

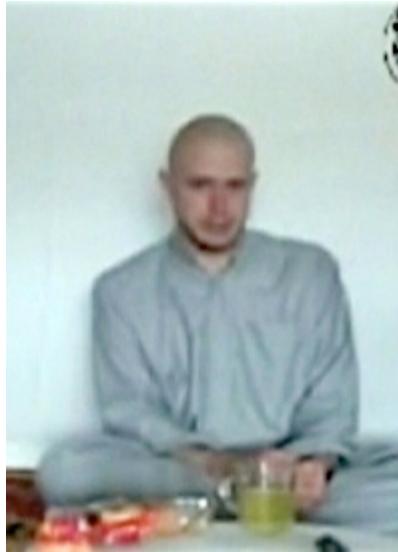


Written by [Mary McHugh](#) on August 24, 2010

Pentagon Denounces Taliban Claims About PFC Bergdahl

According to one of his captors and Afghan intelligence officials, missing U.S. Army Private Bowe Bergdahl of Hailey, Idaho, has become a Muslim and is training Taliban fighters in bomb-making and ambush skills.

However, the [Fox News](#) website quotes U.S. Military spokesman Lt. Col. John Dorrian as denouncing this report about the prisoner of war, saying, "The Taliban spokesmen are notorious for their puffery, and for exploiting captives through propaganda. We condemn his kidnapping and demand SPC Bergdahl's immediate release by his captors. The perpetrators responsible for SPC Bergdahl's abduction will be brought to justice if anything happens to him."



The [Idaho State Journal](#) reported that "... veterans and active duty personnel, as well as Bergdahl's parents in Hailey, won't speak on the record because they're afraid their words could jeopardize Bergdahl's safety. But privately, many of them believe anything Bergdahl says or does while in captivity should be viewed as coerced." Other military groups agree, calling the news "cruel propaganda."

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Private Bergdahl, 24, was based in eastern Afghanistan as part of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment and is believed the only U.S. serviceman in captivity. He left his observation post in Paktika's Yahya Khel district on June 20, 2009 accompanied by an Afghan soldier. They were observed entering a village near the bazaar at Sharan. When informed of this, eight Taliban gunmen in a nearby field ambushed them. The Afghan with Bergdahl attempted to fire his gun but was himself shot and instantly killed. Though Bergdahl signaled surrender by raising his hands, one of the Taliban members hit him with the butt of his rifle across the face and forced him to the ground. He was dragged into a compound where he was kicked in the chest, had his weapon taken, and was then ordered to remove his uniform and bulletproof vest. It was feared that he might have been "bugged" in such a way as to reveal their location via technology. Their Taliban commander in the Mota Khan district was radioed and informed of what had taken place.

Haji Nadeem, who claims to be Taliban deputy district commander in Paktika, informed the U.K.'s [Sunday Times/Daily Mail](#) that next, "My commander told them not to kill the American. He told them to feed him, hide him and he said take everything that he has on his body and throw it away. Don't even leave him with a small nail because it could be used to show your location."

Private Bergdahl was given traditional Afghan clothing to wear and his belongings and clothing were disposed of. When he missed roll call the next morning, predator drones and dog teams began looking for him. Confirmation that he was a prisoner eventually came when radio chatter was intercepted.

According to Nadeem, "Some of my comrades think he's pretending to be a Muslim to save himself so



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they wouldn't behead him." He claims Bergdahl is now "very relaxed in our company" and has taken the name Abdullah. Three videos of the missing private have been released, including one at Christmastime. In April a disturbing, seven-minute video (below) of the POW followed. In this he speaks haltingly, has a beard and also is shown doing push-ups to demonstrate the state of his health.

It is the thought of author and film maker Robert Young Pelton, when interviewed on Fox News' Studio B with Shepard Smith on Monday, August 23, that the Taliban is hoping to exchange Bergdahl with the U.S. for a large sum and/or high profile prisoners. Pelton has been involved in search attempts to locate the missing private, now believed in Pakistan, and doubts the truth of Taliban and Afghan officials' assertions that Bergdahl has converted to Islam and is helping to train his captors.

Photo: Pfc. Bowe R. Bergdahl of Ketchum, Idaho is shown in this video frame grab taken from a Taliban propaganda video released on July 18, 2009: AP Images



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