

Pro-Iranian kidnappers free American hostage

DAMASCUS, Syria - Pro-Iranian kidnappers freed American hostage Robert Polhill in Beirut on Sunday after nearly 39 months of captivity. He was the first American hostage to be released in nearly 3 1/2 years.

The White House said a U.S. plane would take Polhill to West Germany for debriefing and a medical exam before he returns to the United States. Spokesman Marlin Fitzwater thanked Iran and Syria for their roles in the release.

"I'm very happy and grateful to all the people who spent time on my case," Polhill said in a Syrian TV interview. But he added: "I'm still deeply concerned about my two friends and others who are still held in the conditions I was held in."

Seventeen Western hostages remain in Lebanon, including seven Americans.

Polhill, 55, of New York was freed near the seaside Summerland Hotel in Moslem west Beirut at 5:15 p.m. (11:15 a.m. EDT) and driven immediately to Damascus. He was to be handed over to U.S. Ambassador Edward Djerejian at the Foreign

Ministry, Syrian sources said. Terms of the release, which followed a series of communiqués from the Shiite Moslem kidnappers, were not known.

Polhill's mother, Ruth Polhill of Fishkill, N.Y., was overjoyed at the

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Polhill released hostage

release and said she hoped to see her son when he returns to the United States.

"Maybe I'll have control of myself by that time," she told CNN.

Guards outside the Summerland who witnessed the release said Polhill appeared thin and hunched as he

stepped out of a car that screeched to a halt in a street about 50 yards from the hotel.

He was immediately picked up by a three-car Syrian convoy and driven off at high speed.

The Syrian TV footage showed Polhill being driven through Beirut, sitting in the back of a car and puffing heavily on a cigarette. He appeared drawn after his long ordeal and smiled wanly several times.

Polhill, a professor of business studies and accounting at Beirut University College, was one of three American educators held by the pro-Iranian Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine since Jan. 24, 1987.

The other two are Alann Steen, a native of Boston who turned 51 on Sunday, and Jesse Turner, 42, of Boise, Idaho. The three were kidnapped from the Beirut University College campus by gunmen disguised as police officers.

The last American hostage to be freed was David Jacobsen, former director of the American University Hospital in Beirut. He was kidnapped in Beirut May 28, 1985, was released

Nov. 2, 1986.

He had been held by another Shiite faction, Islamic Jihad, or Islamic Holy War.

Indian-born U.S. resident Mitleshwar Singh was released Oct. 3, 1988.

Polhill's Lebanese wife, Feryal, went to Damascus from Beirut after the kidnappers said Wednesday that they would release one hostage. It was not known whether they had been reunited.

In Libya on Sunday, Col. Moammar Gadhafi called for the release of hostages in an appeal to Moslems around the world, the official Libyan news agency JANA said in a dispatch about an hour after the reported release.

"I urge, once again, all those who are holding hostages to release them in fulfillment and application of the tolerant Islamic principles," the agency quoted Gadhafi as saying.

In Islamorada, Fla., where President Bush is vacationing, Fitzwater said the United States called on "all parties" to free the remaining hostages.

Word that a hostage would be freed first surfaced Wednesday, when the kidnappers announced they would release one of the three hostages in 48 hours.

But on Thursday, the captors indefinitely postponed the release after President Bush refused to send John Kelly, assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs, to Damascus as the kidnappers had demanded.

Hours before Sunday's reported release, the captors released a third statement, saying they would free one of the American educators within 24 hours.

The communique cited "energetic mediation" by Iran and Syria, Tehran's main Arab ally, to prevent the promised release from collapsing.

The longest held Western hostage is Terry Anderson, chief Middle East correspondent for The Associated Press, who was kidnapped March 16, 1985.

On Saturday, an Iranian newspaper close to Iran's president said the first release could lead to another release by another pro-Iranian group. It did not identify the group.

Soviet official denies total blockade

VILNIUS, U.S.S.R. - A top Communist official from Moscow said Sunday the Lithuanian independence movement is leading the republic to catastrophe, and denied the Kremlin has imposed a total economic blockade.

