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## **Plan to Provide a Status Report on the Implementation of the Hostage Recovery Activities Executive Order**

*“Within one year of the date of this order, the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, in consultation with the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Attorney General, and Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, shall provide a status report to the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism on the implementation of this order. The report shall be informed by consultation with stakeholders outside of the U.S. Government and shall, to the extent possible, be made available to the public.”* (Executive Order 13698, Hostage Recovery Activities, 24 June 2015)

This document outlines a plan to provide a status report (hereafter “assessment”) on the implementation of Presidential Policy Directive 30 and the Hostage Recovery Activities Executive Order (EO) 13698, which identifies NCTC as the lead for this task. This plan describes NCTC’s general approach, timeline, list of potential interviewees, and EO tasks that will be assessed and the corresponding draft Measures of Effect (MoE).

### **Assessment Lead and Approach**

NCTC’s Directorate of Strategic Operational Planning (DSOP) will take the lead on drafting the assessment, with support from other elements of NCTC as necessary. DSOP will work closely with the Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell (HRFC) on the development of this assessment and the coordination of discussions with other agencies, organizations and individuals internal or external to the U.S. government.

#### How NCTC/DSOP will develop the assessment

DSOP’s assessment process follows standard qualitative research methods that are grounded in traditional social-science research protocols, the assessment uses focused, semi-structured interviews designed to remove bias from the process. The assessment team will identify the key areas supporting or minimizing progress against policy objectives or areas identified as weaknesses in the past. Once the information is collected, DSOP assessment officers synthesize information from a variety of sources to reach a qualitative judgment on the overall impact of USG efforts, in the process identifying impediments to progress and determining actions that are generating the most effect. In this way, the assessment will attempt to resolve the impact of the changes in policy articulated through EO 13698 and PPD-30 while also considering progress against the implied desired objectives for this implementation process.

Therefore, DSOP proposes a series of Measures of Effect (MoEs) that are based upon the guidance contained in the PPD 30 and EO 13698. The MoEs are designed to ensure that the report will assess a variety of cross-cutting issues. These issues include assessing how the USG approaches private efforts and differentiates between detainee and hostage cases, and the effectiveness of declassification efforts.

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Monitoring of MoEs (and any associated tasks and MoPs) for the HRFC, the HRG, and the Special Envoy will provide data to calibrate progress and assist in determining how much impact has occurred.

Upon completion of the draft assessment, DSOP's finding, recommendations, and supporting analysis will be fully coordinated across the interagency. Those individuals who were interviewed will be given a chance to provide additional data, provide suggested refinements for the analysis, and provide concurrence or dissent. The final assessment provides policymakers with a substantive, evidence-based analysis of USG actions and impact in hostage-taking situations, complete with recommendations to make Hostage recovery activities more effective.

### **Proposed Interviews**

DSOP has identified the following initial list, but expects to make modifications to include other relevant stakeholders as needed, based upon discussion with the agencies and other interested parties.

- Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell
  - **Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs**
  - **External Outreach Coordinator**
  - **Director, FBI**
  - **Deputy Director, State**
  - **Deputy Director, DOD**
- Office of the Director of National Intelligence/Issue Manager for Hostage Affairs
- Hostage Recovery Group
  - **HRG Lead**
  - **Dept of State**
  - **Dept of Treasury**
  - **Dept of Defense/Joint Staff**
  - **Dept of Justice**
  - **FBI**
  - **NCTC**
  - **Family Engagement Coordinator**
  - **CIA**
  - **NSA**
- Families of current and former hostages
- NGOs that provide support to families or other organizations identified by the agencies
- Other Departments that contribute to the HRFC

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## Process

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Begin initial research and data collection</li><li>• Initiate discussion with NSC CT staff</li><li>• Initiate formal assessment process by identifying key POCs</li><li>• Begin preliminary discussions of the 5Ws associated with the assessment process</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Begin comprehensive assessment against MoEs</li><li>• Conduct interviews with Executive Branch officials</li><li>• Identify additional POCs for interviews</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop first draft of assessment</li><li>• Conduct additional interviews and/or request follow-up information as necessary</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First round of coordination conducted with POCs who were interviewed as well as senior leaders of the HRFC</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adjudicate interagency comments</li><li>• Resolve issues and request HRFC to update MoPs status (the MoPs will be updated through a separate process)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Final coordination round conducted with POCs who were interviewed</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Final delivery of assessment to the NSC</li></ul>

### **Executive Order-based Tasks and their associated Measures of Effect (MoE)**

The primary purpose of the MoE is to assess progress against the implied end states and objectives by establishing trend lines and monitoring the status of implementation as reflected by the list of tasks outlined in the Executive Order. The MoEs detailed below are initial working examples identified by DSOP; additional MoEs may be developed as needed, based upon discussion with the agencies and other interested parties.

#### Establish the Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell

- Identify and recommend hostage recovery options and strategies to the President through the National Security Council.
  - MOE: The HRFC has identified and recommended recovery options and strategies that are appropriate, executable, delivered to the NSC in a timely manner and enhance the effectiveness of recovery operations.
  - MOE: The strategies put forward by the HRFC and approved by the HRG have led to demonstrated progress in freeing U.S. nationals from captivity, to the extent that external circumstances allow.
- Coordinate efforts by participating departments and agencies to ensure that information regarding hostage events, including potential recovery options and engagements with families and external actors, is appropriately shared within the U.S. Government to facilitate a coordinated response to a hostage-taking.

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- MOE: Departments and agencies believe guidance regarding prioritization, coordination and information sharing is clearer and contains fewer frictions points than were noted previously.
- MOE: Departments and agencies are actively contributing information analysis and capabilities as appropriate in the recovery strategy and recovery operation phases and these contributions have increased the success rate for recoveries.
- MOE: Engagements with families, employers and intermediaries are well coordinated across the government. Discussions with external stakeholders are consistent and non-contradictory and result in a perception that these efforts improve the understanding of the situation by these individuals and organizations.
- Assess and track all hostage takings of U.S. nationals abroad and provide regular reports to the President through the National Security Council on the status of such cases and any measures being taken toward the hostages' safe recovery.
  - MOE: Current guidance and implementation protocols allow the HRFC to appropriately assess, track and prioritize hostage cases and report to the NSC on these cases in a timely manner.
- Provide a forum for intelligence sharing and, with the support of the Director of National Intelligence, coordinate the declassification of relevant information and provide synchronized intelligence support to the HRFC.
  - MOE: Coordination efforts and information sharing protocols established by the HRFC are being followed, resulting in improved support and assistance to hostages and their families in line with U.S. policy.
- Make recommendations to executive departments and agencies in order to reduce the likelihood of U.S. nationals being taken hostage abroad and enhance U.S. Government preparation to maximize the probability of a favorable outcome following a hostage-taking.
  - MOE: HRFC is proactive in making recommendations to relevant departments and agencies; the information is being used to reduce the risk of additional hostage takings and support USG efforts to achieve favorable outcomes following a hostage taking.
- Coordinate with executive departments and agencies regarding congressional, media, and other public inquiries pertaining to hostage events.
  - MOE: Executive departments and agencies believe that the HRFC is coordinating responses to congressional, media and other public inquiries, and these efforts have improved the unity of the overall message to the outside world.
  - MOE: Executive agencies and Congressional offices report that information with each other is shared in a timely and accurate manner, resulting in improved communication overall and coordinated responses to inquiries regarding the HRFC and individual cases.
- Ensure that all interactions with a hostage's family occur in a coordinated fashion and that the family receives consistent and accurate information from the United States Government.
  - MOE: The makeup of the Family Engagement Team and its interactions with hostage's families is standardized to the extent possible, resulting in interactions with families that are regular and collaborative and demonstrate continuity.

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- MOE: Families are well integrated into the strategy development process and receive timely and relevant information updates.
- Provide coordinated and consistent messages to the families of hostages; families receive appropriate assistance and support services.
  - MOE: The HRFC, in coordination with the IC and the Family Engagement Coordinator, work to understand families' informational needs and regularly, proactively declassify information as appropriate, resulting in the sharing of as much relevant information as possible with families.
  - MOE: In accordance with the family's wishes, available USG and non-USG support services are clearly and consistently explained, with the result that families are able to access these services when needed and are referred to appropriate resources, which could include non-governmental assistance organizations, private providers and other government providers.

#### Establish the Hostage Response Group

- Identify and recommend hostage recovery options and strategies to the President through the National Security Council.
  - MOE: The HRG, with input from the HRFC, has identified and recommended any recovery option strategies and elevated recommendations that are appropriate, executable and are delivered to the President and/or other senior policy officials in a timely manner.
- Coordinate the development and implementation of U.S. hostage recovery policies, strategies, and procedures, consistent with the policies set forth in PPD-30.
  - MOE: The stand-up of the HRG, the HRFC and other organizations identified in the PPD-30 and Executive Order 13698 has resulted in improved U.S. capability to recover hostages safely where viable recovery options consistent with PPD-30 exist and to address the cases in a systematic manner that improves consistency in addressing family concerns.
- Receive regular updates from the HRFC on the status of U.S. nationals being held hostage abroad and measures being taken to effect the hostages' safe recovery.
  - MOE: The HRG has held meetings to receive, review and provide appropriate feedback and recommendations to the HRFC in a consistent and timely manner.
  - MOE: The Family Engagement Coordinator is a full contributing member of the HRG and is able to express family interests in HRG discussions.
- Coordinate the provision of policy guidance to the HRFC, including reviewing any recovery options proposed by the HRFC and working to resolve disputes within the HRFC.
  - MOE: The HRG is able to receive, review and provide appropriate feedback and recommendations to the HRFC in a consistent and timely manner.
- Where high-level guidance is required, make recommendations to the Deputies Committee.
  - MOE: When possible, the HRG resolves issues and provides policy guidance that delegates operational responsibility to the lowest level possible for execution. When necessary and appropriate, the HRG elevates issues to the Deputies Committee on issues that cannot be resolved otherwise.

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#### Establish the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs

- Coordinate all diplomatic engagements in support of hostage recovery efforts, in coordination with the HRFC and consistent with policy guidance communicated through the HRG.
  - MOE: In support of hostage recovery efforts, the Special Envoy appropriately coordinates all diplomatic engagement, ensuring that those engagements are supported by and coordinated with the HRFC. Departments and agencies believe this effort has improved their understanding of the diplomatic engagement portion of recovery strategies.
- Lead diplomatic engagement on U.S. hostage policy.
  - MOE: The Special Presidential Envoy, with input from relevant department and agencies, leads diplomatic engagement with foreign partners, which includes ensuring that information is appropriately shared both with foreign partners and within the USG.
- Coordinate with the HRFC proposals for diplomatic engagements and strategy in support of hostage recovery efforts.
  - MOE: The Special Presidential Envoy's Office is appropriately coordinating with the HRFC on proposals for diplomatic engagements and strategy. The HRFC believes they have sufficient insight to conduct their respective duties and the net result is a more effective and unified USG approach.
- Provide senior representation from the Special Presidential Envoy's Office to the HRFC and in the HRG.
  - MOE: The HRG and the HRFC have been consistently provided with appropriate senior representation from the Special Presidential Envoy's Office and these individuals have been able to provide insight that enhances coordination and integration of effort.

#### **Executive Order and PPD 30 - based Tasks for Departments and Agencies and their associated Measures of Effect (MoE)**

Each Department and Agency is required, per the EO and PPD-30, to fulfill specific tasks. Those tasks are detailed below.

##### Department of State

- Participate in the Hostage Response Group as a regular member.
- Participate in the HRFC as a regular member.
- Leverage appropriate intelligence support to pursue diplomatic, military, and law enforcement actions in response to a hostage-taking.
- Engage with foreign governments to seek commitments to punish hostage-takers and their aiders and abettors.
- Work to develop the capacity of partner nations through technical assistance and training in best practices, to collect intelligence for use in hostage recovery efforts while preserving, when possible, opportunities for a criminal prosecution by the United States or the relevant nation.

##### Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs

- Participate in the Hostage Response Group as a regular member.
- Provide senior representation to the HRFC.

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#### Special Assistant to the President for Counterterrorism

- Chairs the Hostage Response Group.

#### Department of Justice

- Participate in the Hostage Response Group as a regular member.
- Participate in the HRFC as a regular member.
- Leverage appropriate intelligence support to pursue diplomatic, military, and law enforcement actions in response to a hostage-taking.
- Seek to prosecute hostage-taking of U.S. nationals and related violations of U.S. law in the U.S. court system whenever possible.
- Engage with foreign governments to seek commitments to punish hostage-takers and their aiders and abettors.
- In coordination with the Special Presidential Envoy, work to develop the capacity of partner nations through technical assistance and training in best practices, to collect intelligence for use in hostage recovery efforts while preserving, when possible, opportunities for a criminal prosecution by the United States or the relevant nation.

#### Federal Bureau of Investigation

- Establish within the FBI for administrative purposes an interagency HRFC.
- Participate in the Hostage Response Group as a regular member.
- Participate in the HRFC as a regular member.
- Provide either a full-time employee or a detailee to be the first Director to the HRFC.
- Leverage appropriate intelligence support to pursue diplomatic, military, and law enforcement actions in response to a hostage-taking.
- Investigate violations of U.S. law and collect evidence and conduct forensics in furtherance of a potential prosecution, consistent with its statutory authorities and where applicable, the permission of the foreign government and COM in whose territory it is operating.
- Work to develop the capacity of partner nations through technical assistance and training in best practices, to collect intelligence for use in hostage recovery efforts while preserving, when possible, opportunities for a criminal prosecution by the United States or the relevant nation in coordination with the Special Presidential Envoy.

#### Office of the Director of National Intelligence/Intelligence Community

- Participate in the Hostage Response Group as a regular member.
- Participate in the HRFC as a regular member.
- Coordinate the declassification of relevant information in conjunction with the HRFC.
- Provide centralized management of hostage-related intelligence to coordinate the IC's efforts on hostage-takings and provide synchronized intelligence support to the HRFC.
- Coordinate the declassification and tearlines of relevant and reliable information in conjunction with the HRFC, and provide unclassified summaries to a hostage's family and foreign governments, as appropriate.

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- Leverage appropriate intelligence support to pursue diplomatic, military, and law enforcement actions in response to a hostage-taking.

#### Department of Defense

- Participate in the Hostage Response Group as a regular member.
- Participate in the HRFC as a regular member.
- Leverage appropriate intelligence support to pursue diplomatic, military, and law enforcement actions in response to a hostage-taking.

#### Department of the Treasury

- Participate in the Hostage Response Group as a regular member.
- Participate in the HRFC as an augmentee.
- Leverage appropriate intelligence support to evaluate potential diplomatic, military, and law enforcement actions in response to a hostage-taking.
- Engage with foreign governments to seek commitments to punish hostage-takers and their aiders and abettors, in conjunction with the Presidential Special Envoy for Hostage Matters and the HRFC.

#### Family Engagement Coordinator

- Participate in the Hostage Response Group as a regular member.
- Ensure that all interactions with a hostage's family occur in a coordinated fashion and that the family receives consistent and accurate information from the USG.
- Ensure that all communications between the USG officials and a hostage's family are coordinated.

#### Central Intelligence Agency

- Participate in the Hostage Response Group as a regular member.
- Participate in the Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell as a regular member.
- Leverage appropriate intelligence support to pursue diplomatic, military, and law enforcement actions in response to a hostage-taking.

#### National Security Agency

- Participate in the Hostage Response Group as a regular member.
- Participate in the Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell as a regular member.
- Leverage appropriate intelligence support to pursue diplomatic, military, and law enforcement actions in response to a hostage-taking.

*This document is an abridged version of the original planning document. While none of the language has been altered, personally identifiable information, USG processes, and chronological timelines have been removed for public release.*



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Dear Families:

I am writing to provide you an update on the U.S. government's efforts to improve our ability to secure the safe return of your loved ones and to better communicate with you on these efforts. As you know, on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015 the President issued Executive Order 13698, Hostage Recovery Activities. Soon it will have been one year since that Executive Order was issued. The President considers this effort one of his top priorities and to ensure we are providing the best results possible, I am leading a team of senior officials at the National Counterterrorism Center in the production of a Status Report to the President on how the United States government responded over the past months to these cases.

Specifically, we are examining the actions that the U.S. government has taken since the President issued the Executive Order, the effects they have had, and areas for further improvement. Your recommendations and reflections over the past months on your experience will be a critical element of this process and we believe will be valuable in informing the most complete status report.

As part of this report, we will continue to be guided by the principle that we should share as much information as possible with the families of hostages, while protecting the safety of your loved ones, the integrity of investigations, and the sensitive sources and methods through which we develop information. The President also remains firmly committed to denying hostage takers any benefits of ransom or other concessions.

The U.S. government's goal has always been to do whatever we can within our capabilities and the bounds of the law to assist families to bring your loved ones home. On behalf of the interagency status report team, I invite you and members of your family to provide input to this effort. If you wish to accept this invitation, please contact our review team leader to make arrangements for the most convenient way to provide your input.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to be part of this important effort.

Sincerely,

Director  
Directorate of Strategic Operational Planning