



*Transcript of the National Security Exchange event with Richard Fontaine and Adam Bohler on September 16, 2025 at the Center for a New American (CNAS) office in Washington, D.C.*

**Richard Fontaine:**

I'm the CEO of the Center for New American Security. Thanks everybody for being here and thanks for bearing with us. You can deal with many things, but not the vicissitudes of air traffic.

**Adam Bohler:**

They said burnt rubber smell on the plane-

**Richard Fontaine:**

That is not a good-

**Adam Bohler:**

... which I thought is probably not good to push past.

**Richard Fontaine:**

No, no, no. Well, thanks for being here. We are, of course, here with Adam Bohler, who is the special envoy for hostage response, and we're going to have a conversation here about his work, some of the efforts that have already taken place for the successful release of hostages in various countries, some of the things that are still in progress and some of the lessons along the way.

**Richard Fontaine:**

I think to say that he's got a critical role would be putting it mildly, given the centrality of some of the hostage issues in our foreign policy more generally. I saw the president posted to social media just an hour or so ago about the hostages in Gaza and said that he had seen that they had been moved above ground and was talking about that. So very much a live set of issues in Gaza of course, but other places as well.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Just a reminder, before we begin, we'll have a Q&A portion of the event. So if you're watching online, you can enter questions in the chat box that's at [CNAS.org/live](https://CNAS.org/live) or on Twitter using the hashtag CNAS 2025. And after we have a discussion here, we'll have questions from both our audience here and online via this little iPad mechanism we've got here. So, Adam, welcome.

**Adam Bohler:**

Thank you.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Great to have you here. Thanks for being here. And maybe we could just start, maybe you could give us a little bit of an update to the degree you can on the situation in Gaza with the hostages overall, the work that you've been doing there and a status report on the negotiations.

**Adam Bohler:**

One, I'll say one of the reasons that I joined President Trump in this administration is because of his commitment to return all American hostages as well as those in Gaza. October 7th was a really difficult for a lot of people, including me, and I had a lot of hope for the first time when the president was elected and I think he's ready to make the tough decisions that are necessary.

**Adam Boehler:**

So one, I'll preface there. I spoke with some of the Israelis late last night about a different topic. I have a number of folks that work that are Israeli and stressful time, but they think the president and we're doing the right thing. I don't think this region responds to weakness. It responds to strength. And the president has decided that it's not acceptable to hold hostages anymore.

**Adam Boehler:**

And the United States has a lot of tools to use at its disposal and so does Israel. And we've decided it's not acceptable and the president has communicated that directly via his truth social account to Hamas. And at some point, that's their decision if they know the consequences.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Anything you want to elaborate on the consequences or should we leave that one TBD?

**Adam Boehler:**

I think when you sit down and you discuss with anybody, the question is what do they want? So if I'm discussing something... So my job obviously, as you may know, is meeting with bad people, bad guys in the context of usually people that take hostages are not the best people in the world. So that's what I specialize in.

**Adam Boehler:**

And so the question is what do they want? And then what do we want and is there any possibility to give them what they want or not? If not, that's better to know too. So there's positive consequences and negative consequences, and if both are not used effectively... When both are used effectively, it creates more leverage.

**Adam Boehler:**

So, Hamas, where are they? I think they want some element of survival. Now, that could be individual survival, that also could be the movement's survival. What is the movement's survival? It's extremism. So they would like that. What are they willing to do? I think as it's come up.

**Adam Boehler:**

And it's interesting as Israel has moved closer to saying post-Iran, that this should end, Hamas has moved further away in their demands, which is a traditional story. And I believe the United States role is to make it clear that them moving further away is not in their interest. And I believe that's what the President of the United States is doing.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Let me ask you a broader question about your approach to these things and maybe Hamas or some of the others with whom you've had talks, the Taliban, others might be examples here. So you sat down with Hamas to talk, what is the experience of doing that given what has happened and how

do you approach those kinds of talks or negotiations with people that are quite obviously adversaries of the United States?

