TUMUN V

The Rescue of Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl

The U.S. War in Afghanistan

Background Guide

Crisis Director: Annie Rubinson

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LETTER FROM THE CRISIS DIRECTOR

Dear Delegates,

Greetings! My name is Annie Rubinson, and I am beyond excited to welcome you all to TUMUN V and the Rescue Committee of Bowe Bergdahl this upcoming spring. I am originally from Irvington, New York, and began my first year at Tufts University this past fall. I have been an active participant in Model United Nations since my sophomore year of high school, but I also enjoy reading, cooking and religiously listening to the Harry Potter movie soundtracks.

While my interest in *studying* International Relations originated during my high school MUN experience, listening to the second season of *Serial* was my first exposure to the subject – and I can't wait to bring it to life. The series documents the story of Bowe Bergdahl, a soldier captured by the Taliban in 2009 while serving in Afghanistan. With that being said, *it is not recommended that you listen to the podcast* - the crisis staff will not be sticking to the script, and neither should you! I believe we can make the most of this conference by working to understand the nuances and controversies of the U.S. military as well as the War with Afghanistan, in addition to the cultures surrounding them - not by simply replicating exactly what happened in real life. Of course, if you find yourself struggling to find information on your *character* and their perspective on Bowe's story, episode transcripts, synopses and other interactive materials are available.

Bowe Bergdahl's rescue is considered a massive failure in American foreign policy. This is your chance to get creative and see if you can right past wrongs!

The MUN conferences I attended as a delegate were major highlights of my high school years, and I couldn't be more excited to help create a similar experience for each of you – even in the midst of these difficult times. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with any questions you may have, committee-related or otherwise. I look forward to meeting all of you soon!

Annie Rubinson
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Overview

The Rescue of Beaudry "Bowe" Bergdahl was just about as polarizing as the U.S. War in Afghanistan itself. Especially after the conclusion of the major combat phase, many argued over whether or not the United States had any business staying involved, both in the extent to which it did and the ways in which it did. These were questions that Bowe himself asked during his own deployment – and especially in the military and political worlds, much of this controversy is still very much alive.

When Bowe Bergdahl enlisted in the military, all he wanted was to be a hero for his country. Yet, only weeks into his deployment, he made the decision to walk away from his post. It wasn't long before he realized he was way over his head, landing himself in the hands of the Taliban for five years as a prisoner of war (POW).

Understanding the complex nature of this situation requires an examination of the culture that surrounds the United States military, specifically as it pertains

Map of the Middle East and Afghanistan. https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/is-afghanistan-in-the-middle-east.html

to the War with Afghanistan. We will first take a look at the events that led up to Bowe's capture in 2009, and then dive into his side of the story.

As we learn more about the circumstances surrounding Bowe's disappearance, we will ask ourselves the following questions: were his reasons legitimate enough to warrant his actions? Should this, in any way, alter the United States' approach to the War on Terror? And finally, how much is worth sacrificing in order to save him?

The U.S. War in Afghanistan

President George W. Bush launched the War in Afghanistan following a series of attacks on September 11, 2001. Members of al-Qaeda (deemed a terrorist organization by a number of

Hijacked al-Qaeda airplanes crash into the World Trade Center in New York. https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/9-11-attacks

international bodies)[1] hijacked and crashed four commercial planes into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., a field in Shanksville, PA, and the World Trade Center towers in New York, NY. Although the hijackers themselves were of Saudi descent, the Taliban-controlled Afghan government had been providing safe bases of operation for al-Qaeda as an organization[2] – namely by harboring Osama bin Laden, the primary organizer of the 9/11 attacks. So, to the United States, overthrowing that regime was a critical step toward winning the "War on Terrorism."

