



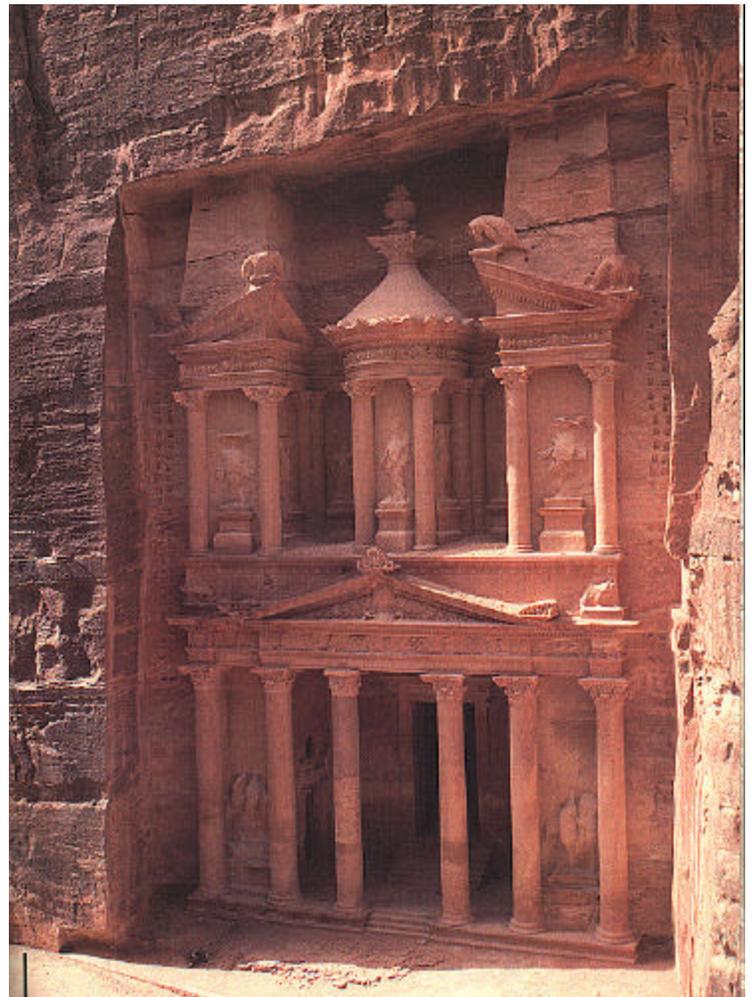
# ***The Middle East And North Africa***

## ***A Cultural Guide For Security Assistance Personnel***



**The Defense Institute  
Of  
Security Assistance  
Management**

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June 2000



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## A Cultural Guide for Security Assistance Personnel

### 1. Introduction.

a. This guide could not have been prepared without the assistance of Dr. Laraine Carter Mansfield, a member of DISAM's adjunct faculty. Her advice and editorial assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

b. This cultural guide about the Middle East and North African region is published to assist Security Assistance personnel to better understand the cultural aspects of the region and the people. This guide was compiled from a variety of sources and documents which were available in the DISAM Middle East Seminar Room, from the personal experiences of the author, other SAO personnel and Dr. Mansfield. Every effort was made to be accurate. The countries and the people of the region are not, however, homogeneous. Differences in culture, language and the practice of religion do exist. This guide deals with generalities and similarities as much as possible. Security Assistance personnel are therefore encouraged to learn the unique cultural aspects of their host country as well. The embassy Community Liaison Office, Foreign Service Nationals and host nation interlocutors are excellent sources for gaining a more thorough understanding of an SAO's respective host country. A solid understanding of the culture of the region and the people is key to the SAO's effective mission accomplishment and representation of the U.S. and the U.S. military.

c. Comments and recommendations from SAO's in the field are desired, especially concerning additional topics to add to the guide and inaccuracies between the guide and actual experiences. Also, the phonetic spelling of Arabic words and phrases in English may be done differently in different sources by different authors. Readers are asked to bear with these differences.