**Adam Boehler:**

The way I think about it is I have a job and I go to work and I do my job and my job is clear. It's to do everything I can to bring all Americans or whoever the president of the United States says. In this case, it's all hostages on the Gaza side because the President of the United States instructed that, to bring them all home and then to work to make sure they're never taken again.

**Adam Boehler:**

This is an interesting second component because you could bring everybody home if you decide to pay billions of dollars probably, in my opinion. It's like when people congratulate you for buying a house. Well, if you have money, you buy a house. Congratulations. Selling the house is the harder thing than making money. So anyone with money, as we've seen in prior circumstances with billions of dollars going places can get releases.

**Adam Boehler:**

The key is how do you make sure people aren't taken to? What are the deterrents for that? And we can get into it. Why has the president brought home now over 75? I think it might be 70, I'll tell you, Americans without giving up almost anyone. And why was it 75 now and in the prior administration say measure was a one.

**Adam Boehler:**

Most people that go and do these things, let me tell you, it's not a, all Americans want Americans home. If you're all American, I know you feel that. We all feel it. It's certainly not a political feeling, R or D, is it? We all want it. So there is a difference in approach, but the way I view my job is the second thing too, which is the harder thing.

**Richard Fontaine:**

So money-

**Adam Boehler:**

If you do that. Sorry, I didn't answer your question.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Yeah, go ahead.

**Adam Boehler:**

It was more background. So if you sit down with bad guys and that's your job, then I have to think through what are their incentives? Are there things that make sense in the context? And then if they don't, what are the negative things?

**Adam Boehler:**

And then quite frankly, I'm relatively honest with them about that, what will happen in the negative. I'm not threatening, I'm just saying, what will happen in the positive and if there's things they ask,

what I need to bring back to people, more senior, the president, others for their guidance, who make those decisions. Sometimes I'm just a message carrier.

**Richard Fontaine:**

I wanted to ask you about the recent case. Elizabeth Tsurkov, she was held in Iraq for more than two years by Kataib Hezbollah. You said that U.S. didn't give anything in exchange for her release. Why did they do it? Why'd they give her up in that case?

**Adam Boehler:**

I can tell you what I think. So I'll give some background and I'll tell you what I think. And the quick answer is I think it relates to the executive order. The president signed the Friday before they gave her up because the timing seems to fit fairly well.

So we had been negotiating and spending time on Surkov for a long time, a lot of people had. This is not, again, it wasn't... And the president had expressed interest. She's a citizen of Israel, her sister, she went to Princeton, her sister is an American citizen, advocated. So we had interest and it's an ally of ours. So as we're looking to do this, there had been a lot of back and forth with Iraq, etc.

And so what happened was I got a phone call from our embassy in Baghdad asking whether the United States would accept Elizabeth onto our soil and it was from the embassy and the Iraqis had asked them to call me, and then I had to check. I made sure, but of course in that situation we're going to take Elizabeth onto our soil into our embassy. She was dropped off.

Let me move to the executive order that happened the Friday before. The way that USG worked before the executive order was in theory, we have a lot of tools that we can use as the United States, sanctions, economic, we've got a lot of tools. And the way it worked is if somebody holds Americans or allies, maybe we would use those tools.

And by the way, if any of you worked in US government, that's quite a process that can take quite a long time with a lot of opinions. So how do you switch that to proactive action? You reverse it. You say, actually we're going to, unless we make an exception. And so Iraq in holding an ally would violate that. And so they took action. And so I don't, it actually doesn't always totally matter to me, quite frankly. I was just happy to have her on American soil and get her to our allies.

So quite frankly, at some point, it's interesting one way or the other in terms of what goes forward. It also shows a model. Kataib, Hezbollah responded, Iraq responded to the President of the United States, the prime minister of Iraq wrote a note to the President of the United States, a letter thanking him for leadership and guidance.

Again, I don't think the timing would be interesting if it's not. And the President of the United States responded to the Prime Minister of Iraq to thank him for taking action. Those are the kind of things that affirm and give positive incentives to action like that while recognizing the fact that the longer Hamas doesn't listen to the President of the United States, the worse it's going to get because it's gotten worse and worse and worse for Hamas.

