

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 7, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

Our constituent, Robert Gilman, a U.S. citizen and former U.S. Marine, has been in Russian custody since January 17, 2022. The Gilman family has submitted an application to have Gilman designated as wrongfully detained under the Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-Taking Accountability Act. We write to express our continued concern for Gilman and urge the Department of State to do everything in its power to obtain his release from Russian custody.

Gilman was on his way from the United States to Moldova to pursue a teaching assignment when he was struck by illness while transiting Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport. He remained in Russia to recuperate and to replace his passport, which was damaged by unknown persons while he was unconscious. While on his way to the U.S. Embassy for his appointment to replace his passport, he was arrested.¹ At the police station, he allegedly kicked a policeman while he was throwing up. The policeman was not injured and did not seek to press charges.² Nonetheless, Gilman was prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced to four and a half years in prison; the maximum sentence in Russia for assaulting a police officer is five years, and the typical Russian charged with the same crime receives either a fine, probation, or, in extreme cases, one year in custody. Gilman appealed the sentence and it was reduced to three and a half years.

In March 2023, Gilman's family wrote to the Department of State to ask that he be designated as wrongfully detained. They have yet to receive a reply to that request. In the meantime, Gilman was charged with striking a prison guard and a government investigator — both incidents in which there is reason to believe Gilman was provoked. On October 7, 2024, Gilman was sentenced to an additional seven years and one month.³

On September 16, 2024, Gilman's family provided the Bureau of Consular Affairs with a confidential addendum to their March 2023 Levinson Act request. This addendum documented drugs that the Russians are forcing Gilman to take; harassment he is suffering; and physical torture he is enduring. Additionally, the Russian officials responsible for his mistreatment are telling Gilman that his country has forgotten him and are encouraging him to volunteer to fight on Russia's behalf in Ukraine as a means of earning his freedom.

According to Gilman's family, the abuse he is experiencing appears intended to goad him into reacting so the Russians can extend his sentence. The Gilman family believes this Russian conduct is designed to position Gilman for inclusion in a future prisoner trade or exchange.⁴

¹ Merlyn Thomas, *Robert Gilman: Ex-US marine jailed in Russia for drunken attack*, BBC (October 4, 2022), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-63135831>.

² Juliet Butler, *U.S. Marine Robert Gilman given 'harsh' sentence in Russian court – Activists allege he's being used as a pawn*, People (Oct. 4, 2022), <https://people.com/politics/former-marine-robert-gilman-receives-harsh-sentence-russian-court/>.

³ Lucy Papachristou & Felix Light, *Russian court sentences U.S. citizen Gilman to over 7 years in prison on assault charges*, Reuters (Oct. 7, 2024), <https://www.reuters.com/world/russian-court-sentences-us-citizen-gilman-over-7-years-prison-assault-charges-2024-10-07/>.

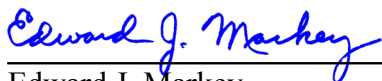
We appreciate the Department's work to successfully bring home U.S. citizens wrongfully detained by Russia,⁵ but we remain very concerned for Gilman. We join his family in expressing our fear that, due to the forced ingestion of drugs and physical and emotional abuse, his mental state is deteriorating. We hope that you will give their request for a wrongful detention designation your full and fair consideration.

To help us better understand the Department's engagement on Gilman's behalf, we request that you provide us with written responses to the following questions by March 28, 2025:

1. Have you reviewed the Gilman family's March 2023 request that Gilman be designated as a wrongful detainee?
2. Have you reviewed the September 2024 addendum that the Gilman family submitted outlining the conditions under which Russia is holding Gilman, including torture at the hands of Russian officials?
3. While we respect that you have a deliberative process for reviewing the facts surrounding individual Americans in custody abroad and their suitability for wrongful detention designation, can you tell us whether the State Department has reviewed the new facts the family shared in September 2024 and whether you have received a recommendation for designation for your consideration?
4. Beyond wrongful detention designation, are you considering any other means by which to arrange for Gilman's release from Russian custody?

Gilman's case is of serious concern to us. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

⁴ Vladimir Gilman, *My son is being held in a Russian prison. America, please do not leave him behind*, Boston Globe (Oct. 11, 2024), <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2024/10/11/opinion/russia-prisoner-robert-gilman/>.

⁵ Press Statement, *Release of Wrongfully Detained Americans and Russian Political Prisoners*, U.S. Department of State (Aug. 1, 2024), <https://www.state.gov/release-of-wrongfully-detained-americans-and-russian-political-prisoners/>.