

REFUGEE

Scottsdale attorney helping one Afghan to safety

By Brent Ruffner

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A Scottsdale immigration attorney has been thrust into urgent circumstances as he tries to assist an Afghan interpreter make his way out of a potentially deadly situation in Kabul.

The Associated Press reported officials said efforts have been underway for several days from various points in Kabul as Afghans seek to flee the country taken over by the Taliban. Intelligence teams inside Kabul are helping guide both Americans and Afghans and their families to the airport or are arranging for them to be rescued by other means.

Valley immigration attorney Darius Amiri is attempting to help one man obtain a work visa to be able to return to the United States.

Amiri is chair of the immigration department and an attorney at Rose Law Group in Scottsdale.

Now, the man — who the attorney identified as Zabi who worked as an interpreter for the U.S. military while they were in Afghanistan, made it past the Taliban and to the airport gate in Kabul, the attorney said.

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The attorney is communicating with the man via WhatsApp and through email messages.

"A visa is good," Amiri said. "But it doesn't do much good if you are dead. He's got to get out of there. You know, he's sending me audio messages where you can hear gunfire in the background. It's really scary."

The Associated Press reported CIA case officers, special operation forces and agents from the Defense Intelligence Agency on the ground are gathering some U.S. citizens and Afghans who worked for the U.S. at predetermined pick-up sites for those living outside Kabul.

The officials would not detail where these airlift sites were for security reasons. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss ongoing operations, according to the report.

Amiri said he initially tried to help the man obtain a work visa a few years ago. He met the man through a mutual friend and had helped with the administrative process of a work visa.

The men hadn't stayed in constant contact.

Earlier this month, that changed. He said the man told



A photo shows a man named Zabi, seated with back to the camera, acting as an interpreter helping platoon commander Corey Mazza talk with Afghans during a deployment in 2011. [Submitted photo]

friends in the U.S. the Taliban was gaining momentum.

"It became not just an appeal case," Amiri said. "But (now it became) let's get everyone involved to help him... It popped up out of need and out of urgency."

Amiri said the man is making his way through an "apocalyptic" environment as Afghans seek to retreat from the

country that has seen a rapid expansion of the Taliban's power in a matter of days.

Amiri said he hopes the man can make it to U.S. custody and onto a plane. He said so far, the man has been pepper-sprayed as he stands in a crowded area flooded by Afghans trying to flee the country.

"It's kind of like you are on

your own," Amiri said.

The Associated Press reported in Washington, some veterans in Congress were calling on the Biden Administration to extend a security perimeter beyond the Kabul airport so more Afghans could get through.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said a "small number" of U.S. troops did go outside

the perimeter a short distance for a "short amount of time" to help bring in 169 people, but gave no details. Those were Americans, Biden said.

The administration has said it's not capable at current deployment levels in Kabul of bringing order to the chaos, the report said.

But Amiri, whose father,

John, retreated from Iran in 1979 — isn't giving up hope. He said he's contacted Arizona politicians to try to help expedite the process.

"We can't turn our backs on them now, when they need us the most," Amiri said. "We've got to help our friends."

The Associated Press contributed to this story.