**Richard Fontaine:**

So you talked about the EO and the necessity of coordinating within the US government. How does it work in the current administration? So you're obviously doing all the things that you're doing in your role. There's Steve Witkoff, Rick Grinnell has been involved, I think at least with Venezuela, with some of these efforts. How does that aspect of it come together?

**Adam Boehler:**

The way I think of it is I think about what we do on the hostage side as a service, meaning it doesn't have to be me that picks up people. Quite frankly, what leverage is there in that I'm just happy to get people home. I have a particular goal, which is exactly those two, which is get everyone home.

And if Steve Witkoff, if Rick Grinnell, if anyone can bring an American home, you want to go get an American bring home, I'm real happy about that. It doesn't have to be. You'll get leverage from you, Richard. So from my perspective, I'm a service. So what does the service provide? Sometimes it's me if need be.

Sometimes the services, we have social workers that take care of people. So when the hostage comes out, because people are scarred right away, we can escort the families. We have a center in Texas that we bring them to rehabilitate all after this because people, so sometimes it's our wonderful staff like our social workers and our family team that take care of people that are there. They always get that. But I don't need to provide all, I just want to make sure people are home.

And so the other way I think of it is like if I'm horizontal, you have people that are vertical specialists in their country. So I'm there if we're in Israel, if Steve wants to do something, I'm there to support him. I'm there to support anybody to bring those hostages home. My main person I report to is the President of the United States. I report through Marco Rubio, but I will do anything for anyone USG to get Americans home.

**Richard Fontaine:**

I believe you were in Kabul over the weekend. So the fact that you're sitting here, I guess we can see why we were talking about the vicissitudes of air travel. You've logged a few miles over the past few days, but reportedly had meetings with four Minister Mottaki and Mullah Baradar.

The Taliban readout suggested that it was a conversation talking, I don't think they said normalization, but they talked about economic cooperation, bilateral relations, things like that. The other one said it really focused on prisoner releases. Can you give us a sense of what was on the agenda for that meeting and how things went?

**Adam Boehler:**

The main thing I would say is the Taliban shouldn't get ahead of themselves, which is to be very specific. The Taliban hold Americans right now. So nothing's going to fucking happen until they release them all. I'll just tell you that they're getting way ahead of themselves.

The other thing is they're going to need to really look at, we have equipment there, we have an airfield we had, so there are very concrete steps that I was very clear on to the Taliban if they want to talk anymore. But holding Americans is a liability. So they shouldn't get too far ahead of themselves. They want to turn over the Americans. I'm all ears.

**Richard Fontaine:**

That's a quote there with the language too.

**Adam Boehler:**

Sorry about that. I get a little emotional on those things, but it's a liability.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Actually though, let me ask you about the emotional side. Foreign policy is often made at a distance or it's made by people just talking to each other. And this is always one of the issues in the foreign policy world because the effects of those policies tend to happen somewhere often far away to other people. Yours is a visceral job.

You meet these families, you talk to the people who at least are one step removed from holding these hostages. You go through the whole process. This must be pretty different than running the development finance corporation for example, which is what you did in the first Trump administration. And how does your team deal with the emotional side of all of this?

**Adam Boehler:**

Early on to me it was obvious that this was a part of the job. And by the way, there's a club of us because it's hard-

**Richard Fontaine:**

Roger.

**Adam Boehler:**

Roger, yeah. So we talk about it. Roger told me, we talk about it how it-

**Richard Fontaine:**

Carson's predecessor.

**Adam Boehler:**

Roger did it for six years. Think about regular government. But the emotional toll, I know in Israel I have talking what they do for the family. So I'll give you on the negative side, your job is to listen to everything and you don't always want to because it's horrible.

I'm Jewish and every time you go to the Holocaust Museum, I'm on the board there. Do I always need to see the stories of horror? It's painful and after a few, it's really painful, but it's my job. So it is the worst things to feel. And the feeling of being powerless or helpless to help people is one of the worst human feelings. So it feels horrible. And I'm not an emotional guy, but early on, well, I will give you the flip side because there's extremes. So let me tell a story.

