



Biden called families of 3 Americans held by Taliban to tell them he hasn't reached deal to free them



Ahmad Shah Habibi, the brother of Mahmood Habibi, told CBS News that during the conversation, Mr. Biden clarified that he would not agree to the Taliban's demand that the U.S. release Muhammed Rahim al Afghani

In a roughly 30-minute phone call Sunday afternoon, President Biden delivered difficult news to the families of three Americans held by the Taliban. He did not have a deal with the Taliban to free their loved ones from captivity, despite what U.S. officials described to CBS News as a significant offer the U.S. had extended in Doha days earlier. The U.S. considers Ryan Corbett and George Glezzmann to be wrongfully detained by the Taliban, and describes Mahmood Habibi, who holds dual American and Afghan citizenship, as

In a roughly 30-minute phone call Sunday afternoon, President Biden delivered difficult news to the families of three Americans held by the Taliban. He did not have a deal with the Taliban to free their loved ones from captivity, despite what U.S. officials described to CBS News as a significant offer the U.S. had extended in Doha days earlier. The U.S. considers Ryan Corbett and George Glezzmann to be wrongfully detained by the Taliban, and describes Mahmood Habibin

FBI public notice

Ahmad Shah Habibi, the brother of Mahmood Habibi, told CBS News that during the conversation, Mr. Biden clarified that he would not agree to the Taliban's demand that the U.S. release Muhammed Rahim al Afghani, a detainee at Guantanamo Bay, unless the Taliban, now the government of Afghanistan, also releases Mahmood. An NSC spokesman declined to respond to a CBS inquiry about that specific claim.

Mahmood Habibi disappeared in Afghanistan in 2022, and the Taliban denied abducting him. In a public notice posted by the FBI in August 2024, the agency said it "believed" that Habibi was taken by Taliban military forces and "has not been heard from since his disappearance." The FBI said in its notice that Habibi was working as a contractor for a Kabul-based telecom company when he disappeared.

The Taliban still say they do not have Habibi in custody.

"No, we don't have him," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told CBS News Monday.

Asked whether Mahmood had disappeared in Afghanistan, Mujahid said, "It's not clear either, because we didn't know him before."

Ahmad Habibi told CBS News, "My family has every confidence that my brother is alive. There are things that neither we nor the U.S. government can say publicly, but Mahmood's case is different from the other two Americans."

"We know the other families are desperate to get their loved ones home and I told the president we want them home, too," Ahmad Habibi added. "But anyone speculating that my brother is dead is just feeding into Taliban claims. We are grateful that President Biden committed to not leave Mahmood behind," and he said that national security adviser Jake Sullivan had also made similar assurances.

In its statement acknowledging the phone call, the White House also noted that Mr. Biden had been able to bring home U.S. citizens who had been detained before the U.S. exit from Afghanistan in 2021. Corbett, Glezzmann and Habibi were detained after traveling to Afghanistan following the Taliban's return to power. That ascendance of the Taliban followed a diplomatic deal negotiated by the Trump administration for U.S. troops to withdraw and a surprisingly strong Taliban military offensive that caught the Biden administration off guard, leading to a hasty and chaotic U.S. evacuation. Unwilling to remain without U.S. troops, NATO forces also pulled out.

The U.S. does not officially recognize the Taliban, with its horrific human rights record, as the legitimate government of Afghanistan but has been in contact with its leaders through U.S. agencies as well as via the Qatari government. Last weekend in Doha, Special

Presidential Envoy Roger Carstens and NSC official Jen Daskal pressed for a deal with the Taliban to free the Americans.

A U.S. official described the Doha meetings as unsuccessful but declined to detail which other individuals the Biden administration was willing to offer to the Taliban as part of a potential trade. The White House described the Biden efforts as continuing through the end of his term.

Mr. Biden has dedicated much of his career to foreign policy, and that portion of his legacy is extremely important to him. In a speech Monday at the State Department, the president will describe the chaotic U.S. exit from Afghanistan, arguably his biggest foreign policy failure, as having successfully ended America's longest war.

LENS ASIA