



Written by [D. Michael DeRidder](#) on August 1, 2024

U.S. and Russia Agree to Release Detainees in Prisoner Swap

The United States and Russia have [reached an agreement to exchange detainees](#) in a 24-person prisoner swap. President Joe Biden announced the Americans that were being held in Russia had begun their travel back to the United States, [stating on X](#):

After enduring unimaginable suffering and uncertainty, the Americans detained in Russia are safe, free, and have begun their journeys back into the arms of their families.



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In a statement following the announcement of the prisoner-swap agreement, Vice President Kamala Harris mentioned Alexei Navalny, and his widow Yulia, and said the U.S. stands with Russians fighting for freedom, stating:

We never stopped fighting for their release. And today in spite of all of their suffering it gives me great comfort to know that their horrible ordeal is finally over, this exchange also includes the release of Russian political prisoners, including those who worked with Alexei Navalny. Earlier today I spoke with Alexei's widow Yulia to discuss the significance of their release, and as I told her, this being an additional time from previous conversations with her, the United States stands with all of those who are fighting for freedom in Russia.

The three U.S. citizens who are part of the agreement are Evan Gershkovich, a reporter for *The Wall Street Journal* who was [arrested on March 29, 2023](#) by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), Alsu Kurmasheva, a Russian-American radio journalist who was [arrested on October 18, 2023](#), and Paul Whelan, a U.S., British, Canadian, and Irish citizen who was [arrested on December 28, 2018](#).

Despite the fact that two of the three U.S. citizens in the prisoner swap were detained by Russia during the Biden-Harris administration, Biden responded to former President Donald Trump's criticism of the deal by asking why the former president did not reach the agreement while in office, stating, "Why didn't he do it when he was president?"



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