CYNTHIA LOERTSCHER—BIOGRAPHY

Cynthia Loertscher is the Director of Research, Hostage Advocacy, and Government Affairs for the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation (JWFLF), which was founded three weeks after the brutal murder of James Foley who was kidnapped, tortured, and beheaded by the Islamic State in 2014. JWFLF advocates for all Americans held hostage or wrongfully detained abroad. Cynthia is responsible for JWFLF’s research efforts and authors the Foundation’s annual hostage and wrongful detainee reports, Bringing Americans Home—2019; 2020; 2021, 2022, and 2023. Her other duties include building effective relationships across the executive and legislative branches, third-party intermediaries, interlocutors, NGOs, and hostages, wrongful detainees, and their families to successfully advocate for the return of Americans held hostage or wrongfully detained abroad. Her recommendations and report findings have been implemented into the National Defense Authorization Act – building off the “Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-Taking Accountability Act,” as well as across the U.S. hostage enterprise. Cynthia currently sits on the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Commission on “Hostage Taking and Wrongful Detentions.”

Prior to working for JWFLF, Cynthia was a contracted researcher at the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at the United States Military Academy. There she participated a variety of research initiatives: (1) terrorist incarceration—terrorist recidivism and changes in roles and groups after release; (2) the impact of Specially Designated Global Terrorist and Foreign Terrorist Organization designations—detailed analysis of biographical information, roles, terrorist activity, CBRN activity, and U.S. government response; (3) intrastate and interstate conflicts—detailed analysis of political violence and third party interventions; and (4) Westerners kidnapped by terrorists, militants, and pirate groups. Cynthia’s background is also in the hard sciences, and she continues to work on defense-related technologies designed to address national security issues.

Prior to working with JWFLF and the CTC, she was the Co-Founder and Vice President of Research for Mineral Sciences LLC where she co-developed intellectual property and created technological applications designed to combat radiological warfare, the use of a “dirty bomb,” by sequestering Cs$^{137}$, Sr$^{90}$, and Co$^{60}$ from multiple surfaces, water sources, first responders, and military personnel. Cynthia received her Master of Science from Miami University of Ohio and her Bachelor of Science from George Mason University.