The military campaign against al-Qaeda and the Taliban – backed by the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Northern Alliance and various anti-Taliban resistance groups within Afghanistan – began in October and yielded swift success early on. Between foreign forces carrying out airstrikes and internal opponents fighting on the ground, it only took about only a month of combat before a series of pivotal losses fell upon the Taliban side (including at Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan), marking what looked like the beginning of the end for the regime. By November 14, 2001, just 64 days after the 9/11 attacks, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) already passed a resolution[3] that both installed an interim administration in Afghanistan and invited U.N. peacekeepers to help maintain stability and distribute aid packages.

The international community continued to build on this resolution in early December, when the U.N. invited members of Afghan factions to congregate in Bonn, Germany for a

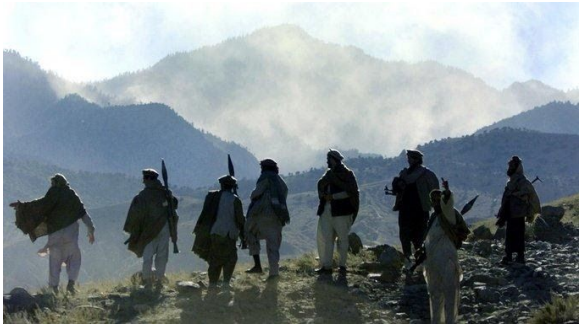
[1] "Foreign Terrorist Organizations," United States Department of State, https://www.state.gov/ foreign-terrorist-organizations/

[2] "Timeline: The U.S. War in Afghanistan," Council on Foreign Relations, https://www.cfr.org /timeline/us-war-afghanistan

[3] "Resolution 1378 (2001)," United Nations Security Council, https://digitallibrary.un.org/ record/452431?ln=en

conference. The representatives decided to appoint Hamid Karzai as the head of the interim administration, in recognition of his leadership in organizing Pashtun resistance against the Taliban following 9/11. This appointment, as well as the formation of a peacekeeping task force to be stationed in Kabul, makes up what became known as the Bonn Agreement. The Security Council later cemented this by establishing the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)[4] in that same month, the official NATO and U.S.-led body dedicated to "develop[ing] new Afghan security forces to ensure Afghanistan would never again become a safe haven for terrorists."[5] These measures, combined with the dwindling political and military power of the Taliban, created hope that victory was on the horizon for the U.S.

But the War on Terror was still far from over, with bin Laden still out there – and even though reliable intelligence pinpointed his location in a cave complex in Tora Bora (roughly 200 km from Kabul) in early December, the United States opted not to lead an assault and left the fighting to less capable Afghan militia groups. The battle that ensued there lasted two weeks, and saw not only the deaths of hundreds but also the escape of bin Laden to Pakistan.[6]



Fighters in the mountains of Tora Bora, Afghanistan. David Guttenfelder/AP Images. https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan

This was a major setback because Pakistan is a sovereign nation with amicable relations with the United States. In other words, even if the U.S. Armed Forces were able to track bin Laden down, invading the country in order to capture him would have been much more difficult to justify. The war

[4] "Resolution 1386 (2001)," United Nations Security Council, https://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/mandate/unscr/resolution_1386.pdf

[5] "NATO's Mission in Afghanistan," North-Atlantic Treaty Organization, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm

[6] *Ibid.* Council on Foreign Relations

effort thus became more complicated and prolonged than Americans would have hoped, and the fact that decisive action by the U.S. could have deterred such an issue did not bode well for them.

The Iraq Controversy

On December 9, Taliban leader Mullah Omar surrendered the city of Kandahar and fled Afghanistan, which forced the many remaining al-Qaeda operatives into hiding. This, with the exception of a few battles in the early months of 2002, marked the end of the first phase of major combat in Afghanistan[7] and the shift of military attention toward suspect number 2: Iraq.

