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PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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President and Mrs. Bush Saddened by Death of Mohammad Zahir Shah

Laura and I are saddened by the death of Mohammad Zahir Shah, who was King of Afghanistan from 1933 to 1973.

Zahir Shah was a monumental figure in Afghan history, and his life spanned vast changes in that country's political system. He returned to Afghanistan as an ordinary citizen in 2002, shortly after the Taliban regime was removed from power, and continued to play an important part in the life of his country. Zahir Shah supported the goal of a representative and freely elected government in his homeland, and he encouraged Afghanistan toward democracy and stability. His presence in Afghanistan as a private citizen and "Father of the Nation" for the past several years has been an important factor in rebuilding Afghanistan.

On behalf of the American people, Laura and I extend our condolences to Mohammad Zahir Shah's family and to the people of Afghanistan.

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