

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

SH 141 Hart Building, Washington, D.C. 20510

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: WALT RIKER
(202) 224-5358

**DOLE SPEAKS WITH U.S. AMBASSADOR TO SYRIA
WHILE SOME HOSTAGES TASTE FREEDOM,
LET'S REMEMBER COLONEL BILL HIGGINS;
HUMANITARIANISM SHOULD PUSH IRAN, NOT "GEOPOLITICAL BARGAINING"**

LIKE ALL AMERICANS, I JOIN IN REJOICING OVER THE RECENT RELEASE OF TWO AMERICAN HOSTAGES -- MR. POLHILL AND MR. REED.

AS THE SENATE KNOWS, I LED A CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO THE MIDDLE EAST DURING THE MOST RECENT RECESS. ON A STOP IN SYRIA, WE URGED PRESIDENT ASSAD AND FOREIGN MINISTER SHAARA TO DO EVERYTHING THEY COULD TO ASSIST IN WINNING THE RELEASE OF HOSTAGES.

I HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY TELEPHONED MR. SHAARA -- IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE RELEASE OF MR. POLHILL -- TO THANK HIM FOR SYRIA'S CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN THAT ENDEAVOR.

RAFSANJANI

AS AN ASIDE, I NOTE THAT IRAN'S PRESIDENT RAFSANJANI IS COMPLAINING THIS MORNING THAT WE ARE NOT SHOWING ENOUGH GRATITUDE TOWARD IRAN -- FOR WHAT HE IMPLIES IS ITS ROLE IN WINNING THE RELEASE OF THE TWO HOSTAGES.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT ROLE, IF ANY, IRAN HAS PLAYED. IF THEY HAVE PLAYED A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE, AS AN AMERICAN, I DO SAY: THANK YOU.

BUT I ALSO SAY THIS: HELPING OBTAIN THE RELEASE OF INNOCENT HOSTAGES, TAKEN BY TERRORISTS, IS WHAT ALL CIVILIZED NATIONS OUGHT TO DO, AS A MATTER OF COURSE.

IT IS WHAT WE DO, AS A NATION -- AND I NOTE THAT THE PRESIDENT, THIS MORNING, INDICATED WE ARE GOING TO DO WHAT WE CAN TO GAIN AN ACCOUNTING FOR FOUR IRANIANS MISSING IN LEBANON.

THERE ARE STILL SEVEN AMERICANS HELD HOSTAGE OR NOT FINALLY ACCOUNTED FOR IN LEBANON. IRAN HAS A VERY LARGE AMOUNT OF INFLUENCE OVER AT LEAST SOME OF THE GROUPS HOLDING THOSE HOSTAGES, OR KNOWING OF THEIR FATE.

IRAN -- NOT AS A MATTER OF GEOPOLITICAL BARGAINING, BUT AS A MATTER OF SIMPLE HUMANITY -- OUGHT TO BE DOING WHAT IT CAN TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ON AND RELEASE OF THOSE INNOCENT AMERICANS.

AS LONG AGO AS HIS INAUGURAL ADDRESS, PRESIDENT BUSH PLEDGED THAT WE WOULD RESPOND TO ANY SUCH MOVES BY IRAN. HE REPEATED THAT PLEDGE TODAY. HOPEFULLY IRAN'S LEADERS WILL UNDERSTAND PRESIDENT BUSH IS SERIOUS ABOUT THAT PLEDGE.

AMBASSADOR DJEREJIAN

IN ANY CASE, THIS MORNING I ALSO TELEPHONED OUR AMBASSADOR IN DAMASCUS, ED DJEREJIAN -- WHO, BY THE WAY, IS DOING AN OUTSTANDING JOB -- ASKING THAT HE AGAIN PASS ON MY THANKS TO MR. SHAARA.

OF COURSE, I TOOK THE OCCASION, TOO, TO URGE THAT WE CONTINUE TO PUSH AS HARD AS WE CAN FOR THE RELEASE OF THE OTHER AMERICAN AND WESTERN HOSTAGES. AS TWO FAMILIES REJOICE, TOO MANY OTHERS STILL LIVE IN ANGUISH.

SPEAKING BOTH FOR MYSELF AND SENATOR METZENBAUM -- WHO WAS PART OF OUR MIDDLE EAST DELEGATION -- I ALSO ASKED AMBASSADOR DJEREJIAN TO URGE THE SYRIANS TO DEAL JUSTLY WITH THREE SYRIAN JEWS BEING HELD WITHOUT OFFICIAL CHARGE IN SYRIA. THIS WAS ANOTHER ISSUE WE RAISED IN OUR MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD.

