



Bring Bowe home

By The Staff

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THE ISSUE: Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl.

OUR OPINION: Help free America's only POW in captivity.

How many know the name of Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl?

If his name is unfamiliar, you are not alone. Sadly, very few Americans know his name and his plight.

Bowe was taken prisoner in Afghanistan by Taliban-allied insurgents June 30, 2009 and is believed to be held somewhere in Pakistan. At the time of his capture, he was a private first class, but has since been promoted to sergeant in absentia.

Following his capture, the Taliban demanded \$1 million and the release of 21 Afghan prisoners in exchange for Bowe. If they didn't get it, they said, they would kill him. In 2010, the Taliban demanded a Pakistani scientist convicted by a U.S. court of attempting to murder U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan be released for Bowe or he would be executed. In late 2010, Bowe reportedly escaped only to be recaptured three days later.

Bowe's parents remain hopeful since the Taliban have not carried out their threats to kill him and have released five videos showing him in captivity. His parents' hopes were further buoyed with the receipt of a letter from Bowe through the Red Cross in June 2013.

Although U.S. policy is to not negotiate with terrorists, a senior Taliban spokesman has offered to trade Bowe for Taliban detainees as a step toward possible peace talks. While the Obama administration has been mute on the proposal, it could possibly be parlayed as a good-faith measure for broader peace negotiations with the Taliban.

Given the U.S. military's credo of "No one left behind," there would be no shortage of volunteers willing to risk their lives to bring Bowe home. While the U.S. military's technological edge and power projection capability make a rescue feasible, any attempt would have to carefully weigh the inherent risk to Bowe.

Absent negotiations and a rescue, a citizen-based campaign across the U.S. to make Americans aware of Bowe's plight and our government's duty to secure his freedom is essential for creating domestic and international pressure for his release. For Bowe's loved ones, it is also a source of comfort knowing that he is not forgotten.

Locally, Rolling Thunder Florida Chapter 7 is spearheading the awareness campaign as part of its mission of educating the public and enlisting support to account for all POWs and MIAs.

Citrus Countians can help bring Bowe home by stopping tomorrow at the High Octane Saloon, 1590 S. Suncoast Blvd., Homosassa, to sign a petition urging Secretary of State John Kerry to secure his release before U.S. troops withdraw from Afghanistan.

County residents are also encouraged to call or email Rep. Richard Nugent to thank him for supporting the campaign to bring Bowe home and asking U.S. Sens. Bill Nelson and Marco Rubio to do likewise.

As of this date, Sgt. Bergdahl has been held captive for four years, six months, one week and four days. Help bring Bowe home by signing the petition, never forgetting him and urging others to do like wise.

YOU CAN HELP

- To obtain a petition call 628-6481 or email Cyn2719@yahoo.com.