The Sajudis independence movement, whose leaders dominate Lithuania's government, declared its determination to stand by the March 11 declaration of independence.

In neighboring Latvia, meanwhile, the drive for independence received a show of support in a rally attended by 8,086 of the 16,000 newly elected members of city councils, regional bodies and the republic's parliament, a journalist reported. Only 307 people attended a nearby meeting of a group opposing Latvian independence.

The streets of Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, were calm, with people walking rather than using cars as they coped with stringent gasoline rationing that permits about 7 gallons per month for private cars.

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia all are trying to restore the independence they lost in 1940 when they were occupied and forcibly annexed to the Soviet Union. Lithuania has declared

independence, Estonia has dropped enforcement of the Soviet Constitution, and Latvia is expected to declare its freedom from the Soviet Union on May 3.

Lithuanian Deputy Premier Romualdas Ozolas charged Saturday that the Kremlin was implementing a full economic embargo, halting all rail and truck traffic to the tiny republic.

Lithuanian officials also said numerous shipments of food, metals, wood, chemicals and parts had not arrived as scheduled, and payments to Lithuanian businesses have been halted.

Ozolas told reporters that Lithuanian ports have already stopped loading goods for exports.

On Sunday, the Lithuanian government sent a telegram to Soviet Premier Nikolai Ryzhkov saying that the Soviet cut-off of fuel and raw materials would choke Lithuanian processing and manufacturing of goods meant for export and the Soviet market.

The government telegram said production of oil and gas products, chemicals, plastics, compressors, automobile brake systems, television

screens, and other components would soon have to be halted.

The republic depends entirely on Soviet resources at subsidized prices.

Andrei Girenko, a secretary of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee, said Sunday that Lithuania's declaration of independence March 11 meant a loss of preferred prices and favorable trade conditions.

"This would sharply, catastrophically affect the republic's affairs and the living standards of its people," he said during a visit to Vilnius.

He denied Moscow had imposed a total economic boycott, saying that only oil and natural gas were affected.

"This is only a small part of the products that are supplied," he said. "Plans for a total blockade don't exist."

The Soviet decision to cut off all of Lithuania's oil supply and nearly all of its natural gas is expected to put 70 percent of the republic's work force out of work.

Girenko was in Vilnius to attend a meeting of the minority Communist Party faction that remains loyal to Moscow. The faction counts 37,000 of the 200,000 Lithuanian Communists as its members.

He said he still believes common sense will prevail in the war of wills between the Kremlin and Vilnius, but reiterated the Soviet demand that Lithuania must back off of its declaration of independence and follow the new Soviet secession law.

Activists reject this, saying the new law is designed to make it impossible for any republic to leave the Soviet Union.

The Sajudis independence movement also was meeting Sunday. It accused the Kremlin of attempting to use economic means to turn Lithuanians against the drive for independence.

"The Soviet Union seeks to deal a blow to the daily existence of every person, hoping that we shall be overpowered by our material interests," the declaration said.

Vilnius residents strolled in a warm spring sunshine to the Roman Catholic cathedral Sunday to pray for their republic, and said they would endure shortages and other forms of pressure.

"I prayed that my children grow up not like I grew up, so they are not afraid to say whether or not they believe," said Dalia Seselgiene, leaving the cathedral with her two small children.

In Latvia, the 9,000 elected officials meeting in Riga's Daugava Stadium adopted an appeal for the parliament to consider restoring the independence of Latvia "without delay in its first session," journalist Boris Kolesnikov reported.

CRIME RATES			
According to bi-annual nationwide surveys by the Justice Department between 1979 and 1986...			
BLACKS	robbery	RATE *	13
	INJURY RATE OF VICTIMS		28%
	SEVERE INJURY RATE OF VICTIMS		61%
	assault	RATE *	5
WHITES	robbery	RATE *	16
	INJURY RATE OF VICTIMS		34%
	SEVERE INJURY RATE OF VICTIMS		41%
	assault	RATE *	14
SIMPLE VICTIMS OF *			19
AGGRAVATED RATE *			9
VICTIMS OF			48%
INJURY RATE OF VICTIMS			24%
VICTIMS OF			41%
INJURY RATE OF VICTIMS			16%

*per 1,000 people Andy Manhart/Daily Nebraskan

Blacks found more likely to suffer assault, robbery

WASHINGTON - Blacks are more likely than whites to be victims of rape or aggravated assault and are more than twice as likely to be robbery victims, according to a federal study released Sunday.

