



Written by on July 20, 2009

## Awaiting the Fate of U.S. Soldier Captured in Afghanistan

In an interview taped by ABC's television network in New Delhi, India, and broadcast on Good Morning America on July 20, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the United States will do everything it can to find and free a U.S. soldier captured in Afghanistan on June 30.

Officials declared the soldier, Pfc. Bowe Bergdahl, as "missing-captured" on July 2, after the BBC broke the story two days after he went missing from his base in southeastern Paktia province.

Secretary Clinton said during the interview: "We are attempting to do everything we can to locate [Bergdahl] and free him. It's just outrageous. It's a real sign of desperation and criminal behavior on the part of terrorist groups, so we are going to do everything we can to get him."



Over the weekend before the Clinton interview, Bergdahl's Taliban captors posted a 28-minute video on YouTube during which the soldier answered questions asked by those holding him.

Reuters and AFP news services reported that the video shows Bergdahl wearing traditional pale grey Afghan dress, and being prompted in English by his captors to call for U.S. forces to be withdrawn from Afghanistan. A U.S. military spokesman in Kabul confirmed Bergdahl's identity, but condemned the video as "propaganda." "We condemn the use of this video and the public humiliation of prisoners. It is against international law," Col. Greg Julian, a military spokesman, was quoted by the *Washington Post*, "We are doing everything we can to return this soldier to safety."

In the video, Bergdahl says: "I am scared. I'm scared I won't be able to go home. It is very unnerving to be a prisoner. I have my girlfriend who is hoping to marry. I have my grandma and grandpas. I have a very, very good family that I love back home in America."

Bergdahl was then prompted by a voice from off-camera that stated: "Miss them."

Responding to the cue, he continued: "And I miss them every day that I'm gone. I miss them and I'm afraid that I might never see them again and that I'll never be able to tell them that I love them again."

Bergdahl is a member of 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, based in Fort Richardson, Alaska. But his hometown is Hailey, Idaho, where residents have rallied around their neighbor. The town's people held a candlelight vigil on July 8.

Bergdahl's parents issued a statement Sunday through the Idaho National Guard, stating: "We hope and pray for our son's safe return to his comrades and then to our family, and we appreciate all the support and expressions of sympathy shown to us by our family members, our friends and others across the nation." They concluded: "Thank you, and please continue to keep Bowe in your thoughts and prayers."



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The National Guard issued a statement on behalf of the family: "Due to the sensitivity of this issue, the Bergdahls have made it clear they do not wish to be contacted by media representatives; please respect this family's privacy."

Idahopress.com interviewed Sue Martin, owner of Zaney's River Street Coffee House, where Bergdahl once worked. A writer for the paper reported that Martin hung a sign in the window of the shop reading "Get Bowe Back," and that a message posted inside asks customers to "join all of us at Zaney's holding light for our friend."

In the interview, Martin recalled: "[Bergdahl] joined the ballet. Then he joined the Army." The report noted that Zaney's has become an impromptu meeting place for friends, acquaintances, and the media since the Taliban video was posted online. "People have been calling and asking what they could bring to show their support," said Martin.

An article in the New York *Daily News* for July 20 noted that Bergdahl had been homeschooled and took ballet lessons for several years. His father was reportedly a ballet dancer.

"He's athletic," the reporter quoted Jill Brennan, director of the Sun Valley Ballet School. "He just had a knack for it. He's a wonderful young man."

Bergdahl was also a member of a sport fencing club, the Sun Valley Swords.

Within hours after his identity was released, hundreds of people posted messages on a Facebook page called "Bring Bowe Bergdahl Home."

*Photo: AP Images*



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