The 2003 invasion of Iraq does not directly relate to the story of Bowe Bergdahl, but it is still one of the main reasons why the War on Terror (and therefore the question of how to rescue Bowe) became as controversial as it did. According to former CIA Director George Tenet, the invasion of Iraq was necessary because there was "solid reporting of senior level contacts between Iraq and al-Qaeda going back a decade."[8] Additionally, there was speculation that the country possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), which Bush deemed a major threat to United States security. However, both of these justifications were met with criticism. For example, Washington correspondents with *The Atlantic* reported that the plan to invade Iraq was in motion long before any mention of connections to 9/11 or WMDs, as early as 2001. That report also cited a statement from American economist Paul Krugman, who went so far as to say, "America invaded Iraq because the Bush administration wanted a war. The

President George W. Bush declares war on Iraq.
https://www.youtube.com/watch/5BwxI_I84dc

[7] *Ibid.* Council on Foreign Relations

[8] Jacob Heilbrunn, "Why the United States Invaded Iraq," *The New York Times*, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/28/books/review/to-start-a-war-robert-draper.html

President Bush at Camp David in 2001, where initial talks of invading Iraq allegedly took place. https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/05/the-right-and-wrong-questions-about-the-iraq-war/393497/

public justifications for the invasion were nothing but pretexts, and falsified pretexts at that."[9]

These criticisms were later validated, when a report from former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfield revealed the following: "Our knowledge of the Iraqi [nuclear] weapons program is based largely – perhaps 90 percent – on analysis of imprecise intelligence."[10] That is, the rationale for a war in Iraq was much more deeply rooted in assumptions than the White House initially let on to the public. Even if this information wasn't made available until years after the fact, it still serves as evidence of building public mistrust of the Bush administration and undermined the so-called need for prolonged war in the Middle East.

Reconstruction

Back in Afghanistan, President Bush closed the book on combat for the most part, and called for the complete reconstruction of the country. A sum of 38 billion dollars was allocated by the U.S. Congress to fund this project.

First, the interim government established in the Bonn Agreement was replaced by a "transition government" with Hamid Karzai still in charge, as was reaffirmed by the *loya jirga*[11] (Pashtun legal assembly) in June 2002. His

Hamid Karzai, the appointed head of Afghanistan's interim and transition administrations. Brennan Linsley/AP Images. https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan

[9] James Fallows, "The Right and Wrong Questions about the Iraq War," *The Atlantic*, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/05/the-right-and-wrong-questions-about-the-iraq-war/393497/

[10] John Walcott, "What Donald Rumsfeld Knew We Didn't Know About Iraq," *Politico*, https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/01/iraq-war-wmds-donald-rumsfeld-new-report-213530

[11] *Ibid.* Council on Foreign Relations

powers were equivalent to that of a president, with elected members of Parliament providing checks and balances (although, some members of the Northern Alliance would have preferred the assembling of a Prime Ministership). A constitution for Afghanistan was adopted two years later in 2004, and by 2005 the executive and legislative powers of the country were all appointed by means of free and fair election.

Election officials in Kabul, 2004. David Guttenfelder/AP Images. https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan

Of course, ensuring the stability of the country would still require far more involvement from the international community than merely installing the government. The United States military attempted to take this next step by assembling "provincial reconstruction teams" (PRT's)[12] that would help to expand and enforce the power of the transition government – and for a while, this approach seemed to suffice. However, without a central authority to enforce and organize the actions of the PRT's, their capabilities became limited and it became clear the system couldn't sustain on its own in the long term.

Nevertheless, the United States and NATO maintained a strong presence in Afghanistan, albeit smaller than during the initial combat phases. As NATO expanded and took more control over ISAF, the number of deployed troops rose from 5,000 to 65,000 between the years of 2005 and 2006; Bush also declared a strategic partnership with Karzai, in the hopes of equipping Afghan security forces with the tools necessary to uphold the new democracy without Western involvement.[13] Unfortunately, no number of troops and no amount of aid seemed to be enough.