### 2. Dealing with Cultural Differences.

a. The Middle East and North Africa region culturally is very different from the U.S. in many ways. When faced with these cultural differences, there are a number of options for



Security Assistance personnel (SAO). The SAO can reject the culture and spend the time counting the days until the tour ends. The SAO can ignore the culture and try and live, work and socialize only within the "Little America" community. Or the SAO can seek to learn, explore and experience the richness of the local culture. The most successful SAO takes the latter route, though it may not necessarily be the easiest. It will, in the long run, be the most educational and the most enjoyable.

b. In trying to learn and understand any foreign culture, it's important to remember a couple of ideas. First, before making any judgment about the local culture, try and take your cultural glasses off; try to put aside one's cultural biases. Also, remember that local customs were developed by or accepted by the local society to fit their needs and beliefs – not yours. Be open and positive – see the experience as an adventure.

c. Miscommunications and misunderstandings between SAOs and host nation interlocutors will likely occur at times. Cultural differences are not the only factor that can contribute to miscommunication and misunderstandings. Differences in class, education and wealth, for example, can also contribute. Personality characteristics may also have a causal or magnifying effect. Characteristics such as, lack of patience, inability to cope with stress, arrogance, self righteousness and selfishness, are likely to create challenges for the SAO in this region.

### 3. Who are the Arabs?

a. There is no one standard for who is an Arab and what they look like. Arabs can be brown skinned, as in Saudi Arabia and Sudanese, even blonde. One Islamic religion. While most are not Arabs. Arabs may also (Sephardim). One common whose native language is some revelation of Islam, the term the people who inhabited the an ancient history, language religion. Arabs share many of habits; some values are a result history and the desert from the Islamic religion. history.



the Gulf states, black like a cannot also define an Arab by the Arabs are Muslims, most Muslims be Christian or even Jewish definition of an Arab is a person form of Arabic. Prior to the 'Arab', was often used to describe Arabian Peninsula. Arabs share and, as noted, often the Islamic the same cultural values and of ancient values formed in early environment, and others result Arabs are very proud of their

b. In the past, many Arabs were herders. They depended upon the herding of camels, sheep and goats for their livelihood. Other Arabs depended upon agriculture and trade. Arab cultures were also kinship based, and group oriented, often around a tribe. Each tribe was composed of a group of extended families. Conformity to the values of the tribe was requisite. Alliance to the tribe and groups within the tribe were also important. An Arabic proverb, still widely accepted today, captures this idea. "I fight with my brother against my cousin, but I fight with my cousin against the stranger."

### 4. Arabic Language.

a. To an Arab, Arabic is the best language in the world. It is the divine language since Arabic was the language of Allah's (God) revelations to the prophet Mohammed and is thus the language of the sacred book of Islam, the Quran (Koran). Classical Arabic, the language of the

Quran, is often referred to as Modern Standard Arabic. This is the written language and is used on formal occasions, in oratory, and in radio and television broadcasts.

b. Besides the classical, or Modern Standard Arabic, there are many dialects. These dialects are spoken only, not written. Five predominant spoken dialects are: Egyptian, Levantine (Syria, Lebanon), Peninsular (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the Gulf States), Magrebi (Morocco, Tunisia), and Iraqi. To be literate therefore, Arabs must be able to read and write classical Arabic and speak their local dialect.

c. To many Arabs, Arabic is not just a means of communication. They delight in the complexities of Arabic grammar; the language is a flexible instrument of thought. Arabs prize eloquence and enjoy linguistic subtleties. Arabs can be flowery, indirect and elaborate with words, especially in speeches and orations. The language is used to arouse, to stimulate emotionally, rather than intellectually. There is no occasion for sloppy speech. Speaking eloquently, with long sentences, rather than laconically, in either Arabic or English, is the key to impressing your Arab counterparts.



d. Arabs enjoy speaking and have what can be termed communicative routines. These may vary from country to country. There are phrases for greeting hello, good morning, good evening, sickness, entering someone's home, welcoming someone to your home, and so on. Greeting rituals will be covered in more detail in Paragraph 6 and a list of Arabic words and phrases is included at Enclosure 2. While Arabic is difficult in its grammar and pronunciation, most SAOs should be able to say, and SHOULD learn, at least the basic greetings.

e. Many Arabs also believe that words have supernatural powers. Arabs spend a lot of time blessing each other and wishing good things. For example, when meeting an Arab's son, you may say something like "what a nice boy, may he have a long life". If you say something like "what a nice boy, I wish I had one like him", and not bless him, you will be seen as envying the boy. This is seen as casting the "Evil Eye". If the child later is injured or becomes sick, you will be blamed because you did not bless him, but cast the evil eye on him. As a side note, many Arabs believe that to prevent the evil eye one can wear blue; many will wear a blue amulet stone. If you hold your open palm toward a person they will think that you believe they are giving you the evil eye and are trying to block its effect. Holding the open palm toward someone should be avoided.

