

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 20, 2020

## VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write to urge greater attention to the timely and safe release and return of American citizen Mark Frerichs, who was abducted earlier this year in Afghanistan. Mr. Frerichs, originally from Illinois and a Veteran of the U.S. Navy, had spent several years living and working as an independent contractor in Afghanistan.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Mr. Frerichs was abducted in early February, and intelligence and media reports indicate that he is likely being held captive by the Haqqani network, a group closely aligned with the Taliban. While a Taliban spokesperson has reportedly claimed that Mr. Frerichs is not being held by them or any associated groups, serious questions remain about the veracity of these claims.

The Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation at the State Department, Zalmay Khalilzad, has made clear that he continues to press Taliban leaders on the release of Mr. Frerichs. In August, the FBI and the Department of State announced a \$5 million reward for information leading to the safe return of Mark Frerichs. We hope these efforts bear fruit but worry they may not be sufficient.

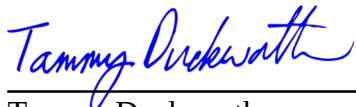
We last wrote you regarding Mr. Frerichs' abduction in August, but are especially alarmed by the impact your Administration's recent announcement concerning an accelerated troop withdrawal in the region may have on the prospects of his—and other hostages'—safe return.

Hastily removing U.S. forces may reduce our leverage and ability to secure the release of American hostages like him, and any negotiated settlement in Afghanistan must not overlook the need to first recover all American hostages. We urge you to establish the return of all American hostages held in Afghanistan and Pakistan as a condition for the further withdrawal of troops from the region.

Ultimately, the swift and safe return of Mr. Frerichs and other Americans hostages held in the region must be a top priority for our government amid the larger peace process in Afghanistan.

We welcome the opportunity to help on this urgent matter, and we look forward to your attention to this urgent request.

Sincerely,



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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator