

Trump abandoned Paul Whelan, Biden freed him

Letter to the editor, [Brunswick Beacon](#), 08.08.24

On August 1, the Biden/Harris administration completed the biggest prisoner swap since the Cold War. Moscow traded ex-Marine Paul Whelan, journalist Evan Gershkovich, Radio Free Europe's Alsu Kurmasheva, and 13 others for eight prisoners held by NATO countries.

Trump threatened to pull out of NATO. Biden expanded it and got help from five NATO allies to pull off the swap. Germany's Chancellor Scholz told Biden, "For you, I will do this."

Once home, the freed Americans shared hugs with President Biden, Vice President Harris, and loved ones. Biden removed the American flag pin from his own lapel and pinned it on Whelan. "Our family is grateful to the United States government for making Paul's freedom a reality," his family said in a statement.

At the July 2018 Helsinki Summit, Trump took Putin's side against America's intelligence community, which accused Putin of interfering in our 2016 election to help Trump win. Contrary to Trump's claim that his weird man-crush on Putin helps Americans, Putin arrested Whelan in December 2018, just five months later. With friends like that, who needs enemies?

Former Trump White House national security official Fiona Hill said Trump "was not particularly interested in Paul's case in the way that one would have thought he would be."

David Whelan, Paul's brother, said, "The Trump administration was not prepared to or not interested in working on wrongful detention cases. The Biden administration is much more engaged in wrongful detentions."

Of course, Trump lied about his record. CNN's fact-check concluded: "Trump's claim that he gave opposing countries "NOTHING" to secure the freedom of American prisoners is false." In February 2020, Trump released 5,000 prisoners to the Taliban who released just 1,000 in return.

When asked about Trump's claim that Putin would only release hostages for Trump, Biden said, "Why didn't he do it when he was president?"

As CNN's Dana Bash said, "That's what they call a mic-drop moment."

Nancy Briganti
Carolina Shores