[12] *Ibid*. Council on Foreign Relations
[13] *Ibid.* Council on Foreign Relations

Despite the positive changes in administration, several institutional and infrastructural shortcomings continued to inhibit the holistic redevelopment of Afghanistan. For instance, according to expert Seth G. Jones, many Afghan civilians were deprived of basic services and the government had yet to establish a centralized police force.[14] This led to a resurgence of violence in protest of the new government, and even the U.N. and NATO aid officers. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, in 2007, accredited this rise in attacks to several NATO nations not pulling enough military weight: "Our progress in Afghanistan [is] fragile. Many allies are unwilling to share the risks, commit the resources, and follow through on collective commitments… As a result, we risk allowing what has been achieved in Afghanistan to slip away."[15]

For the remainder of the intervention in Afghanistan, which continued until 2020, the United States and its allies strove to prevent just that. The

Violence resurges in Afghanistan, 2006. Rodrigo Abd/AP Images. https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan

continuation of violence meant casualties mounted, including many civilians on either side. This, in turn, harmed the legitimacy of the new government and allowed for the slow shift of public opinion back toward the Taliban. President Barack Obama, upon taking office in 2009, responded by deploying 17,000 new troops to Afghanistan (amounting to a total of 37,000 U.S. and NATO soldiers in the region), a measure which Gates believed lacked direction and therefore would not be powerful enough. Even more troops were deployed that March to accommodate a major shift in U.S. strategy – namely, 1,000 were sent to Pakistan to prevent an influx of al-Qaeda members on the run, and another 4,000 were sent to Afghanistan to train the still-struggling police force.

[14] *Ibid.* Council on Foreign Relations
[15] *Ibid.* Council on Foreign Relations

NATO also allocated more funds and soldiers to these efforts, in the hopes it would suppress counterinsurgency (COIN) and finally stabilize Afghanistan once and for all.

Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl. https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/bowe-bergdahl-released/bowe-bergdahl-debriefs-were-intelligence-gold-mine-agents-say-n816286

Bowe Bergdahl: Capture

This is the point at which Bowe Bergdahl enters our picture. He enlisted in the army in early 2009, and was eventually assigned to a unit based at the Forward Operating Base (FOB) Sharana in the Paktika province of Afghanistan. Leading up to his capture, he was serving at an outpost called OP Mest.

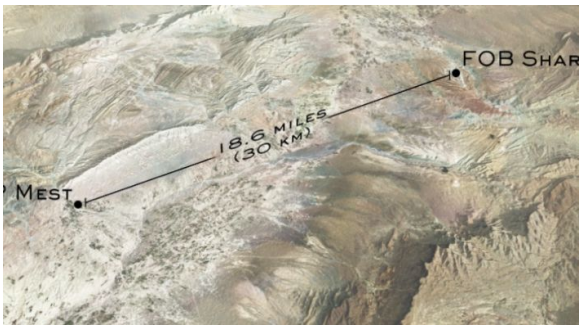
Recall that by 2009, the major combat phase of the Afghan War was long over, and the U.S. had shifted its approach toward facilitating reconstruction and maintaining stability. With that in mind, it's safe to say that Bowe and his platoon mates' at OP Mest were bored. They were stationed roughly 1,000 miles away from a hotspot of IEDs (improvised explosive devices), and their job, in the words of Sarah Koenig in *Serial*, was to "just be there, in the middle of nowhere, making their presence felt." More specifically, this meant keeping a constant eye out for snipers on rooftops, weapon transactions and other suspicious activity. However, according to Bowe, the only Afghan locals they came across were farmers or vendors.

The soldiers stationed at Mest dreaded the time they spent there, and many couldn't help but question whether their service was truly serving a purpose. Their frustration only grew

when on June 30, 2009, Bergdahl walked off his post without a word in the middle of the night. This triggered what is known as a DUSTWUN (short for Duty Status - Whereabouts Unknown).