My first day on the job inauguration, so at noon inauguration day, that's my first day on the job. But I started out that morning early. I was up all night. I was staying in the British Embassy and I was talking to Roger because there was a discussion about two Americans coming home from Afghanistan. And the president, because of his commitment to bring people home, said he wants hostages to be with him there to highlight the issue in the inauguration.

And I didn't really know how the inauguration was. It was indoors. It was the first time. It's hard to imagine. And so I flew one of the individuals that was coming home, his wife and they had three kids to the British Embassy, stay there with me. It was nice if the British to let me use it. I don't know where they were actually. They were away for a while.

And so I flew them in and they were on stage with the President of the United States. And I had met them a few weeks before, very hard because was, these are hard meetings. And so I got a call from right before from Jake Sullivan, this is before noon. And Jake said, "Adam, if we bring them home, will you reverse..." Something like that.

And by the way, I was like, Jake, I'm a private citizen, you have to ask me that. I said, "I don't know why anyone would reverse Americans coming home, quite frankly." And it's a great time because if it brings Americans home, you are still making that policy one way or the other. I am not. I'm a private citizen for another hour or whatever it was. Of course, I'll accept Americans home, why would I not do that? And so we brought her on stage and we heard, Roger told me they were going to go get them.

And late that night back in the embassy, I got a call, Roger told me he would do it, and as soon as they passed from Afghan airspace, out and they were American hands, I got a phone call from the people on the plane and me, and I don't know if Jacob's here. Yep, my specialist, Jacob, we got to run downstairs, wake her up and her kids, we have a picture and tell them that he's in American hands.

And that's my first day on the job. I called Rogers every day like that because I'll take it. But those things, every negative, every pain moment, that's worth it.

### **Richard Fontaine:**

I got a lot more questions, but I'm going to ask you one more and then work some questions in from the audience here and take some from the online audience. So I'd be thinking if you'd like to come in on this, but you mentioned the Brits and I noted that you brought together your counterparts from a bunch of countries earlier this year in Montana, I believe.

So one, was that the first time that this had happened, and I assume that there's a good deal of commonality and approach, but there must be some differences as well. Some countries pay ransoms and the United States and others do not and so forth. So where did you see the possibilities of collaboration, coordination? Where'd you see the cleavages even with some of our friends and allies?



**Adam Boehler:**

Actually, it wasn't the first time Roger introduced me to the group.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Oh, is that right?

**Adam Boehler:**

Yeah. I don't know if they hadn't gotten together in the US sometimes. I'm not sure if they, it is like a little chat group that Roger had one or other, because again, we support each other because everybody has these. So they had, not everybody, but a number of them I think had met. I'm not a hundred percent sure, but there was somewhat of a group.

But what we decided is if we get together, since we all have somewhat similar aims and we see a lot of situations like our work that day released a British citizen too, which was crazy because we're in the British Embassy with the Ambassador and I got to announce there. And that happens. And so why not ask for others too? Sometimes you can get at the same time, why wouldn't I? They're allies.

And that we started talking about this idea of shifting in the EO to being more aggressive from that perspective to get our people home. Now, we are leaning in more than some in that because it creates risk. But what I hope in the EO and we just signed it, is that other countries will follow.

In fact, I just spoke with Israel about it and I hope other allies will lean in with us because we're allowed in that EO to support allies too. To lean in and say, listen, it is unacceptable to have hostages. If I'm Britain, if I'm Brit, that is not an acceptable thing and automatically will trigger a lot of things because that will stop people from doing it in the first place.

And maybe they would get their citizens help home too. And if we do it in United stronger now, we make American policy not their policy, but if they'd love to join us, it certainly doesn't hurt at all.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Great. Let's take some questions here. Yes, just identify yourself and I think there's a mic coming right here.

**Phelim Kine:**

Hi, Phelim Kine from Politico. Thank you so much for being here to do this. I want to ask about China. I realize that the Biden administration brought home the last wrongfully detained prisoners. There's a long list, dozens, hundreds of people, US citizens in China that various groups say are wrongfully detained, we have people under exit bans that can't get out unjustly, no process.

