

Duckworth And Durbin Call On The White House To Prioritize The Safe Return Of Illinoisan Kidnapped In Afghanistan

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Mark Frerichs, is a Veteran of the United States Navy who was working in Kabul as a civil engineer prior to being abducted last year.

Combat Veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), member of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), and U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), member of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, wrote to President Biden today to request that the National Security Council (NSC) immediately convene an interagency meeting of the Principals Committee to develop a course of action to secure the release of Mark Frerichs, their constituent.

“Securing the safe release and return of potentially the only U.S. citizen being held hostage in Afghanistan is an urgent matter that the United States Government should prioritize,” wrote the Senators. “A whole-of government approach will demonstrate our Nation’s commitment and resolve to leave no American behind in Afghanistan. The NSC Principals Committee would also be the most effective and efficient vehicle to make sure Federal agencies with relevant equities in the matter appropriately participate in the development of a potential course of action to free Mr. Frerichs.”

They continued: “Our attention and energy must be devoted to pushing on every reasonable lever to secure the safe return of Mr. Frerichs to his family in the United States. Mr. Frerichs served our country in uniform and we must honor his service by doing everything in our power to make sure our exit from Afghanistan includes bringing Mr. Frerichs home.”

After Frerichs was abducted by the Taliban, Haqqani network or their affiliates in Afghanistan, Duckworth and Durbin have repeatedly called on both the Trump and Biden administrations to prioritize his safe return, [including writing letters](#) to President Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken on the anniversary of his abduction.

During U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) hearing this past May about the transition of troops out of Afghanistan, Duckworth discussed her concern for the safe return of Frerichs and [secured a commitment](#) from Mr. David F. Helvey, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs, to pursue opportunities to advocate for Frerichs’ safe return. Last month, Duckworth [spoke](#) with Secretary Blinken about the importance of securing his safe release.

During a recent Senate Appropriations Committee hearing, Durbin [urged](#) Secretary Blinken to do everything in his power to bring home Frerichs.

Full letter text is included below and [here](#).

Dear President Biden:

We write to request that the National Security Council (NSC) immediately convene an interagency meeting of the Principals Committee with the objective of developing a

course of action for your consideration to secure the release of our constituent, Mark Frerichs, a Veteran of the United States Navy who was working in Afghanistan as a civil engineer prior to being kidnapped by members of the Taliban, Haqqani Network or their affiliates.

Securing the safe release and return of potentially the only U.S. citizen being held hostage in Afghanistan is an urgent matter that the United States Government should prioritize. A whole-of government approach will demonstrate our Nation's commitment and resolve to leave no American behind in Afghanistan. The NSC Principals Committee would also be the most effective and efficient vehicle to make sure Federal agencies with relevant equities in the matter appropriately participate in the development of a potential course of action to free Mr. Frerichs.

We remain deeply troubled over the Trump administration's decision to forgo efforts to negotiate Mr. Frerichs' safe release and return when it worked with the Taliban to develop its February 29, 2020, "Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban and the United States of America." However, there is no time to dwell on past mistakes.

Our attention and energy must be devoted to pushing on every reasonable lever to secure the safe return of Mr. Frerichs to his family in the United States. Mr. Frerichs served our country in uniform and we must honor his service by doing everything in our power to make sure our exit from Afghanistan includes bringing Mr. Frerichs home.

Sincerely,