Bowe's plan seemed technically feasible at first – he hoped to travel straight to FOB Sharana, which was packed with American soldiers and Afghan nationals. So, in order to pass through, he'd merely disguise himself in Afghan clothing and then reveal his uniform once he approached his final destination. Also worth noting is the relatively short distance between the two bases, only about 20 miles.

What Bowe failed to consider, however, was the severity of the consequences he'd undoubtably face for abandoning his men. Even if he turned around, there was no possibility of making it back before his superiors noticed he was missing. Not to mention, the sole purpose of OP Mest targeting potential intruders - if he suddenly reappeared, there was a chance he'd



The journey from OP Mest to FOB Sharana. https://serialpodcast.org/maps/fly-over-op-mest-and-fob-sharana

be inadvertently shot. Bearing this in mind, he decided to continue forward.

Bowe thought he could buy the sympathy and forgiveness of his superiors at FOB Sharana if he came to them with valuable information they could use against the Taliban. The best chance at this was to catch someone planting an IED along the roads between the FOB and the OP, report their whereabouts and prevent a few casualties. Only, after forgetting to check his compass for several hours, he drifted far off his original course and found himself in the open desert by the time the sun rose the next morning. It wasn't long before a group of Taliban-affiliated men approached him and seized him.

Bowe Bergdahl: Rescue

At first, the United States military responded to Bowe's DUSTWUN as they would have under any other circumstances. They immediately distributed pamphlets demanding his release, and had search teams set on securing his location both in Afghanistan and at home. But as time passed and the rescue mission became increasingly expensive and complex, controversy erupted across the United States.

Military pamphlet demanding Bowe Bergdahl's released. This side reads "If you do not release the American soldier," and the other reads "you will be hunted." https://serialpodcast.org/maps/army-leaflet

The primary issue was that the government and the public disagreed on what was worth risking in order to ensure Bowe's safe return, given the unique circumstances surrounding his capture. President Obama continually and publicly stressed the notion of "leave no man behind," and yet organizations like the NSA and CIA still did what they could to avoid the situation altogether. These mixed messages are ultimately what classify Bowe's rescue effort as a major failure – every stakeholder had a completely different idea of what an appropriate approach should look like, and therefore each took separate courses of action instead of working together.

The major players involved were the military, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the State Department and the Department of Defense (DoD) – each with their own agenda to protect. The people who cared the most and took the most action were part of a very small division under the DoD, a CENTCOM committee based in Tampa, Florida, dedicated to analyzing and solving military dilemmas. On the *Serial* podcast, many of the Tampa committee soldiers expressed great frustration with the lack of time and resources the higher-clearance organizations were willing to spend. At one point, they even

tried appealing to the Federal government for help, which only intensified the animosity.

Everyone involved in Bowe's rescue knew that they had to tread carefully, especially if they chose to negotiate with the Taliban - that is, they understood that accommodating any of their demands had the potential to completely derail the eight-year operation in Afghanistan that was already coming under scrutiny. Releasing Taliban prisoners from the Guantanamo Bay Detention center, for one, could risk the safety of American troops on the ground. Removing the Taliban from the official list of terrorist organizations would also be detrimental, in that it would separate Afghanistan from the U.S.' real target, al-Qaeda - and all in the name of one serviceman who deliberately endangered himself.

Finally, the United States had to consider the issue of optics in addition to security. After all, every decision they made would be perceived by the international community as a reflection of their determination to punish the perpetrators of 9/11 and win the War on Terror. In other words, the fear of appearing weak was a very legitimate one - whether it was before allies or before enemies.

President Barack Obama announces Bowe's release alongside his parents, Robert Bergdahl and Jani Bergdahl. https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2014/05/31/president-obama-welcomes-release-of-captured-u-s-soldier/

It took five years before, even in the midst of endless undercutting between the U.S. government bodies, the Taliban came to the table and slowly negotiated toward reconciliation (despite multiple setbacks). The final trade was executed by the United States DoD, who met secretly with the Taliban in Qatar and successfully traded him for 5 high-level Taliban men imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay (known as the Taliban Five). But even though

the ultimate goal had been achieved, internal conflict continued.

Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp in Cuba, where the Taliban five were held. https://time.com/3688995/u-s-guantanamo-bay-cuba-return/

For one, the DoD carried out the final deal with very little involvement of Congress, which bent government protocol and created even more distrust than there already was. Some officials also worried that the agreement failed to ensure that the Taliban Five could not endanger the lives of American troops. Finally, the fact that this was such a simple transaction, not part of a larger, multi-faceted peace deal, ruffled many feathers. That is, releasing five of the Taliban's most dangerous men may not have been too high a price if it meant creating peace and stability after 13 years of conflict, but it certainly was for one man – not to mention a deserter. In a sense, this provided the perfect, polarizing end to a polarizing story... almost.

Bowe Bergdahl (right) is released by the Taliban after five years in captivity. https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/06/taliban-video-shows-bergdahls-release/372118/

Current Situation

It is the week of June 30, 2009, and you have received word of Bowe Bergdahl's DUSTWUN - nothing is known about his rationale for walking away from OP Mest, except that it happened. You have all been called together to help launch an investigation into Bowe's whereabouts, in the hopes of returning him to the United States as soon as possible. Recall that all statements from Bergdahl documented in *Serial* or elsewhere do not exist yet.

There is already a mixed narrative circulating about Bowe among both the political world and the public world, one of which is painting him as a deserter deserving of the highest punishment.

This group has also voiced that searching for Bowe is a waste of military resources, and that his recovery is not worth risking the lives of the American soldiers he abandoned. Meanwhile, the other half of the country is begging the government and the

President Donald Trump calls Bowe Bergdahl a "dirty, rotten traitor." https://www.wsj.com/video/trump-bergdahl-a-dirty-rotten-traitor/F83D4013-58A3-4A8E-BE95-74DAC2A03BB1.html

military for compassion - citizens of Bergdahl's hometown in Hailey, Idaho, have even decorated their neighborhoods with yellow ribbons in solidarity. Both of these movements have grown increasingly vocal with every day that Bowe remains missing.

Regardless of what beliefs individual characters may hold regarding these polarizing subjects, President Barack Obama has already insisted that the rescue of Bowe Bergdahl move forward. It is your job to locate him and bring him home, whether that be by negotiating with the terrorist-sympathizing Taliban, expending resources on a military extraction, or both – and don't forget, the public is watching!

Questions to Consider

- Is there a way to extract Bowe Bergdahl without overly compromising resources and risking lives?
- What should be done about the alleged incompetence that led Bowe to abandon his post in the first place?
- Should the committee's plans be based on diplomatic negotiation or military extraction strategies?
- Can the United States find a way to both rescue Bowe and maintain its current role in the Middle East?
- What level of liability should the military face for Bowe's escape?

- How can/should the committee appease the divided public as it advances their mission?
- If rescued, how should Bowe be reintegrated into society amid the public backlash surrounding his actions?
- Should Bowe Bergdahl be punished for his actions? If yes, how so?

Characters

If you are familiar with the Serial podcast, you'll notice that most of these characters did not take part in the actual rescue of Bowe. While looking at the Serial podcasts may be helpful when it comes to understanding your character's perspective, the crisis staff will not necessarily be sticking to the script when deciding the direction of the committee - and neither should the delegates. We have brought together every stakeholder in such a way that never occurred in real life, which means more portfolio power and creative license for everyone... Take advantage of that!

Jason Amerine is described by *Serial* host Sarah Koenig as the G.I. Joe of Bowe Bergdahl's case. A veteran, he worked with a team of CENTCOM analysts that worked to "solve the military's dilemmas." Rescuing Bergdahl was at the top of his priority list. Frustrated with the lack of communication and coordination between the organizations involved – and the considerable delay of action that often resulted – Amerine turned to the Federal government (with the ultimate goal of involving the President) to help move the operation forward. Finally, he was a firm believer in the principle of leaving no man behind, and was willing to do almost anything to ensure that at the very least, Bergdahl would not be forgotten.