## 5. Religion - Islam.

a. Islam is at once a religion and a total way of life. Nearly one-fifth or more of the world's population, some 900 million in around 60 countries are Muslims. Islam means to surrender to the will of God, or Allah. Allah is the name of God in Arabic, literally meaning "the

God” to emphasize that “He is the one and only”. Believers in Islam are called Muslims (also Moslems) which means “one who submits to the will of Allah”.

b. Islam is not just a religion, if religion means only a system of belief and worship. Rather, Islam is a way of life. It proclaims faith and sets forward daily rituals. It prescribes order for individuals and society: codifying law, family relationships, matters of business, etiquette, dress, food, personal hygiene and more. Islam is a complete, complex civilization in which, ideally, individuals, societies and government should all reflect the will of God. It is a system of rules or laws to be followed in which the sacred is not separated from the secular.

c. Islam teaches that Allah (God) revealed His existence to a number of prophets through the ages. They include Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. According to Muslims, however, God’s final and complete revelation was given to the prophet Muhammed.



Muhammed was born in Mecca, in what is now Saudi Arabia, around 570 A.D. During one of his frequent meditations alone in the desert hills near Mecca in the lunar month of Ramadan in 610 A.D., Muhammed heard revelations from the angel Gabriel and began to receive the word of Allah. At Allah’s commandment, the Prophet Muhammed began reciting God’s word and preaching the message revealed to him. Muhammed’s wife, Khadija, and some close friends were the first believers. The ruling oligarchy in Mecca fought to stamp out the Islamic movement. Islamic tradition also holds that during this period, Muhammed went on a night journey in which he was transported from Mecca to the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and from there ascended to heaven for a preview of the afterlife. (Biblical tradition holds that the Dome of the Rock is the site where Abraham was to sacrifice his son Isaac. The site is revered by Muslims, Jews and Christians.) In 622 A.D., after continuous persecution, Muhammed and his followers left Mecca and took refuge in the city of Yathrib, now known as Medina. This emigration, or Hijra, marks the first year of the Islamic calendar. A.H., which stands for Anno Hegira, “literally - the year of the emigration”, is used to denote the years in this calendar.

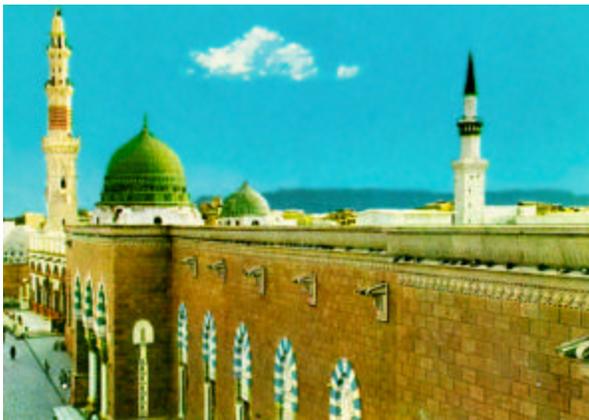
d. In Medina, Muhammed became the leader of the community as well as its religious teacher. Both the Quran (Koran), the revealed word of Allah, and the example of the Prophet (Sunna) governed daily life and gave the community its laws. More people converted to Islam and after eight years, Muhammed and his followers returned to Mecca. Muhammed then smashed the pagan idols in and around the temple called the “Ka’ba”. The Grand Mosque erected around the Ka’ba is the holiest site in Islam and marks the direction towards which Muslims pray. Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem are Islam’s holiest cities because of their connections with Muhammed’s life and the Mosques built to commemorate these events. Muhammed died in 632 A.D. Muslims honor Muhammed as God’s final prophet. He did not create but received Allah’s word as recorded in the Quran. Muslims do not worship Muhammed, only Allah. When speaking the name of the Prophet or referring to him, Muslims will add the words “peace be upon him”, and when writing in English, will add the abbreviation (PBUH).

e. When Muhammed died, a dispute over leadership succession arose within the Muslim community.

(1) One faction, which is referred to as “Sunnis” derived from the Arabic word for ‘Orthodox’, felt that the successor or Caliph (from khalifa, Arabic for successor) should be chosen as other Arab leaders had in the past, by consensus selection or election. They supported the succession of the first four Caliphs, often referred to as the “rightly guided”. All were companions of the Prophet Muhammed.

