

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

Statement on the Death of Luke Somers

December 6, 2014

The United States strongly condemns the barbaric murder of Luke Somers at the hands of Al Qaida terrorists during a rescue operation conducted by U.S. forces in Yemen in partnership with the Yemeni Government. On behalf of the American people, I offer my deepest condolences to Luke's family and to his loved ones. I also offer my thoughts and prayers to the family of a non-U.S. citizen hostage who was also murdered by these terrorists during the rescue operation. Their despair and sorrow at this time are beyond words.

It is my highest responsibility to do everything possible to protect American citizens. As this and previous hostage rescue operations demonstrate, the United States will spare no effort to use all of its military, intelligence, and diplomatic capabilities to bring Americans home safely, wherever they are located. And terrorists who seek to harm our citizens will feel the long arm of American justice.

Luke Somers was kidnapped 15 months ago in Yemen and held hostage by Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Since his capture, the United States has been using every tool at our disposal to secure his release. Earlier this week, a video released by his terrorist captors announced that Luke would be killed within 72 hours. Other information also indicated that Luke's life was in imminent danger. Based on this assessment, and as soon as there was reliable intelligence and an operational plan, I authorized a rescue attempt yesterday. I also authorized the rescue of any other hostages held in the same location as Luke.

Luke was a photojournalist who sought through his images to convey the lives of Yemenis to the outside world. He came to Yemen in peace and was held against his will and threatened by a despicable terrorist organization. The callous disregard for Luke's life is more proof of the depths of AQAP's depravity and further reason why the world must never cease in seeking to defeat their evil ideology.

As Commander in Chief, I am grateful to the U.S. forces who carried out this mission, as well as the previous attempt to rescue Luke, and to the dedicated intelligence, law enforcement, and diplomatic professionals who supported their efforts. I also deeply appreciate the support and assistance provided by President Hadi and the Yemeni Government and reiterate our strong commitment to combating the shared threat posed by AQAP.

We remember Luke and his family, as well as the families of those Americans who are still being held captive overseas and those who have lost loved ones to the brutality of these and other terrorists. We remain determined to do our utmost to bring them home and to hold those who have done them harm accountable.

NOTE: The statement referred to Pierre Korkie, a South African teacher who was kidnapped in Yemen in May 2013.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Deaths :: Somers, Luke.

Names: Hadi, Abd Rabuh Mansur; Korkie, Pierre; Somers, Luke.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Deaths : Somers, Luke; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Global threat; Yemen : President; Yemen : Security cooperation with U.S.

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