Hillary Clinton was Secretary of State during Bowe Bergdahl's capture in 2009. The State Department was among the organizations that were hesitant to become heavily involved in his rescue, and they definitely would have striven for as swift a recovery as

possible. Not to mention, as we know, Clinton had future political ambitions of her own to think about. She defended the deal that ultimately freed Bergdahl, even though some criticized that it wasn't comprehensive enough.

Michael Flynn was serving in Afghanistan as ISAF's Director of Intelligence when Bowe Bergdahl went missing, making him our committee's eyes and ears on the ground. When it came to the rescue mission, Flynn held fast to the notion of "leave no man behind." However, it often seemed he did this reluctantly – he always condemned Bowe's actions and pushed for his prosecution upon release, and frequently made a point to emphasize the dangers and damage caused by the operation in a public way (even if it meant twisting the truth at times, as explained in the *Serial* podcast). This included suggesting that soldiers lost their lives as a direct consequence of Bowe's actions, though this claim was disputed. The easiest explanation for this is that shifting blame onto Bowe would help him avoid accountability for the DUSTWUN. After all, Flynn's hopes of climbing up the political ladder depended on it.

Robert Gates was Secretary of Defense in 2009. While the Department of Defense was also skeptical about investing in Bergdahl's rescue, Gates would have preferred a prolonged effort if it meant maximizing the safety of everyone involved. He criticized the release of Taliban Five from GITMO, saying the prisoners posed threats to U.S. and NATO troops on the ground that was "too high a price" for bringing Bowe home.

Marc Grossman is a seasoned diplomat with much firsthand experience with foreign affairs. By 2009, he had served as the United States Ambassador to Turkey, Director-General of the Foreign Service, and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. He replaced Richard Holbrooke as the United States' SRAP in 2012 (Holbrooke died while negotiations with the Taliban were still in motion). Grossman had hoped to

craft a deal with the Taliban that would not only bring Bowe Bergdahl home, but also facilitate positive political progress in Afghanistan in the long term.

Richard Holbrooke was a talented diplomat who worked under President Obama and Secretary Clinton as the very first Special Advisor on Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP). During the search for Bowe Bergdahl, he played an active role in negotiating his return with the Taliban. Holbrooke is also well-known for his belief that conflicts should be resolved diplomatically by any means possible, rather than forcefully.

Maj. Margaret Kurtz was a lawyer assigned to prosecute Bowe on behalf of the United States military. While she appreciated the complexities of Bowe's situation as much as anyone, she believed that Bowe should be held strongly accountable for his desertion of his post. In terms of our rescue committee, this likely means she would have opposed a forgiving approach to Bowe's reintegration to society upon rescue – and that she would have been on the lookout for information that could help her advance her case.

Robert Mueller was Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 2009, and strongly believed that hostage recovery lay in his domain, not the military's. Likely, he was just as interested in reaffirming the FBI's worth as he was in ensuring Bowe Bergdahl's safe return. Meanwhile, it of course remained Mueller's (and the FBI's) responsibility to deal with any domestic friction that was generated in the heat of Bergdahl's capture.

Leon Panetta directed the CIA during the Bowe Bergdahl incident. Also a former soldier, he was dedicated to bringing Bowe home no matter the circumstances that led to his capture. He also criticized the trade-off agreement that freed the Taliban Five as careless and dangerous. So while he may have been willing to risk slightly more than others to ensure Bergdahl's safe return, securing the safety for the

most people was always high on the priority list for Panetta.