Is there any thought or thinking that there needs to be a reinterpretation or a widening of the criteria for who is being wrongfully detained, particularly in China? And one other question, are China prisoners going to be part of the call with Xi on Friday or part of an upcoming summit? Thank you.



**Adam Boehler:**

It's an issue that the US government understands well, obviously. In fact, are we allowed to release or no? Or no?

**Richard Fontaine:**

Go ahead. Man, you're already on stage and you got a mic, so go for it.

**Adam Boehler:**

This we'll provide specific information. It wasn't tied to this to be honest with you, but we did just get, that's why I wasn't sure, 75 or 76. We did just get someone that was held in their home released from China. Yes.

**Phelim Kine:**

Can you tell us who that is?

**Adam Boehler:**

We'll follow up with some of the details because truthfully, I don't know what I'm supposed to say at this, that's why. Otherwise, I'd have some really cool thing I'd read off and it would be awesome. But we'll follow up for people that are interested in specifics. But that may help answer your question that it's unacceptable everywhere to do those things.

China should know that, and I think we made it very clear and they responded in a positive way from that perspective. I like that. But there's more to do and we're well aware. And I would hope that China continues to proactively respond because in this administration you're always on better negotiating ground if you don't have Americans. Always.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Other questions? Yeah, go ahead. Right here. Thanks.

**Ellen Nakashima:**

Hi, Adam. Ellen Nakashima with the Washington Post. Good. See, and I just wanted to follow up to Phelim's question because we have written about the case of an American held under an exit ban and reported that that issue was raised at the highest levels by the State Department and interlocutors in China. Did that kind of engagement help in this case, do you think?

**Adam Boehler:**

Of course.

**Ellen Nakashima:**

And was it also related to the EO?

**Adam Boehler:**

Again, I don't know what other countries always decide and China certainly has a complex decision-making process. I certainly think the EO didn't hurt in that. And I certainly think that raising things in this way is very helpful.

**Ellen Nakashima:**

Including Secretary of State?

**Adam Boehler:**

Of course, including the Secretary of State. I will say when you look at people that are driving this and support, this is something that I really appreciate. Quite frankly, the president has set the tone and made it very clear. But people around the president, like Secretary Rubio, like Pete, our defense secretary like John, who runs the CIA, like Steve, they group around the president, like Rick, the people all knows this is a priority.

And so those things, when things are raised at a senior level and ambassador level, at a Rubio level, it does make a difference. Of course it does. Because what they're really doing is they're explaining this EO, let's say. They're explaining that US policy has changed and that it is a huge negative to hold Americans. And that is best explained directly.

**Richard Fontaine:**

There's an online question here for you. What role does public attention and media coverage play in your negotiations? Is it helpful or does it complicate your work?

**Adam Boehler:**

It's very dependent on the situation. And so I think Americans would be shocked if they knew how many Americans are held. Look, we've gotten out 75, maybe 76, whatever. If I came up here and I told you right now that there were those people there, I don't think the United States or Americans understand that. I think they would be shocked that Americans are held.

So I think media attention to that is very helpful. I think media attention to big issues is important. So for instance, when I talk about the executive order, I want all countries to understand this change of policy. I want them to because they should return all Americans. It's actually not that complicated. Specific cases, it depends. The one other thing I will say is I would never ask a family not to advocate on behalf a relative because I would do the same thing.

**Richard Fontaine:**

And what does your caseload look like now?

**Adam Boehler:**

We have a number of other hotspot countries. It's always evolving too. I have a number of areas that are important. Obviously, if I'm in Afghanistan and thinking about the Americans held there, that's very important. I think it's known that Russia holds Americans, which is a real problem.

Again, in terms of complicating negotiations, I would say to Putin, you're on stronger ground without the Americans. They're not leverage, they're liabilities. If you hold Americans, it's not

leverage. It's a liability. Let them go and things will improve. So there's a few other countries that don't understand their liabilities yet, and we'll help them understand their liabilities if that's the case.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Other questions? Here's another one. This is a good big, thick question for you. What misconceptions do people have about how hostage negotiations actually work? So you walk in, you throw a chair against the wall and-

**Adam Boehler:**

Yeah. And it's theater or something like that.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Daddy's here.