(2) Another faction believed that the succession should be through the Prophet’s bloodline and that Muhammed had chosen his cousin and son-in-law, Ali, as his spiritual and secular heir. This faction is referred to as “Shia Ali” (partisans of Ali), or “Shi’ites”. In 680 AD, Ali’s son, Hussein, the Prophet’s grandson, led a small rebellion against the ruling Sunni Caliph; they were massacred in the battle of Karbala (located in present day Iraq).

(3) Shia (Shi’ite) and Sunni are the two major branches of Muslims. Sunnis comprise about 80-85% of all Muslims. The major differences between these two groups is not necessarily in beliefs and religious law, which are basically the same for both groups, but rather in practice and political theory. Shias have developed a hierarchical religious leadership and await the return of an Imam (religious leader) who is said to have gone into hiding but will return some day. Shias are located primarily in Iran, Iraq, Yemen, and the eastern province of Saudi Arabia. Shia and Sunni are further divided among themselves into groups with some differences in ritual, practice, structure and political orientation. There are other smaller Muslim sects as well. One mystical strain, which encompasses both Sunnis and Shias, is Sufiism. Sufis are individuals who believe in the need to go beyond formal religious practices and find means to commune directly with Allah.



f. The teachings of Islam are found in the holy book called the Quran (Koran) which Muslims hold to be the immutable word of God. The Quran is viewed as the unrivaled source of authority in almost all aspects of individual and group living. The Quran was revealed to Muhammed in classical Arabic. A Quran in Arabic, believed to be the word of God and a Holy book, is handled with great reverence. Editions of the Quran, which also contain translations or commentaries in other languages, are not necessarily seen in the same Holy context as a Quran in Arabic. The Quran is complemented by the “Hadith”, the traditions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammed and his companions. Together, they form the basis for the “Sunnah”, or path, for devout Muslims to follow. Sunnah is the totality of the deeds, sayings and approval of the Prophet on details of community life. The Quran and the Sunnah are the foundations of the “Shari’a”, or Islamic law. In many, but not all, Islamic countries, the Shari’a provides the basis for judgement and punishment in some or all areas of life. In some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, the Shari’a is the fundamental basis for the country’s legal codes and judicial system. In other countries, Shari’a has been supplemented with what could be termed “western” legal codes and practices.

g. In Islam, no images or pictures of any kind are permitted in mosques. There is no picture or graphical representation of God as in Christianity. Islam holds that all men are created equal. There are no pews, benches or chairs in mosques and generally, no reserved places for dignitaries. Mosques are usually furnished with mats and rugs. Worshippers usually form lines, regardless of social status or rank, behind the Imam, or leader. The belief in the equality of men also results in Islam not having the Christian concept of “ordained” clergy and no separate religious organization of a denominational church. There are, however, religious leaders characterized by their knowledge of Islamic law. Many of these religious leaders exert political power, as well as religious, and some have been venerated by their followers.

h. There are five key practices or “pillars of faith” in Islam that every Muslim is to adhere.

(1) The first is the profession of faith, the “Shahada”. The Shahada means believing and repeating that “There is no god but Allah and Muhammed is the messenger of God”.

(2) The second pillar is praying, or “Salat”. Prayers are performed five times a day – at dawn, noon, late afternoon, sunset and night. There is no set hour for prayers; the times for prayers vary with the movement of the sun during the seasons. Daily prayers are performed, either individually or in a group. When prayer times come, Muslims will ritually wash themselves and face toward the Ka’ba in Mecca to pray. In some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, everything stops during prayer time. Facing in a common direction symbolizes unity of purpose for the millions of Muslims offering their prayers at the same time. Four things are normally required for the performance of daily prayers: ritually prescribed washing or ablutions; being properly clothed; a suitable clean surface/area for praying; and facing Mecca. Males are expected to pray in mosques whenever possible. Friday, however, is the day of communal prayer and men are expected to go to a mosque for the Friday noon prayer, which is considered to be the most important for the community. During Friday prayers, a speech or sermon is usually given by a religious leader, the Imam. Prayers contain verses from the Quran and are said in Arabic, regardless of the Muslim’s native language. Arabic is considered the language of the revelation of God’s word. Personal prayer requests, in addition to the required prayers, may be said in one’s native language. Prayer times are announced by the call for prayer from the mosques by the Mu’ezzin. A general translation of the call for prayer is as follows:

God is great. God is great  
God is great. God is great.  
I testify that there is no god but God.  
I testify that there is no god but God.  
Muhammed is the messenger of God.  
Muhammed is the messenger of God.  
Come to prayer. Come to prayer.  
Come to success. Come to success.  
God is great. God is great.  
There is no god but God.