David Petraeus is a former Director of the CIA, and headed the ISAF initiative for much of the duration of Bowe's capture, and was appointed after an article revealed that his predecessor questioned the Obama administration's handling of the War in Afghanistan. Petraeus was also known for being an interventionist, contrary to the views of figures like Holbrooke. Throughout his career, he advocated for an increased United States presence both in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

Susan Rice was the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. in 2009 and a national security advisor to President Obama. While she expressed the belief that Bowe should be held accountable for his actions, she also urged people to wait to hear Bowe's side of the story before coming to a preemptive conclusion. In doing this, she hoped to ensure that the Obama administration could flexibly search for Bowe as it saw fit, unrestricted by the contradicting opinions of the masses.

David Rohde is a writer and former prisoner of the Taliban, captured while conducting research for a book about Afghanistan. He escaped just months before Bowe Bergdahl was taken. He is a renowned journalist, made even more famous by the story of his captivity, and therefore will have the ear of many major news outlets. He is a valuable asset to the committee because he can also offer a unique perspective on Bowe's situation that may help the committee as they try to track him down.

****Each of these characters represent larger organizations with agendas of their own. In this crisis committee, it is your job to craft solutions that serve both Bowe's interests and yours.*

Glossary

al-Qaeda U.N.-declared terrorism organization responsible for 9/11 attacks on the United States.

Barack Obama President of the United States during Bowe Bergdahl's capture and rescue.

The Bonn Agreement established Hamid Karzai as the head of the interim Afghan government outlined in U.N. Resolution 1378. Representatives from various Afghan factions participated.

Bowe Bergdahl American prisoner of War, held hostage by the Afghan Haqqani network for five years.

FOB Sharana forward-operating base for the U.S. military (specifically Bergdahl's unit), and Bowe Bergdahl's destination when he walked off his post.

George W. Bush President of the United States in the beginning of the War with Afghanistan.

ISAF the name for the U.S. and NATO led mission in Afghanistan during the War.

NATO the North- Atlantic Treaty Organization, a collective defense alliance between much of Europe and the United States. Leaders of the ISAF initiative.

Northern Alliance assembled after the Taliban's 1996 overtake of the Afghan government. Based internally in Afghanistan, but allied with India, Iran, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and the United States. Also referred to as the "Afghan Northern Alliance" or the "United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan."

OP Mest one of Bowe Bergdahl's outposts, and the starting point of his intended escape to FOB Sharana in 2009.

Osama bin Laden the mastermind behind the al-Qaeda attacks on 9/11, and a primary target during the U.S. War in Afghanistan.

Pashtun are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, constituting nearly one-half of the country's total population.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) task forces of military officers,

diplomats and other experts who facilitated and supported reconstruction projects in unstable regions (Afghanistan).

Taliban an Islamist political group who had control over the Afghan government during the War in Afghanistan (and fought to sustain their control during the entirety of the war effort). Provided safe operating bases for al-Qaeda during the period of the 9/11 attacks. Also known as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

U.N. Resolution 1378 called for the installation of an interim administration in Afghanistan (with Hamid Karzai serving as the leader) and the deployment of peacekeeping forces to Kabul to maintain stability and distribute aid packages. Initiated in November of 2001.

Resources for Delegates

Army Organization Chart: https://serialpodcast.org/maps/army-org-chart

Interactive map of Afghanistan: https://serialpodcast.org/maps/afghanistan-a-sense-of-place#sceneButton4

Serial episodes and other related material: https://serialpodcast.org/season-two/listening-guide

Serial episode 1 transcript (Bowe's DUSTWUN): https://serialpodcast.org/season-two/1/dustwun/transcript

Serial episode 10 transcript ("Thorny Politics"): https://serialpodcast.org/season-two/10/thorny-politics/transcript

Timeline of War in Afghanistan: https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan

War Diaries of early days following Bowe's capture: https://wardiaries.wikileaks.org/id/36261792-F927-5439-D51D126F3051823D/

****feel free to reach out to me if you are struggling to find resources with information on your character*

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