

. He held passports in four countries -- the United States, Canada, England and Ireland -- and loved to travel the world, his twin brother, David Whelan, said. (Photo: Whelan family photo) # MOSCOW -- Russia's deputy foreign minister is brushing back suggestions that an American being held in Moscow on suspicion of spying could be exchanged for a Russian. # Paul Whelan, who also holds Canadian, British and Irish citizenship, was detained in late December. His arrest has led to speculation that Russia could be using him as a pawn to exchange for Maria Butina, the Russian who pleaded guilty last month to acting as a foreign agent in the U.S. # But deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov said Saturday that discussing the issue would be premature because Whelan hasn't been formally charged, according to Russian news agencies. # Paul Whelan, 48, of Novi (pictured in the center with two unidentified men) served two tours in Iraq with the Marine Corps before being given a bad-conduct discharge in 2008. He was charged with espionage in Russia Dec. 28, 2018, and is being held in a prison in Moscow. His family insists he is not a spy. Whelan family photo # Paul Whelan, 48, of Novi was arrested in Russia Dec. 28 and charged with espionage. His family insists he is not a spy. He held passports in four countries -- the United States, Canada, England and Ireland -- and loved to travel the world, his twin brother, David Whelan, said. Whelan family photo # Paul Whelan, 48, of Novi was arrested in Russia Dec. 28 and charged with espionage. His family insists he is not a spy. He