**Adam Boehler:**

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Probably that. Look, it's not that I don't lose my temper, by the way, here's what I think. You have to be authentic on these things and everything and everything you do in life, but it is relatively simple, which is what do I want? What do they want? Is there a possibility? How do I align the incentives?

And what I will tell you is if I'm really upset, I might get really upset. But not theater upset. It's silly. You can't plan that. If it's real, then let it be real. So I get upset sometimes, of course. But no, it's less theater.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Okay, less theater.

**Adam Boehler:**

I don't think it's as exciting as people... I don't think it's like that.

**Richard Fontaine:**

All right.

**Adam Boehler:**

My heart rate is low.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Beats once a minute or so.

**Adam Boehler:**

I have a naturally low heart rate, that's helpful in my line of business.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Let me ask you, this is actually-

**Adam Boehler:**

It's low heart rate variance. I actually have a decent pulse, but it doesn't vary that much. I noticed I have a little watch thing that tells me very low HRV.

**Richard Fontaine:**

There you have it, ladies and gentlemen. Let me ask you, this is related, but not exactly on the same topic, but about the Abraham Accords in general in which you played a very significant role in the first Trump administration. It looked like the Biden administration may have been on the verge of something with Saudi Arabia.

And then of course, the terrorist attack conducted by Hamas set things back. When you look at the prospect for regional normalization, do you think it's just a matter of time before Saudi Arabia and Israel normalize and potentially other countries too outside of the region?

**Adam Boehler:**

Yes, I do think it's only a matter of time, yes.

**Richard Fontaine:**

And what do you think has to happen in order to that? I mean, there seemed to be a variety of statements ranging from there has to be a full-blown Palestinian state in place before normalization is possible through progress toward a Palestinian state toward some other kind of thing, a little bit of a moving target.

But does this get back to the first criterion is going to be an end of the war in Gaza, and the first thing that needs to happen for that is release of hostages in Gaza. Is that the train here?

**Adam Boehler:**

There's no question that the hostages need to be released. So the president has made that clear. So one thing I love, not the one thing, I love about the president is he's just going to post it directly. He directly communicated with Hamas over true social, a president with terrorist organization. But he's directly communicated, does that with everybody.

The president directly communicates with the people of the United States all the time. You just read one right before you came in. He's not lying. He just says what he thinks. So he's saying it. That's it. That's from the president. Authentic communication. And so the president has made it clear that all hostages must be released. It's definitely what needs to happen now.

The reason that I think the Abraham Accords or normalization from that perspective are an inevitability is because of really what the Abraham Accords are is a number of countries that are not extremists coming together against extremism and stability is very important for that region.

And so who is it against? Who loses out in stability in that region? People that want instability. Who wants instability? People that don't like an order as they're established, and how do you try to disrupt that through extremism and terrorism? So what is Iran doing when they're doing that? They don't like it keeps them relevant. So they're going to meddle all over the place.

This is why the president's decision to join Israel on the Iran side, reshapes the region and increases the possibility of peace. Oftentimes, so we have people say peace through strength in government. Everybody gets cool coins. Robert O'Brien used this and I'd read it, a who was one of my predecessors, then national security advisor and a great friend. It says, I believe it's Roman, that if you want peace, prepare for war. That's on my coin. And you need that. And that's what we're trying to do.

**Richard Fontaine:**

One of the things that... Well, taking a step back from the Abraham Accords and everything else, you talked about Russia, you talked about China. One of the things that has to be at least a challenge is we want Americans released for sure, but that's not the only thing we want with these countries.

So we want Americans released from China, but there's also administration pursuing a trade deal with China and many other things as well, drug issues. And with Russia and end of the war in Ukraine and all these other things. So how is the administration prioritizing hostage release and negotiations in the pantheon of other things that he's talking to these governments about and that it seeks from these governments?

**Adam Boehler:**

Yeah, I think there's two ways to think about it. One is, it's clear the president's made it a priority. He talks about it, he announced it right at the beginning. It was in his inauguration. So people know it's a priority. I didn't say, look, fentanyl coming in from China kills a lot of Americans. That's a priority too. Trade is a major priority.

