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## **In Letter, Federal Legislators Urge State Dept to Press Britain on Hapgood's Safety, Fair Treatment**

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**Categories :** [Public Safety](#)

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The same points made in a rally and news conference for Scott Hapgood at Darien Town Hall on Oct. 28 were made in a letter on Monday from six U.S. senators and a U.S. House member to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo — security for Hapgood in Anguilla and fair and transparent treatment in the judicial process there.

Hapgood, a Darien man in his 40s, is charged in April with manslaughter in Anguilla, a small Caribbean island where he was vacationing with his family. The island is part of the territory of the United Kingdom. Hapgood fought with a hotel worker who showed up at his door. According to Hapgood, the man, Kenny Mitchel, initially said he was there to fix a sink which wasn't broken, then demanded money and started fighting.

The two fought, and Mitchel died. According to reports from Anguilla, a toxicology report released much

later showed Mitchel had enough cocaine and other substances in his blood to be the primary cause of his death, although prosecutors continue to accuse Hapgood of killing the man in the fight.

According to some news accounts from from Anguilla, other hotel workers who came to the room and saw the fight said Hapgood held Mitchel longer than necessary. Hapgood's two daughters were also in the room.

The letter, released Tuesday by U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, reads in part:

"We request the State Department do everything in its power to ensure that Mr. Hapgood's safety is secured while traveling to and from Anguilla and during his stay on the island for the inquest. We further request that the State Department express its strongest concern and expectation to the British government that the inquest — and any other legal proceeding in Anguilla — be conducted fairly and openly.

"Such proceeding should accord Mr. Hapgood all rights of due process and basic safeguards of fundamental justice, including the right to return to the United States during the pendency of any judicial proceeding. The proceeding should be transparent and fair, and include the presence of members of his legal team and representatives of the State Department."

The letter was co-signed by not only U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy and U.S. Rep. Jim Himes (like Blumenthal, both Democrats who represent areas including Darien), but also by U.S. Senators Robert Casey Jr. (D-Pennsylvania), Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina), Joe Manchin III (D-West Virginia) and Jerry Moran (R-Kansas). President Trump has previously expressed support for Hapgood.

The Hapgood family issued this statement in reaction to the letter:

- "We remain grateful to Senator Blumenthal and his co-signatories [...] for their efforts to secure safe passage for Scott. Although we are all concerned about Scott's safety in Anguilla, it is reassuring to have our government behind us in such a public and steadfast way."

While the letter urges the State Department to press the United Kingdom for fair and transparent proceedings, it does not say the judicial proceedings so far conducted were either unfair or not according to legal rights within the United Kingdom, which on some points in criminal matters differ with those in the United States.

In the United States, not all legal proceedings before trial are transparent: Grand juries, for instance, may call an accused person to testify without legal representation in the room and not in public.

Anguillan officials, according to Hapgood's attorney, have said that Hapgood is in some danger in Anguilla

in light of anonymous threats made against him and public anger over the case. According to Hapgood's attorney, the same Anguillan officials have indicated they have limited resources to protect him.

The letter asks Pompeo to urge the United Kingdom to ensure Hapgood's safety. The U.K. has considerably greater resources than it's sovereign territory, Anguilla (with a population of about 15,000 people).

## **Full Text of the Letter**

*Here's the full text of the letter, dated Nov. 4 and released Tuesday, Nov. 5, by Blumenthal's office. The letter uses Hapgoods full name, Gavin Scott Hapgood:*

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We are writing to express our concerns for the safety and fair treatment of Mr. Gavin Scott Hapgood by the government of Anguilla, a British overseas territory, and to alert the State Department that Mr. Hapgood will be traveling back to Anguilla as part of the ongoing inquest.

"We request the State Department do everything in its power to ensure that Mr. Hapgood's safety is secured while traveling to and from Anguilla and during his stay on the island for the inquest. We further request that the State Department express its strongest concern and expectation to the British government that the inquest — and any other legal proceeding in Anguilla — be conducted fairly and openly. Such proceeding should accord Mr. Hapgood all rights of due process and basic safeguards of fundamental justice, including the right to return to the United States during the pendency of any judicial proceeding. The proceeding should be transparent and fair, and include the presence of members of his legal team and representatives of the State Department.

By way of background, Mr. Hapgood, a Connecticut resident, was vacationing in Anguilla with his wife and children. According to published reports, a hotel worker attacked Mr. Hapgood in his hotel room with his two daughters present. A struggle ensued and ultimately the hotel worker died. Mr. Hapgood was arrested and later allowed to return to the United States pending completion of the inquest. Published reports also indicate that an Anguillan toxicology report revealed that the hotel worker had a fatal combination of drugs in his body and that the official primary cause of death was later changed to drug overdose.

"Mr. Hapgood remains subject to the ongoing proceedings and must return to Anguilla on Nov. 11. Because there is evidence of unrest on Anguilla as a result of the hotel worker's death and Anguillan officials raised issues of personal safety, the Hapgood family is very concerned about Mr. Hapgood's safety when he returns.

"We strongly urge the State Department to obtain from the British government its ironclad guaranty of Mr. Hapgood's safety and security during his stay on Anguilla for any proceeding. Such guaranty should also ensure the proceedings are conducted in accordance with judicial tenets of fairness and due process of law, including his right to return to the United States after the inquest. Ultimately, the government of the United Kingdom bears this responsibility.

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"Thank you for your immediate attention to this time-sensitive request.

"Sincerely,

"[Senators] Richard Blumenthal, Christopher S. Murphy, Jerry Moran, Lindsey O. Graham, Robert Casey Jr., Joe Manchin III

"[Member of Congress] Jim Himes"

The Letter

This copy of the letter was sent to [Darienite.com](https://darienite.com) by Hapgood's public relations firm:

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