

One Afghan family resettling in the U.S. finds a respite.



By Miriam Jordan

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Zar Mohammad Yousafzai applied for a job with the U.S. military forces in Afghanistan 14 years ago. The money was good, and he believed in the American mission to root out extremists there and develop their homeland.

This week, his family of nine settled into their new apartment in Houston. They are among the Afghans who, by virtue of the help they provided to American forces during the two-decade war in their country, were able to flee Afghanistan as it fell to the Taliban.

The family fled on Aug. 14, the day before the Taliban seized Kabul, the capital. Mr. Yousafzai and his wife, Bibi, worried for the fate of several brothers, nephews and cousins who also had worked for the Americans.

Still, after years of threats and tumult, their eventual arrival in Houston with the help of a refugee aid group has offered a respite.

“I can walk comfortably to places,” said his son Huzzaif, 11, who was kidnapped four years ago and held for ransom. “My mother doesn’t have to worry about me being stolen anymore.”

Mr. Yousafzai was attached to U.S. Army units in Kandahar, a hotbed of Taliban activity, and Zabul Province, where the Taliban had support among many villagers and reaped financial rewards from cultivating opium. He won accolades for his performance and helped three brothers, three nephews and a brother-in-law secure jobs on bases.

Working with Army engineers, he taught Afghan military personnel how to use and maintain equipment like bulldozers and backhoes. He also went on combat missions with soldiers in several provinces, and they came under fire on and off the base.

Threats against him and his family intensified. In 2015, he quit his job with the military and took a position with the government in Kabul as an audit manager. But the threats continued. His car was hit by gunfire, and Huzzaif was kidnapped.

Having sought a visa for years, Mr. Yousafzai was notified last year that he could get one, and found out in July that he could board a relocation flight to the United States.

Now the family is dealing with modern American problems. A trip to Walmart inspired admiration over American plenty but cost the family \$82.43. Mr. Yousafzai is also juggling his appointments with drop-offs at three schools.

“I am having time-management challenges,” he said.

Miriam Jordan is a national correspondent who reports on the impact of immigration on the society, culture and economy of the United States. Before joining The Times, she covered immigration at the Wall Street Journal and was a correspondent in Brazil, India, Hong Kong and Israel. @mirjordan