So here's what I think. There are two ways to handle it. Number one is constant pressure. Constant, consistent, and authentic pressure. Number two is waiting for the right time on some things. So one, you never relent. We never forget about Americans. We never relent. And that's my job. I will not give up in my job until all Americans are home. I will not.

And then timing plays in, there's the right moments. If you're never relenting, and I'm doing that, it's not just me. I've got an unbelievable team at SPIHA. This is my special presidential envoy. It's the team that focuses on hostages. I've got an unbelievable team of 30 people that all they do, it's like they're the misfits of state. They're the people that want action.

They're the people that came into work every single day, COVID or not, they're American heroes and they're out there fighting like hell and they'll never relent. And then we wait for the moment and we get Americans home.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Does Congress play a role in the things that you're doing? I spent seven years of my life working in the Senate. And of course, especially when there is a constituent who's being held, and this generates a lot of activity statements and letters and resolutions and things like that.

There's also other things I can recall when I worked for Senator McCain and there was a great journalist who was being held by the Taliban and we were going over to Pakistan and Afghanistan very regularly and at least had the opportunity to raise those with the heads of state at these levels.

And so this was separate from what the executive branch was trying to do. But I guess the bottom line question for anyone in the executive branch is, does Congress help or hurt in this case?

**Adam Boehler:**

That's a very broad question you just asked. You were giving the hope. Yeah, yeah. Look, I told you across this party lines, it's not. And so this is something that all Americans feel. It's not something R, It's not something D, it's something American. And that's very nice. We don't always have that in the United States everywhere, but it's something that unites us.

And so the more attention that's focused on it, the better. I've had unbelievable members of both sides from Congress push for families, let other countries know it's not acceptable. That's what the President thinks. It's what both sides of Congress thinks. It's what the Senate and the house think because we're all Americans. And I've yet to find an American that doesn't think we should have Americans home and have them not taken again.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Here's another question that's come in online. How have technological advances changed the landscape of hostage recovery as a positive or negative factor?

**Adam Boehler:**

Say it one more time.

**Richard Fontaine:**

How have technological advances changed the landscape of hostage recovery as a positive or negative factor? Now, I know you haven't been doing this so long. The technology has changed dramatically in the interim, but at least it must be the case that you're on every case all the time. I would guess because you can communicate with anyone all the time.

**Adam Boehler:**

Yeah, you can do a lot more. There are times you have to go dark, just to be clear, as you may know. So you're not always on. I can go, but it's much briefer moments of going dark. The other thing too is you've got a lot more support even though people may not be on the ground with you.

The US can back you up in a lot of different ways. And so always, I'm not alone. So people always say, "Oh, you go to Taliban, you're going..." Yeah, well, whether you can see them or not, I'm not alone. And that feels great to have the support of the United States behind you.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Okay. Well, I'll ask you one last question and then we'll let you get back to work here. So if you could have one additional thing in the way of support, whatever that is, I don't know, a bigger team, more congressional buy-in, more media attention, I don't know, whatever it is. What would assist you in your efforts beyond what you already have today?

**Adam Boehler:**

Two things probably. First and foremost, I wish there were a way that I could immediately tell the leader of every country that has Americans, that it's a liability, and that they understood that and they knew it's not a fucking game, we're being serious, and there are negative consequences and possibly some positive ones. So they should listen to the President of the United States when he says it. It's not a game. And we'll prove it over actions either way.

The second thing is in everything, there's red tape one way or the other. And so yeah, if I could snap my fingers and remove all red tape, sure, of course. In bringing home Americans from a, it's not more people. I have an unbelievable team, trust me. We're out there. But of course, if there was no, but I don't expect that. Look, you report to the American people. You can have everything. But sure, I'd love of less red tape in what we do, of course.

**Richard Fontaine:**

Great. Adam Boehler is the special Envoy for Hostage response. Please join me in thanking him for speaking with us today. Thank you very much, Adam. It's great to have you here. Thank you. And thank you all for joining us.