

Michael Travis Leake

8.30.2023

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[REDACTED]
Bakersfield, CA

President Joseph R. Biden
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C.

F O R . I M M E D I A T E R E L E A S E

An Open Letter to the People of the United States and to President Biden

I want to begin by apologizing to America. Apologize for allowing myself to remain in harm's way. For giving the adversaries of our national interest an opportunity to box the administration into an untenable corner. For making our elected president have to choose between two competing moral obligations: the enforcement of our laws on the one hand, and the life and liberty of one of his fellow citizens on the other.

I beg forgiveness from my country for my poor judgment-my arrogance-in thinking that just because I conscientiously refrained from involving myself in politically controversial topics, both publicly and online, that I was somehow immune to potential danger in Russia.

I was wrong.

On June 6th, 2023 at just after noon Moscow time, as my fiancé and I were deciding which movie to watch, our apartment four uniformed and masked Russian

tactical officers, armed with assault weapons, stormed our apartment without warning. No less than five armed plain-clothes ~~deet~~ detectives from the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs followed closely behind. 2/4

I immediately raised my hands in surrender. I was forced to the ground and handcuffed so tightly that my wrists bled. I still have scars from that, even months afterwards. They were looking for money and drugs, acting on a tip from an ex-girlfriend who had been, only two days prior, arrested with a large amount of narcotics she was distributing. She was promised a lighter sentence in exchange for implicating someone else.

When the authorities learned that one of her acquaintances was an American, any American, a chain of events began, culminating in my current imprisonment in Russia already 86 days.

Over a period of several hours, the officers sent to my home wrecklessly destroyed my belongings, my recording studio, furniture, everything, in a fruitless and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to find large sums of money, narcotics, or absolutely anything with which to justify arresting me. I was kicked, punched, dragged half-naked by my handcuffs like a marionette and ultimately forced to watch the police sexually molest my fiancée.

When finally they had accepted the fact that there was nothing incriminating in my home with which to justify arresting me, they threw a packet of drugs on my head and watched it hit the floor.

Since being arrested I have been housed in four separate facilities and placed in 13 different cells. I am not permitted to speak to anyone in my family. Not permitted to know any news, or even what is happening outside these walls. I am not even permitted a Bible.

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I am no one special. I am not a famous athlete, or a war hero, or a rich businessman. I am a regular citizen caught up in a geopolitical chessmatch not of my making, or under my control.

I entered prison at 92 kilograms. I have been starved for months now. I am expected to eat spoiled food, uncutted, uncooked raw fish, and I cannot force myself, even in these conditions to infect my body with toxic substances.

I now weigh about 72 kg. Just in 3 months I have lost 20 kg. That's about 40 pounds. I am 5'10". I do not have access to medicine to deal with a chronic health condition. They refuse to provide it. I have been housed with pedophiles, murderers, extremists, and inmates with AIDS.

The Russian government is actively trying to ensure that when the time comes to trade me away to the U.S. in exchange for actual criminals, that I will either be beyond saving in the long term, or outright insane.

It has no time to endure this charade of a process. This is personal for them. They find joy in my

daily misery. I will not survive much longer. I don't have another 10 pounds of fat left to donate to my survival.

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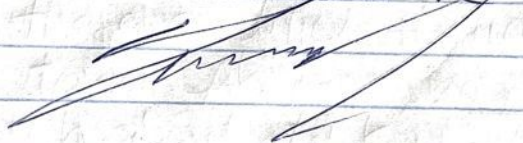
I beseech President Biden, and the people of America to demand my immediate and unequivocal repatriation to the United States. Now. Today. While there is still time to save whatever remains of me. While there is still a me to save.

I do not wish to either be a martyr, nor a cassus belli. I want to come home.

Please help. Time is not on my side.

I won't survive this much longer.

M. Travis Leake

A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'M. Travis Leake', written over the printed name.