

Managing Partner Greg T. Rinckey, Esq. calls for an investigation on Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl before public judgment.

Bergdahl getting treatment, requires hospitalization, Landstuhl medical center says

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LANDSTUHL, Germany — Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl is in stable condition but will require further medical treatment and hospitalization, the military said on Monday. No date has been set for his return to the United States. As of Monday afternoon, Bergdahl had not yet reached the stage in the Army's prisoner of war reintegration program in which he would be ready to speak to his family, officials said. Bergdahl arrived at the medical center around 9 a.m. Sunday morning, a day after the Taliban released him in exchange for five Guantánamo Bay detainees. Bergdahl is in stable condition, but needs hospitalization for both physical and psychological issues stemming from nearly five years of captivity, a Pentagon spokesman said Monday. "He's got some nutrition problems, he hasn't eaten well over the last five years, so we're focusing on that," Col. Steve Warren told reporters in Washington. "There are other matters but for obvious reasons, I'm not going to get into the details." Warren would not venture into specific medical problems beyond the nutritional, but let stand earlier statements by Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, who said failure to bring Bergdahl back for medical treatment could have threatened his life. Bergdahl is being debriefed by Army questioners while receiving care, Warren said, with questions focusing on intelligence matters as well as the conditions he faced while in captivity. Asked whether debriefings include detailed questioning about the circumstances of his disappearance — some fellow troops have said Bergdahl deserted his unit, while intercepted Taliban communications indicate he was snared while on patrol — Warren said such investigations would wait until after Bergdahl receives treatment. "The high priority right now is getting Bowe reintegrated," Warren said. The U.S. military has conducted a preliminary investigation into Bergdahl's capture, but findings have not been released, and Bergdahl's input is needed to conclude the inquiry, Warren said. A lawyer who represents military defendants said some of the accusations being thrown at Bergdahl are serious, including desertion during wartime. But with confusion surrounding what actually happened, it's unfair to attack the returned soldier without established facts, said Greg Rinckey, a former Army judge advocate who practices at the law firm Tully Rinckey. "We need to be very careful about labeling him as anything other than a prisoner of war at this time, because we just don't know," Rinckey said. When Bergdahl might make the next leg of his journey home after five years in Taliban captivity will depend on how his recovery at

Landstuhl goes, officials said. Bergdahl went missing in June 2009 in Paktika province of southeastern Afghanistan while serving with a unit of the 25th Infantry Division from Fort Richardson, Alaska. "The current focus is attending to his medical needs," said a news release from the medical center. It noted that Bergdahl is in stable condition and receiving treatment "for conditions requiring hospitalization." However, in a statement released after Bergdahl was handed over to U.S. special operations forces, U.S. officials said Bergdahl was in good condition and able to walk. The largest American hospital outside the United States, the center has treated more than 70,000 troops injured in Iraq and Afghanistan and last cared for former POWs from the Iraq war in 2003. Those soldiers spent anywhere from five to eight days or more recovering at LRMC. But their time in captivity — 22 days at most — pales in comparison to Bergdahl's years in Taliban custody. Once he's cleared to return to the States, the 28-year-old soldier from rural Idaho is expected to continue reintegration and reunite with his family at the San Antonio Military Medical Center. On Monday, reporters, given limited access to the gated community at Landstuhl, parked outside the "emergency room" entrance to LRMC with TV cameras and news vans, filing periodical updates about Bergdahl. But there wasn't much to report. Bergdahl was nowhere to be seen and hospital officials released little new information about him by late Monday afternoon. The last time former prisoners-of-war recovered at the medical center, back in 2003, they were photographed waving from a hospital balcony five days into their stay. The seven soldiers served in the same unit as then-Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch. Lynch and the others were taken hostage in the spring of 2003, after their unit was ambushed in Iraq. After spending eight days in Iraqi captivity, Lynch, who was rescued first, spent about an equal amount of time recuperating at LRMC, according to a Pentagon news report at the time. The other soldiers were rescued after 22 days in captivity.