

**STATEMENT OF  
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**BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILILTY  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**AT A HEARING ENTITLED,  
“The Plight of Americans Detained Abroad”**

**PRESENTED  
JUNE 13, 2024**

Chairman Mast, Ranking Member Crow, and other members on the subcommittee, thank you for having me here today.

I am FBI Section Chief Rajiv S. Maan, and I am the Director of the Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell (HRFC). As you know, the HRFC is the government's dedicated interagency coordinating body at the operational level for the recovery of U.S. nationals held hostage abroad.

## History

In 2014, the Obama Administration called for a review of the U.S government's response to hostage taking. This was initiated following public outcry from families whose sons and daughters were taken by terrorist organizations overseas and felt frustrated among other things, that the United States Government (USG) was not doing enough to bring their loved ones home and poorly communicating with them about those efforts. The hostage policy review looked at four areas: government coordination, engagement with families and external stakeholders, intelligence sharing and collection, and U.S. policy in response to hostage taking.

As a result of the review in 2015, President Obama issued Executive Order 13698 "Hostage Recovery Activities" and Presidential Policy Directive-30 (PPD-30) "U.S. Nationals Taken Hostage Abroad and Personnel Recovery Efforts." The Executive Order and PPD-30 established the Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell along with the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (SPEHA). Also, out of the hostage policy review came the Hostage Response Group (HRG), an interagency senior leadership body convened by the National Security Council; an Intelligence Community Issue Manager for Hostage Affairs; and the HRFC's Family Engagement Coordinator. The Levinson Act of December 2020 codified PPD-30 establishing the HRFC, SPEHA, HRG, and their respective roles and responsibilities.

## Who We Are

The HRFC consists of professionals from the FBI, Departments of State, Defense, Treasury, and Justice, and U.S. Intelligence Community agencies.

The HRFC's primary responsibilities are to:

- identify and recommend hostage recovery options and strategies to the President through the National Security Council (NSC);

- coordinate the efforts of U.S. departments and agencies to develop and execute strategies, including on potential recovery options as well as engagements with families;
- assess and track all hostage-takings of U.S. nationals abroad and provide regular reports to the President through the NSC;
- provide a forum for intelligence sharing;
- 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;
- make recommendations to executive departments and agencies to reduce the likelihood of U.S. nationals being taken hostage abroad; and,
- coordinate with departments and agencies regarding congressional, media, and other public inquiries pertaining to hostage events.

The HRFC coordinates with the SPEHA office on all diplomatic lines of effort given the SPEHA's mandate to develop, coordinate, and execute, in concert with relevant Chiefs of Mission, diplomatic engagements as part of an overall recovery strategy.

### Our Family Engagement Team

One of the HRFC's most important components is our Family Engagement Team. Headed by our Family Engagement Coordinator, this inter-agency team consists of FBI Victim Services Coordinators, Operational Psychologists, case agents, and crisis negotiators, as well as State Department Consular Affairs Officers. The team directly engages with and supports families, providing information, crisis intervention, and appropriate resources and referrals to families affected by hostage-takings. Our Family Engagement Team is also the lead node in collaborating with the families as we develop comprehensive strategies for the successful recovery of their loved one.

Once recovered, the victim becomes the primary focus of the family engagement team's support efforts. During the continuing investigation into the crime against the victim, the family engagement team provides support and resources that start the recovered victim on a healthy path of reconstitution and reintegration back into their family, social and occupational life. The FBI partners with multiple departments and agencies that will seek justice by continuing its investigation with the goal of prosecuting identified captor network members. It will also work

with other U.S. interagency and foreign partners to dismantle those captor networks to prevent or deter future hostage-takings.

### Victim Funding and Services

The FBI's Victim Services Division (VSD), through the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), is provided with Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding to support victims and their families. These VOCA funds are used as a funding of last resort when no other resources are reasonably available. VOCA expenditures must be executed consistent with DOJ guidelines and must be pre-approved in advance by VSD.

Some possible victim support for hostages and their families may include emergency medical assessment and evacuation; psychological decompression and normalization; emergency lodging, clothing and sundries; reunification assistance; return flights home for recovered victims, and various other services and supports. Trained victim services personnel are required to conduct a unique needs assessment tailored to the specific needs and situation of the victim and family before the approval and employment of VOCA funds.

### Who We Serve

There are two main instances in which the HRFC is the lead for developing a strategy for recovery when a U.S. national is taken abroad:

- The first is when a U.S. national is being held against his or her will by a non-state actor, such as a terrorist group or network. This individual is designated as a "hostage."
- The second is an unacknowledged detainee. That is when a U.S. national is being held against his or her will by a state actor or non-state actor and that state or non-state actor has not acknowledged to the United States, to the family, or to other entities that they are holding the person.

Separately, a kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) is a criminal act primarily motivated by money, extorting family and friends to pay a ransom. These cases are primarily worked by the FBI's Criminal Investigation Division. While HRFC is not the lead coordinating body for these cases, the HRFC does provide support when specifically requested by the FBI.

Finally, a Wrongful Detainee is a U.S. national detained, primarily by a state actor, whose detention the Secretary of State, has determined to be “wrongful.” These cases are led and managed by the SPEHA office, led by my colleague SPEHA Carstens.

### Things to Consider

The mandate of the HRFC is to focus on the hostage-taking of U.S. nationals, but the practice of hostage-taking is a global issue that has transregional consequences. As stated in PPD-30, under the direction of the Chief of Mission, USG 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 recovery and personnel recovery capability through security cooperation. We follow the laws and regulations of the countries we operate in and work alongside. We work very hard with our host countries to establish and maintain good relationships all over the globe. We work closely with interlocutors and the SPEHA in diplomatic efforts. The HRFC continues to collaborate and share intelligence and information with foreign security and law enforcement services, much like we have with Israel since the October 7th attacks. The HRFC continues to strengthen these relationships and we are in the nascent stages of building new initiatives to enhance collaboration and information sharing with our foreign partners.

Lastly, international terrorism remains a persistent national security threat that exposes innocent victims from the United States and the international community to the danger of being taken hostage. Given the sustained national security threat, it is essential to ensure that private industry and the general public gain an awareness of the jeopardy potential for being taken hostage in high threat locations. In order to reduce the threat of an individual becoming a hostage, the HRFC, in partnership with its international counterparts, is working to disseminate “best practices” to mitigate the likelihood of abduction. The HRFC is working to share this information with the Diplomatic Community, Global Corporations, NGOs, Faith-Based Missionary Groups, Humanitarian Organizations, as well as with individual tourist travelers.

### Conclusion

The HRFC is grateful for the strong support of Congress and in particular this committee. Thank you for inviting me here today. I am available to answer any questions you have.