

THE WHITE HOUSE

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PRESIDENTIAL POLICY DIRECTIVE/PPD-29

SUBJECT: U.S. Nationals Taken Hostage Abroad and Personnel
Recovery Efforts

The 21st century has witnessed a significant shift in hostage-takings by terrorist organizations and criminal groups abroad. Hostage-takers frequently operate in unstable environments that challenge the ability of the United States Government and its partners and allies to operate effectively. Increasingly, hostage-takers target private citizens -- including journalists and aid workers -- as well as Government officials. They also utilize sophisticated networks and tactics to derive financial, propaganda, and recruitment benefits from hostage-taking operations. The United States Government's response to hostage-takings must evolve with this ever-changing landscape.

This Presidential Policy Directive (PPD), including its classified annex, supersedes and revokes NSPD-12, *United States Citizens Taken Hostage Abroad*, dated February 18, 2002, along with Annex 1 and Appendix A to NSPD-12, dated December 4, 2008. The policy directs a renewed, more agile United States Government response to hostage-takings of U.S. nationals and other specified individuals abroad. It establishes processes to enable consistent implementation of the policies set forth in this directive, to ensure close interagency coordination in order to employ all appropriate means to recover U.S. hostages held abroad, and to significantly enhance engagement with hostages' families. It also reaffirms the United States Government's personnel recovery policy, which seeks to prevent, prepare for, and respond to hostage-takings and other circumstances in which U.S. nationals are isolated from friendly

support. This policy will thereby further important national security and foreign policy interests by strengthening the protections for U.S. nationals outside the United States.

1. Policy

The United States is committed to achieving the safe and rapid recovery of U.S. nationals taken hostage outside the United States. The United States Government will work in a coordinated effort to leverage all instruments of national power to recover U.S. nationals held hostage abroad, unharmed.

The United States Government will strive to counter and diminish the global threat of hostage-taking; reduce the likelihood of U.S. nationals being taken hostage; and enhance United States Government preparation to maximize the probability of a favorable outcome following a hostage-taking.

The United States will use every appropriate resource to gain the safe return of U.S. nationals who are held hostage. But the United States Government will make no concessions to individuals or groups holding U.S. nationals hostage. It is United States policy to deny hostage-takers the benefits of ransom, prisoner releases, policy changes, or other acts of concession. This policy protects U.S. nationals and strengthens national security by removing a key incentive for hostage-takers to target U.S. nationals, thereby interrupting the vicious cycle of hostage-takings, and by helping to deny terrorists and other malicious actors the money, personnel, and other resources they need to conduct attacks against the United States, its nationals, and its interests. However, this policy does not preclude engaging in communications with hostage-takers. For example, when appropriate the United States may assist private efforts to communicate with hostage-takers, whether directly or through public or private intermediaries, and the United States Government may itself communicate with hostage-takers, their intermediaries, interested governments, and local communities to attempt to secure the safe recovery of the hostage.

The taking of a U.S. national hostage abroad is a violation of Federal law, and the United States Government is committed to prosecuting and punishing individuals and groups responsible for hostage-taking and related crimes committed against U.S. nationals.

The United States Government will endeavor to work closely with a hostage's family in a coordinated manner and will proactively

share as much information as possible with the family, mindful of the need to protect the safety of the hostage, the integrity of any recovery efforts, any ongoing criminal investigation, and intelligence sources and methods. The United States Government will also provide assistance and support services to help hostages and their families cope with the effects of the hostage-taking during the period of captivity, through the resolution of the hostage event, and throughout any prosecution of the hostage-takers.

2. Prevention and Preparation

The United States Government will take steps to decrease the likelihood that U.S. nationals will be taken hostage abroad. To that end, the Department of State shall continue to assess the threat and security risk for travel outside of the United States and provide safety and security information for U.S. nationals and U.S. organizations operating abroad. Departments and agencies shall also support engagements with private entities that raise awareness of the risk of hostage-taking and identify best practices for preventing hostage-takings abroad.

The United States Government will lead international efforts to counter, marginalize, and deter hostage-taking by increasing the costs to hostage-takers and eliminating the benefits of hostage-taking. This shall include engagement with foreign governments, international organizations, and other relevant nongovernmental organizations to encourage them to adopt and implement no-concessions policies and statements and to seek commitments to defeat and punish hostage-takers and their aiders and abettors. The United States Government shall also seek to deter the practice of hostage-taking through aggressive interdiction, investigation, and prosecution of hostage-taking and related violations of U.S. law, as well as through sanctions designations, as appropriate.

