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NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE REPORTS AFRICAN HONEYBEE BILL

WASHINGTON, D.C. --The Senate Agriculture Committee today reported a bill, introduced by Senator Bob Dole, to strengthen the Department of Agriculture's authority to prevent entry into the United States of a species of South American insect viewed as a major potential threat to segments of American agriculture.

The threat posed by the Africanized Brazilian Honeybee -- which is receiving increasing publicity and was the subject of a television network documentary last weekend -- "may not be our most immediate or urgent threat," said Dole, "but the potential for multi-billion dollar damage to crops is there and warrants Congressional action." The Subcommittee on Agriculture Research and General Legislation held hearings June 3, and the Kansas Senator said he expects action by the full Senate soon.

Senator Dole said his bill would tighten quarantine measures and import controls on the bees and authorize a program of eradication and control in cooperation with the Governments of Canada, Mexico and Central America. It also encourages research. Data developed in 1971 and 1972 by a special committee, chaired by Dr. Charles D. Michener of the University of Kansas, shows that African or Brazilian Honeybees could migrate to North America and become a serious public nuisance, a major problem to the beekeeping industry, a danger to several varieties of crops and, not inconceivably, a threat to the lives of people and animals.

"The dollars and cents impact of the African Honeybee in this country could be very high indeed," Dole said. "The value of farm commodities directly dependent upon insects for pollination has been estimated by the Department of Agriculture at \$1 billion and crops valued at \$6 billion are greatly improved by bee pollination. Recent farming techniques have cut back populations of other insects which pollinate crops, making the bee even more important in the vital pollination process. This new strain of honeybee could also destroy the beekeeping industry -- a million dollar business in Kansas -- as we know it.