

World & Local News

For \$1 Million Bail, Iran releases Two American Hikers

Special To The Lion's Eye

Two U.S. citizens imprisoned in Iran for more than two years arrived Wednesday in the Persian Gulf state of Oman after a court in Tehran accepted \$1 million to release them.

Diplomats had wrangled with the Iranian government to get Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal, both 29, released from Tehran's Evin prison under the same conditions that secured the release of Bauer's fiancée, Sarah Shourd, on Sept. 14, 2010.

"We're so happy we are free," Fattal said in Oman as he and Bauer left the airport with their families.

"Two years in prison is too long," Bauer said.

Iranian border guards arrested Bauer, Fattal and Shourd in July 2009 as they hiked near the border of Iraq's Kurdistan region. Iran charged the college friends with entering the country illegally and later charged them with espionage.

Bauer, Fattal and Shourd denied the charges.

The court convicted Bauer and Fattal and sentenced each to eight years in prison. Bauer, who had been living with Shourd in Damascus, Syria, when Fattal came to visit, proposed marriage to Shourd in prison.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, in New York City for the United Nations General Assembly, said last week that he expected the Americans to be released within days.

Family members flew to Oman on Sept. 13 to await the release, Bauer's brother-in-law, Nate Lindstrom, 27, said.

"It's been 'yes' and then it's been 'no' all week," Lindstrom said.

For two years, he said, the families' lives hung in limbo as they focused on freeing the hikers. "It was like life outside of this kind of stopped."

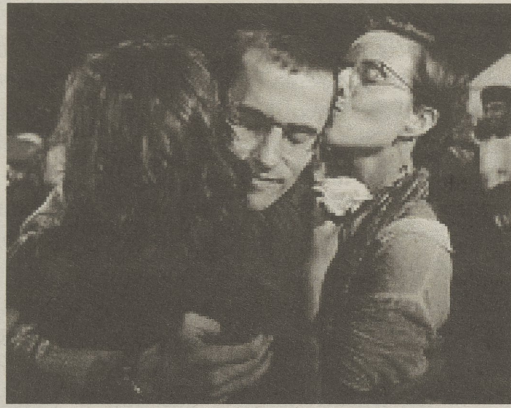
At 4 a.m., Lindstrom's wife, Nicole, Bauer's sister, called from Muscat, Oman's capital.

"She just said, 'I think something's going to happen today, so keep your fingers crossed.' She couldn't go into detail," Lindstrom said.

"Today can only be described as the best day of our lives," the families said in a statement. "We have waited for nearly 26 months for this moment, and the joy and relief we feel at Shane and Josh's long-awaited freedom knows no bounds."

The family thanked Omani and Swiss diplomats for negotiating the pair's release. Oman paid the \$1 million bail, the men's lawyer, Masoud Shafiei, told Reuters. The United States severed diplomatic relations with Iran in 1979.

Contributing: The Associated Press



Shane Bauer, one of the American hikers is greeted by his fiancée Sarah Shourd and family members. (photo courtesy nytimes.com)

Scientists Discover First Planet to Orbit Two Suns

By Dave Serpentine - Lion's Eye World & Local Editor- dms5419@psu.edu

The notion of two suns orbiting one planet has been considered science fiction for years; as of September 15, science fiction has become science fact.

Astrophysicist Laurance Doyle of the SETI Institute in Mountain View, Calif. and his team discovered the first ever circumbinary planet alien body using NASA's Kepler space telescope. Astronomers have named this planet Kepler-16b, but informally named it "Tatooine," after the fictional planet found in the movie Star Wars that illustrates a planet with two suns (which will create two sunsets).

This planet is believed to be part rock and part gas resembling Saturn in size that is 200 light-years away (or 1200 trillion miles away). Scientists say this planet's suns are smaller than our; one is 69% the mass of our sun and the other sun is 20% the mass of our sun. Which means this planet is very cold with an estimated temperature of -150 to -100 degrees Fahrenheit; to put this temperature in some form of a perspective, image Antarctica being Hawaii compared to this planet.

Kepler-16b orbits its two suns every 229 days at a distance of 65m miles, which is roughly the same distance out as Venus.

According to NASA, "Scientists detected the new planet in the Kepler-16 system, a pair of orbiting stars that eclipse each other from our vantage point on Earth. When the smaller star partially blocks the larger star, a primary eclipse occurs, and a secondary eclipse occurs when the smaller star is occulted, or completely blocked, by the larger star. Astronomers further observed that the brightness of the system dipped even when the stars were not eclipsing one another, hinting at a third body."

The Kepler space telescope is currently looking for Earth-like planets that house water. While scientists have not found any said planets, they did discover Kepler-16b showing this historic and unique feat which indicates there could be other planets out there like this. Only time will tell when those others planets are to be found. Doyle said he and his team will keep on trying to find more planets, "Now that we know how to find them, I think we are going to have quite a few more in the next several months."

The New York Times reports, "Enjoy it while you can. Because of variations in the planet's orbital

plane, as seen from Earth, the planet will stop crossing one of the stars as soon as 2014 and cease transiting the other, brighter one in 2018. It will be around 2042 before the show starts up again for Earthlings."

Artist's depiction of the planet with two suns. (photo courtesy of nasa.gov)



Will Egypt Ever Have Their Elections?

By Rob Ripson - Lion's Eye staff writer- rlr283@psu.edu

What began as a protest, activists in Egypt called for an uprising in their own country. The activists protested against poverty, unemployment, government corruption and the rule of President Hosni Mubarak, who has been in power for three decades.

This protest eventually culminated in the ouster of President Mubarak, which began in January 2011; there does not seem to be a freely elected government to replace him. After months of protest and violence, the military assumed control and promised to have free elections within six months. This decree has not been fulfilled since it was announced on February 15. August was supposed to be the month that these elections were to be held. We are now fast approaching October and there seems to be no election in site, all this under the guise of democracy.

After the military was given power to govern, it seems that they have been stonewalling the process. According to CNN, some parliamentary elections will begin in November, but this process will not conclude until February 2012.

There are many conflicting reports as to how this will be accomplished,

if it ever will. On July 22, a web site titled, "World Socialist Web Site," posted, "Egypt's ruling military council issued a new election law by decree Wednesday, overriding objections from the youth groups that spearheaded the mass movement against the dictatorship of President Hosni Mubarak and retaining many of the antidemocratic provisions under which the old regime regularly rigged elections."

With this decree, elections for a new president will not be held until sometime mid to late 2012. This will leave the existing military ruling party in control. This is a dangerous proposition. As history has shown, if a military government stands in place too long, they seem to remain in power. Until, of course, another revolt takes place and they are usually not a bloodless affair.

The only reason this decree was made was in face of the growing opposition for the military remaining in power. There doesn't seem to be any progress (and still appears that way) that the military was ready to relinquish its new found authority.

In a report written by Kurt Nimmo of infowars.com, the military

has now promised to put down any new protest with military means, using live ammunition to suppress the demonstrations which may be forthcoming due to the delay. How is this democratic and how is this justified when democracy or democratic principles were given as the predominant cry for freedom in the state of Egypt during the revolt?

The Washington Post stated, "Egypt's ruling interim military government, however, must still ratify the dates." Sounds like the forming of another dictatorship.

It appears that the delays are being justified so liberal parties wishing to participate in the coming elections can have more time to get organized. It seems that this is a tactic to consolidate power that the military needs to remain in control.

If elections are not held soon, it is possible that more protests will occur and more blood will be shed. One would think that Egypt would prefer not to run headlong down that road and make this transition to a freely elected government sooner than later.

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