The safe conduct of Federal business and duties abroad requires both an effective personnel recovery infrastructure and a coordinated response capability to resolve hostage-takings and similar events. The United States Government will leverage educational and training resources to help decrease the vulnerability of United States Government officials and employees working abroad. Each department and agency with overseas responsibilities shall inform its employees of U.S. policy regarding hostage-takings, and provide personnel recovery preparation, education, and training programs to help their employees understand the risk environment, evade capture,

survive captivity, minimize their vulnerability to exploitation, and enable their recovery from a threat environment. Departments and agencies shall also implement individual and organizational protective security measures and ensure there are interoperable systems of communications and support for the accountability of United States Government employees. Each department and agency shall leverage existing programs or develop new ones to offer tailored training for those employees who will participate in response management when U.S. nationals are taken hostage abroad.

Under the direction of the Chief of Mission, United States Government officials shall establish and strengthen relationships and information-sharing with partner nations, including their respective diplomatic, military, intelligence, and law enforcement counterparts, to pursue opportunities to build hostage and personnel recovery capacity through security cooperation. The United States Government shall establish dialogues with foreign counterparts about hostage and personnel recovery training and local capabilities. The United States will also work with international organizations and the private sector, as appropriate, to resolve ongoing hostage events and to prevent future hostage-takings.

When appropriate, the United States may provide training, equipment, advice, and intelligence support to foreign governments to aid them in achieving the capability to safely recover, or to assist in the safe recovery of, U.S. nationals held hostage and to hold perpetrators accountable. Unless otherwise directed by the President, all such efforts and activities will be coordinated among the relevant Federal departments and agencies and with the Department of State. This assistance may be provided by appropriate departments and agencies through existing programs, within and consistent with existing legal authorities.

3. United States Government Coordination in Support of Hostage Recovery

The United States Government shall work diligently to achieve the safe recovery of U.S. nationals held hostage abroad. The United States Government's response -- which may include diplomatic outreach, intelligence collection, and investigations in support of developing further options, recovery operations, and the use of any other lawful and appropriate tools -- will depend on many factors. When considering how to respond to a hostage situation, the United States Government shall undertake

those options that are most likely to secure the hostage's safe release; deter future hostage-taking of U.S. nationals and combat the financing of terrorist and other criminal enterprises; and protect other U.S. national security interests. The United States Government shall endeavor to work with the nation in which a U.S. national is being held hostage, including supporting that nation's efforts to recover the hostage. However, in extraordinary circumstances, the United States Government may also act unilaterally to protect its nationals and national interests.

The taking of a U.S. national hostage abroad requires a rapid, coordinated response from the United States Government. The Hostage Response Group (HRG), in support of the National Security Council (NSC) Deputies and Principals Committees, and accountable to the NSC chaired by the President, shall coordinate the development and implementation of United States Government policy and strategy with respect to U.S. nationals taken hostage abroad. The interagency Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell (HRFC), in support of the HRG, shall coordinate United States Government efforts to ensure that all relevant department and agency information, expertise, and resources are brought to bear to develop individualized strategies to secure the safe recovery of U.S. nationals held hostage abroad.

The Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, who shall report to the Secretary of State, shall lead diplomatic engagement on U.S. hostage policy as well as coordinate all diplomatic engagements in support of hostage recovery efforts, in coordination with the HRFC and consistent with policy guidance communicated through the HRG. United States Embassies that have established Personnel Recovery Working Groups or other interagency bodies to coordinate overseas activities in response to a hostage-taking shall ensure that those bodies operate pursuant to policy guidance provided by the HRG and in coordination with the HRFC and with the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs.

a. Hostage Response Group (HRG)

The HRG shall be chaired by the Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Counterterrorism and shall convene on a regular basis and as needed at the request of the National Security Council. Its regular members shall include the director of the HRFC, the HRFC's Family Engagement Coordinator, and senior representatives from the Department of State, Department of the Treasury, Department of Defense,

Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and such other executive branch departments, agencies, or offices as the President, from time to time, may designate.

In support of the Deputies Committee chaired by the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, the HRG shall: (1) identify and recommend hostage recovery options and strategies to the President through the National Security Council; (2) coordinate the development and implementation of U.S. hostage and personnel recovery policies, strategies, and procedures, consistent with the policies set forth in this directive; (3) receive regular updates from the HRFC on the status of U.S. nationals being held hostage abroad and measures being taken to effect the hostages' safe recovery; (4) coordinate the provision of policy guidance to the HRFC, including reviewing recovery options proposed by the HRFC and resolving disputes within the HRFC; and (5) where higher-level guidance is required, make recommendations to the Deputies Committee.

b. Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell (HRFC)

