

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, JULY 18, 1984

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SON OF PRE-COMMUNIST AFGHANISTAN OFFICIAL IS RELEASED
FROM PAKISTAN -- GREETES HIS FATHER IN GREAT BEND, KANSAS

WASHINGTON -- Kansas Senator Bob Dole, who has been working for 15 months on the release of the son of a pre-Communist Afghanistan official, will meet with the reunited family in Great Bend this Thursday. The meeting will take place at the Highland Manor, 3017 Tenth Street.

Ahmadullah Ahmadullah, former Interior Minister of Afghanistan, first met Senator Dole in Great Bend in March of 1983. Ahmadullah had been given refugee status and brought to the United States after several years of house arrest following the Communist takeover.

Everyone in Ahmadullah's family was released except his son Ataullah Ahmad Zia, who was attending school in Bulgaria at the time.

"Ever since his arrival in the United States, Mr. Ahmadullah has been working to bring his son to this country," said Senator Dole. "Zia eventually fled to Pakistan, but even there he was refused refugee status, and was advised to apply for second preference visa to immigrate to our country."

"We've sent a lot of letters to Pakistan and elsewhere, and I am certainly pleased to be able to greet Mr. Ahmadullah and his son Zia," said Dole.

Mr. Ahmadullah, Minister of Interior in Afghanistan prior to communist takeover, came to the United States in July of 1981 as a refugee. Mr. Lee Turner of Great Bend heard of the plight of Ahmadullah and asked him and his wife, four sons, and two nephews to come to Great Bend. At that time, March of 1983, Ahmadullah spoke with Senator Dole at a public meeting in Great Bend, asking for assistance bringing his oldest son, Zia, to the U.S.

Zia was denied refugee status entry with his family in 1981 as he was attending college in Bulgaria. He could not attain similar status in Bulgaria and could not return to Afghanistan for fear of reprisals. In 1982 he was returned to Afghanistan and was inducted into the military. Six months later, he moved to Pakistan for a possible reunion with his family in the United States. Senator Dole generated numerous letters, cablegrams, and phone calls to various federal agencies with differing positive reactions.

Finally after an April 9, 1984 letter from Senator Dole to Mr. Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, there was some positive action in Zia's case. With the additional assistance of a Turkish United Nations official and the Catholic Conference, Zia was able to "escape" from Pakistan to Rome. After six weeks in Rome, Zia was reunited with his family in Great Bend on July 12, 1984.