The rate of such violent crimes occurring against black Americans age 12 or older was 44 per 1,000 compared with 34 per 1,000 whites in the same age group, according to data collected by the Justice Department's National Crime Survey between 1979 and 1986.

There were 13 robberies per 1,000 blacks during the seven-year period, compared with five robberies per 1,000 whites, the study said. The rate of aggravated assaults was 14 per 1,000 blacks and 9 per 1,000 whites.

Whites were more likely to be victims of simple assault with a rate of 19 per 1,000 compared to 16 simple assaults per 1,000 blacks.

Blacks were more likely to be physically attacked or threatened with violence than whites during the commission of a crime, the study said.

Among victims of aggravated assault, 48 percent were black, while 41 percent were white.

In addition, blacks were more likely to be attacked by someone holding a knife, gun or some other weapon.

The statistics gathered from the survey showed that 48 percent of black victims of violent crimes reported facing an armed attacker, compared with 33 percent of the white victims

of those crimes.

The injury rate for black victims of aggravated assault also was higher than whites. Twenty-four percent of black victims, compared with 16 percent of whites, sustained serious injuries such as knife wounds, bullet wounds or broken bones.

Whites were more likely to be attacked and injured during robberies than blacks. Thirty-four percent of white robbery victims were injured, compared with 28 percent of blacks.

But blacks were more likely to be severely injured. Sixty-one percent of black victims who were injured received medical treatment, compared with 46 percent of injured white victims.

The overnight hospitalization rate for injured black victims was 8 percent, compared with 4 percent among whites.

The data was collected from the nationwide survey of 50,000 households conducted every six months by the department. Members of each household are asked if they have been victims of crimes during the previous six months.

The survey does not include murder statistics. But the report contained FBI crime statistics for 1986 showing that the murder rate among blacks was 31.2 per 100,000 compared with 5.4 per 100,000 whites.

The rate among black males was 52.3 per 100,000 compared with 7.9 per 100,000 white men.

Dole and Foley unhappy with Gorbachev's actions

WASHINGTON - Many lawmakers are having second thoughts about Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev because of his stance on Lithuania and may block trade agreements that Moscow wants, two congressional leaders said Sunday.

Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan., and House Majority Leader Thomas Foley, D-Wash., said the United States shouldn't do any economic favors for Gorbachev as long as he continues to punish the breakaway Baltic republic.

Dole said there is disillusionment with Gorbachev, who has espoused the Soviet policies of perestroika and glasnost, because of his tactics on Lithuania.

Moscow reportedly has shut off oil and gas supplies and intercepted food to Lithuania in an attempt to force Lithuanian officials to rescind a declaration of independence.

"I think right now a lot of us have put him on hold... now he is backtracking on Lithuania," Dole said. "And a lot of us are having second thoughts."

President Bush has been treading cautiously on the Lithuania issue, but he has indicated he may try to

make Gorbachev pay an economic price for cracking down on Lithuania.

Marlin Fitzwater, Bush's spokesman, has said the president will announce what he plans to do about Lithuania this week after meeting with members of Congress.

Both Dole and Foley, appearing on ABC-TV's "This Week With David Brinkley," said strains over Lithuania shouldn't derail the U.S.-Soviet arms control summit set for next month.

"The summit ought to continue at this point," Foley said. Added Dole: "If it's in our interest, let's proceed."

The congressional leaders said, however, that Congress might stop trade agreements that Gorbachev wants to help pump up his country's sagging economy.

"Anything that benefits the Soviet Union, we ought to slow-walk it," Dole said.

Both men said it would be virtually impossible for the United States to provide direct aid to Lithuania. Any shipments of oil would be stopped by the Soviet navy in the Baltic Sea, and an airlift would be difficult to carry out.

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