

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, September 22, 2011 4:18 PM
To: H
Subject: FW: Report from Oman on Hikers

From: Mull, Stephen D
Sent: Thursday, September 22, 2011 3:56 PM
To: Mills, Cheryl D; Abedin, Huma; Sullivan, Jacob J; Burns, William J; Nides, Thomas R; Sullivan, Stephanie S; Zeya, Uzra S; Kennedy, Patrick F; Sherman, Wendy R; Feltman, Jeffrey D; Dibble, Elizabeth L; Wells, Alice G; S_SpecialAssistants
Subject: Report from Oman on Hikers

Just had a quick chat with our Ambassador in Oman Rich Schmierer, who just returned from dinner with Bauer and Fattal and their families.

As for their two years in captivity, they report that they were generally treated well and with dignity, but they did battle significant amounts of loneliness. Their families remain bitter at their lack of access during their incarceration, and complain that letters and other items they sent to their sons were usually not delivered to them. Both men and their families have expressed strong gratitude to the Omanis for their role, and appreciate the regular public comments senior U.S. officials have made on their case over the course of their incarceration. They were less appreciative of some of the other efforts other groups had made; e.g. the group of clerics who were there clouded last minute efforts by suggesting they might be able to engineer a prisoner swap.

Family members noted with pride that they had made pests of themselves in publicizing their plight, and vow they would do it again. The men noted there were often rumors that a U.S.-Iranian prisoner exchange could have sped their release, but they did not express any bitterness that we did not support such an exchange. (Rich said they might harbor such feelings, but maybe didn't express them out of courtesy). The men expressed some quiet qualms about U.S. foreign policy in the region (supporting autocratic regimes pre-Arab Spring), but did so in a calm, respectful and good-natured way.

Rich has not yet had the opportunity to ask about whether they picked up any news of any other Americans in Iranian custody, but will try to do so discreetly before they depart Oman for New York, and will report anything he picks up.

Neither of the men have signed a privacy act waiver, but consular officers in Oman expect that they will soon.

The men and their eight family members will stay at Rich's residence (where the family has been for the past week) tonight; three family members will leave tomorrow; and the hikers themselves may leave as soon as Saturday night. All will proceed to New York. If the Secretary would like to call, it would probably be best to do so before they depart Saturday night. Also, in taking calls from friends and family, they have most enjoyed doing so through a speakerphone so both can participate at the same time along with their families. If the Secretary were to call, they would probably most welcome the same format. The Ops Center has the appropriate numbers to reach them.

Please let me know if you need more.

Steve