



POW/MIA Empty Chair now prominent at Belmont Town Hall

Belmont selectmen held a POW/MIA Empty Chair dedication ceremony at the Belmont Town Hall Monday. Members of Rolling Thunder, a veteran's organization instrumental in bringing the concept to the Board of Selectmen, attended the ceremony. The chair, which reminds people that American soldiers are still missing, now occupies a position of honor in the building. Taking part were Robert McGuigan of Hooksett of NH Rolling Thunder Chapter 1; Cary Lagace, administrative assistant for the town of Belmont; Jon Pike, Belmont selectman; Ruth Mooney, chairperson of the Belmont Selectboard; Bob Brown of Belmont, Rolling Thunder member and his wife, Cathy, and Bill Downs of Barrington, Rolling Thunder member. (Roger Amsden/for The Laconia Daily Sun)

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Yet she also said he appeared to be "in good physical condition."

One official, who spoke on grounds of anonymity because the person wasn't authorized to discuss the subject by name, said there were concerns about Bergdahl's mental and emotional as well as physical health.

On Monday, a U.S. military hospital in Germany reported Bergdahl in "stable condition and receiving treatment for conditions requiring hospitalization" after arriving from Afghanistan. The Landstuhl Regional Medical Center said Bergdahl's treatment "includes attention to dietary and nutrition needs after almost five years in captivity" but declined to release further details. It said there "is no pre-determined amount of time involved in the reintegration process" for the 28-year-old soldier.

Two officials said Monday that the Taliban may have been concerned about his health, as well, since the U.S. had sent the message that it would respond harshly if any harm befell him in captivity.

Republicans in the U.S. said the deal for Bergdahl's release could set a troubling precedent. Arizona Sen. John McCain said of the Guantanamo detainees who were exchanged for him: "These are the hardest of the hard core."

And in Kabul Monday, the Afghan Foreign Ministry called the swap "against the norms of international law" if it came against the five imprisoned Taliban detainees' will. The ministry said: "No state can transfer another country's citizen to a third country and put restriction on their freedom."

Tireless campaigners for their son's freedom, Bob and Jani Bergdahl thanked all who were behind the effort to retrieve him. "You were not left behind," Bob Bergdahl told reporters, as if speaking to his son. "We are so proud of the way this was carried out." He spoke in Boise, Idaho, wearing a long bushy beard he'd grown to honor his son, as residents in the sergeant's hometown of Hailey prepared for a homecoming celebration.

The five detainees left Guantanamo aboard a U.S. military aircraft flying to Qatar, which served as go-between in the negotiations.

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Juan Carlos didn't mention the scandals or Catalonia, or specify what issues his son must prioritize as the next head of state. He stressed only that

Felipe will need to "undertake the transformations and reforms demanded by today's circumstances and to address the challenges of tomorrow with renewed intensity and dedication."

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