COL. HIGGINS

BUT WHAT I REALLY WANT TO MENTION THIS MORNING IS ANOTHER ITEM THAT I RAISED WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD, AND SPOKE ABOUT THIS MORNING AGAIN WITH AMBASSADOR DJEREJIAN. THAT IS THE MATTER OF COLONEL WILLIAM HIGGINS -- THE MARINE OFFICER TAKEN CAPTIVE WHILE ON DUTY WITH U.N. PEACE-KEEPING FORCES IN LEBANON.

AS THE SENATE KNOWS, THOSE BELIEVED TO HAVE HELD COLONEL HIGGINS HAVE ANNOUNCED TO THE WORLD THAT THEY HAVE EXECUTED HIM. BUT NO ONE KNOWS FOR SURE.

WHILE THE FAMILIES OF MR. POLHILL AND MR. REED UNDERSTANDABLY CELEBRATE -- AND WHILE THE FAMILIES OF OTHER HOSTAGES AT LEAST CAN TAKE SOME HOPE FOR THE RELEASE OF THEIR LOVED ONES -- COLONEL HIGGINS' FAMILY KNOWS ONLY FRUSTRATION AND SORROW.

MRS. HIGGINS

I KNOW MRS. HIGGINS -- MARINE MAJOR ROBIN HIGGINS. IN THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS, I HAVE RECEIVED A PRIVATE NOTE FROM HER.

SHE IS A LOVING WIFE, A STEADFAST MARINE, AND A FINE HUMAN BEING. SHE HAS BORNE UP REMARKABLY WELL, UNDER INCREDIBLE STRESS. SHE DOESN'T INSIST THAT HER HUSBAND'S NAME BE IN THE HEADLINES EVERY DAY; SHE DOESN'T DEMONSTRATE, OR COMPLAIN, OR SEEK ATTENTION FOR HERSELF OR PLIGHT.

BUT SHE DOESN'T WANT COLONEL BILL HIGGINS FORGOTTEN.

WE CARE, EQUALLY, ABOUT ALL AMERICANS WHO HAVE BEEN TAKEN HOSTAGE, AND ALL THEIR FAMILIES.

BUT COLONEL HIGGINS WAS THERE AS A MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN ARMED SERVICES, ON OFFICIAL DUTY -- AS I SAID, SECONDED TO THE U.N. PEACE-KEEPING FORCES.

AS A NATION, WE DO NOT -- WE MUST NOT -- REST UNTIL WE HAVE A FINAL ACCOUNTING OF ALL OUR MILITARY PERSONNEL LOST OR MISSING ON OFFICIAL DUTY. AS A PEOPLE, ON A HUMANITARIAN BASIS, WE CARE DEEPLY ABOUT THOSE AMERICANS SERVING THEIR COUNTRY WHO HAVE BEEN LOST.

THAT IS WHY WE CONTINUE TO PRESS SO HARD ON THE QUESTION OF OUR POW/MIA'S FROM THE VIETNAM ERA.

THAT IS WHY WE MUST NOT FORGET -- WHY WE MUST NOT STOP OR REDUCE OUR EFFORTS -- TO OBTAIN FINAL AND AUTHORITATIVE INFORMATION ON COLONEL HIGGINS. AND, SHOULD IT TURN OUT HE IS DEAD, TO AT LEAST REGAIN HIS REMAINS, FOR RETURN TO HIS COUNTRY AND HIS FAMILY.

IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY, PRESIDENT BUSH EMPHASIZED COLONEL HIGGINS CASE.

AS I SAID, I ALSO DISCUSSED IT WITH AMBASSADOR DJEREJIAN. AND I WILL CONTINUE TO RAISE IT, WHEREVER AND WHENEVER IT MIGHT HAVE SOME EFFECT.

AND I URGE ALL AMERICANS -- AS WE JOIN IN REJOICING OVER THE RELEASE OF HOSTAGES, AND IN HOPEFUL PRAYERS FOR THE SAFE RELEASE OF OTHERS -- TO REMEMBER COLONEL HIGGINS; AND TO REMEMBER THAT OUR NATIONAL AGENDA ON HOSTAGES WILL NOT BE FULLY RESOLVED UNTIL HIS CASE, TOO, IS FULLY RESOLVED.

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