The HRFC shall serve as the United States Government's dedicated interagency coordinating body at the operational level for the recovery of U.S. national hostages abroad. The HRFC shall: (1) identify and recommend hostage recovery options and strategies to the President through the NSC; (2) coordinate efforts by participating departments and agencies to ensure that information regarding hostage events, including potential recovery options and engagements with families and external actors (to include foreign governments), is appropriately shared within the United States Government to facilitate a coordinated response to a hostage-taking; (3) assess and track all hostage-takings of U.S. nationals abroad and provide regular reports to the President through the NSC on the status of such cases and any measures being taken toward the hostages' safe recovery; (4) provide a forum for intelligence sharing and, with the support of the Director of National Intelligence, coordinate the declassification of relevant information; (5) coordinate efforts by participating departments and agencies to provide appropriate support and assistance to hostages and their families in a coordinated and consistent manner and to provide families with timely information regarding significant events in their cases; (6) make recommendations to executive departments and agencies in order to reduce the likelihood of U.S. nationals being taken hostage abroad and enhance United States Government

preparation to maximize the probability of a favorable outcome following a hostage-taking; and (7) coordinate with departments and agencies regarding congressional, media, and other public inquiries pertaining to hostage events.

Upon receipt of credible information that a U.S. national has been taken hostage or has been reported missing in a region where hostage-taking is a significant threat, any department or agency with such information shall report that information, along with any action already taken or anticipated in response, to the HRFC and the relevant Chiefs of Mission. If, at any point in a given hostage event, the HRFC has reason to believe that a U.S. national is being held hostage by an entity or individual designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization or designated for sanctions by the President, Secretary of State, or Secretary of the Treasury, the HRFC Director shall promptly inform the HRG of the designated individual or entity involved and the circumstances of the hostage-taking.

c. Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs

The Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (Special Envoy) shall report to the Secretary of State and shall:

- (1) lead diplomatic engagement on U.S. hostage policy;
- (2) coordinate all diplomatic engagements in support of hostage recovery efforts, in coordination with the HRFC and consistent with policy guidance communicated through the HRG;
- (3) coordinate with the HRFC proposals for diplomatic engagements and strategy in support of hostage recovery efforts;
- (4) provide senior representation from the Special Envoy's office to the HRFC and in the HRG; and
- (5) in coordination with the HRFC as appropriate, coordinate diplomatic engagements regarding cases in which a foreign government confirms that it has detained a U.S. national but the United States Government regards such detention as unlawful or wrongful.

4. Family and Hostage Engagement

The United States Government will treat all families and hostages equitably and fairly while respecting their dignity and privacy. All interactions with the family should be undertaken with the utmost professionalism, empathy, and sensitivity to the psychological and emotional disruption the family is experiencing and should be informed by the family's needs, wishes, and rights.

The HRFC, through the Family Engagement Coordinator, shall ensure that all interactions with a hostage's family occur in a coordinated fashion and that the family receives consistent and accurate information from the United States Government. The Family Engagement Coordinator shall ensure that all communications between United States Government officials and a hostage's family are coordinated to ensure consistent follow-up on questions and requests, and to ensure that any relevant background regarding the family's particular needs is taken into consideration.

The United States Government shall provide the hostage and his or her family with appropriate assistance and support services, including legally mandated crime victims' rights and services, to help them cope with the physical, emotional, and financial impact of a hostage-taking. United States Government officials shall, subject to the family's wishes, maintain regular contact with the family and ensure continuity of care. As appropriate to meet individual needs, United States Government officials may refer hostages and their families to nongovernmental assistance organizations.

The United States Government will share with a hostage's family as much information as possible, mindful of the reliability and credibility of information provided and the need to protect the safety of the hostage, the integrity of any recovery efforts, any ongoing criminal investigation, and intelligence sources and methods. United States Government officials shall communicate to the family, to the greatest extent possible, information about the circumstances of the hostage's abduction and captivity, what options for the safe recovery of the hostage the United States Government is pursuing, information about relevant law and policy, and the roles and responsibilities of United States Government departments and agencies involved in recovering the hostage. When consistent with each family's preferences and the circumstances of the hostage event, the HRFC shall coordinate efforts by relevant departments and agencies to ensure that the family receives a full informational briefing. The United States Government shall share with the family relevant information, including by making proactive efforts to declassify relevant information or providing unclassified summaries.

The United States Government shall continue to offer appropriate assistance and support services to a hostage and the hostage's family after recovery and through any prosecution of the hostage-takers, consistent with the policies set forth in this

directive. The HRFC shall coordinate the delivery of such support services by relevant departments and agencies, including proactive planning for any post-recovery support services that will be provided to a hostage, as appropriate. In the event of a hostage's death in captivity or in the course of a recovery effort, the HRFC shall also coordinate efforts by relevant departments and agencies to ensure that they provide coordinated assistance and support services to the hostage's family.

5. Intelligence Support

The Director of National Intelligence shall provide for centralized management of hostage-related intelligence in order to coordinate the Intelligence Community's efforts on hostage-takings and provide synchronized intelligence support to the HRFC. The Intelligence Community shall make proactive efforts to declassify relevant and reliable information or provide unclassified summaries to a hostage's family.

The Intelligence Community shall maintain the capability to provide intelligence collection and analysis support to allow the United States Government to respond to hostage-takings of U.S. nationals abroad. Moreover, the collection, processing, analysis, and dissemination of intelligence related to hostage-taking incidents shall be a priority for the Intelligence Community when such an incident occurs. In order to improve the United States Government's response capability, departments and agencies shall leverage appropriate intelligence support to pursue diplomatic, military, and law enforcement actions in response to a hostage-taking. Consistent with other provisions in this policy, United States Government departments and agencies may work with private entities to further United States Government interests to locate and recover Americans held hostage abroad, including entities that may assist in gathering or establishing sources of information.

6. Prosecution

The investigation and prosecution of hostage-takers is an important means of deterring future acts of hostage-taking and ensuring that hostage-takers are brought to justice. The United States shall diligently seek to ensure that hostage-takers of U.S. nationals are arrested, prosecuted, and punished through a due process criminal justice system in the United States or abroad for crimes related to the hostage-taking.

The United States has jurisdiction over the taking of a U.S. national hostage abroad, as well as over other criminal acts that may be committed against the hostage, and the Department of Justice will seek to prosecute hostage-taking of U.S. nationals and related violations of U.S. law in the U.S. court system whenever possible. The Federal Bureau of Investigation shall investigate violations of U.S. law and shall collect evidence and conduct forensics in furtherance of a potential prosecution, consistent with its statutory authorities and, where applicable, the permission of the foreign government in whose territory it is operating.

The HRFC shall coordinate efforts by relevant departments and agencies to ensure that all relevant material and information acquired by the United States Government in the course of a hostage-taking event is made available for use in the effort to recover the hostage and, where possible and consistent with that goal, is managed in such a way as to allow its use in an ongoing criminal investigation or prosecution.

The United States Government shall work with foreign governments to apprehend hostage-takers in their territory. In coordination with one another, the Department of State, Department of Justice, and Department of the Treasury shall engage with foreign governments to seek commitments to punish hostage-takers and their aiders and abettors. In coordinating with the Department of State, relevant departments and agencies should also work to develop the capacity of partner nations, through technical assistance and training in best practices, to collect intelligence for use in hostage recovery efforts while preserving, when possible, opportunities for a criminal prosecution by the United States or the relevant nation.

7. General Provisions

For the purposes of this directive, hostage-taking is defined as the unlawful abduction or holding of a person or persons against their will in order to compel a third person or governmental organization to do or abstain from doing any act as a condition for the release of the person detained. This directive applies to both suspected and confirmed hostage-takings in which a U.S. national, as defined in either 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(22) or 8 U.S.C. 1408, or a lawful permanent resident alien with significant ties to the United States is abducted or held outside of the United States. This directive shall also apply to other hostage-takings occurring abroad in which the United States has a national interest, such as (but not limited

to) hostage-takings of individuals who are not U.S. nationals but who have close links through family, employment, or other connections to the United States, as specifically referred to the HRFC by the Deputies Committee. This directive does not apply if a foreign government confirms that it has detained a U.S. national; such cases are handled by the Department of State in coordination with other relevant departments and agencies. In dealing with such cases, however, the Department of State may draw on the full range of experience and expertise of the HRFC as appropriate, including the HRFC's Family Engagement Coordinator's proficiency in providing and ensuring professionalism, empathy, and sensitivity to the psychological and emotional distress experienced by families in such cases. Additionally, the U.S. response to the detention of U.S. military personnel by non-state forces in the context of armed conflict should, in appropriate circumstances, be informed by the law of war.

This directive does not alter the authorities or requirements applicable to Federal departments and agencies under the Constitution, Federal statutes, or Executive Orders or, except as set forth herein, alter any existing Presidential Directives. This directive does not expand the scope of services otherwise available to lawful permanent resident aliens pursuant to departments' and agencies' existing authorities.

This directive is consistent with and intended to be guided by the NSC process, as described in Presidential Policy Directive/PPD 1 of February 13, 2009, or any successor to PPD 1.

Each department or agency shall review this directive and ensure that its own policies and procedures are consistent with the policies set forth herein.

This directive is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

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