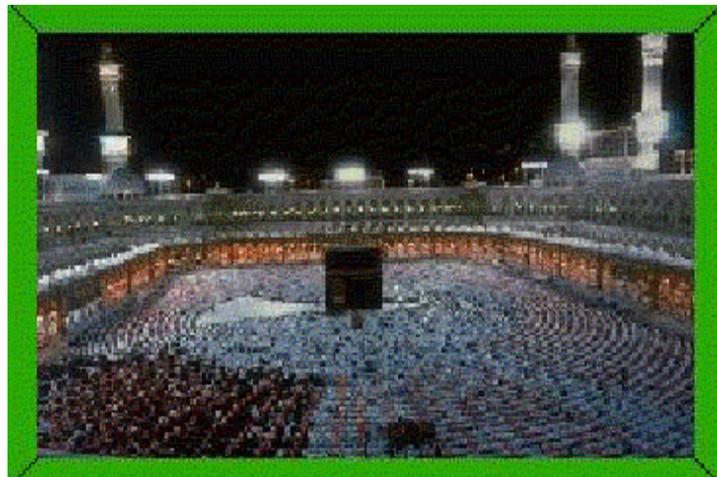


(3) The third pillar is tithing or charity, called “Zakat”. Muslims are required to provide a portion of their personal wealth to help the less fortunate. All things are viewed as belonging to God and personal wealth is viewed as holding God’s possessions in trust or being a steward of God’s belongings. Zakat is usually paid at the end of the month of Ramadan. It appears that an accepted standard is for a Muslim to provide 2½ % of their personal wealth as zakat. It must be understood that giving money to the less fortunate is seen as a privilege and that there is no disgrace in receiving money through zakat.

(4) The fourth pillar is fasting, called “Sawm”. Each year, during the month of Ramadan, adult Muslims are expected to fast between the period of dawn (or first light) until sunset. Fasting includes abstaining from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual relations. Persons who are ill, children, pregnant and breast-feeding women, the elderly and those traveling, are not required to fast. Persons who were excused from fasting during Ramadan, are expected to fast an equal number of days sometime during the year. Children begin fasting at the age of puberty. The purpose of fasting is to contribute to a person’s spiritual life and to help a Muslim better understand the plight of the poor and less fortunate. The end of Ramadan and the month of fasting is marked by the holiday known as the Eid Al Fitr (see following discussion on Ramadan).

(5) The fifth pillar is the pilgrimage, called the “Hajj”. Hajj is the pilgrimage to Mecca. All Muslims are expected to make the Hajj once in a lifetime if financially and physically able to travel. The Hajj is performed during the month of Dhu’l Al-Hijjah. A pilgrimage made during any other time is considered a minor pilgrimage and is called Umrah.

i. Ramadan. During the month of Ramadan, as previously indicated, most Muslims fast during daylight hours. This fasting means an abstinence from drinking, eating, smoking, sexual relations, chewing gum etc... SAOs must be sensitive to the effects of fasting on their host nation counterparts, people on the street and the Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) who work in the embassy. Many people may become tired and irritable during the day due to the lack of food, water, and the



effects of caffeine and nicotine withdrawal. Eating or drinking in public, even while driving around is not recommended, and, in some countries, is against the law. Be culturally sensitive. Work hours, both government and commercial, are usually adjusted to accommodate the fasting. Sometimes business and government hours may not be more than five hours a day. Some stores and other commercial businesses may close very early in the afternoon and reopen during the evening after the breaking of the fast. Many Muslims will rise early and eat a meal just prior to dawn. The daily fast is broken after sunset with a meal called “Iftar” (literally “break-fast). In some countries, this meal is preceded by eating some dates. The Iftar is often a very large,

multiple course meal. If an SAO is invited to attend an Iftar, this is an honor, and is one of the rare occasions when you want to be on time for a meal. At the end of Ramadan an important festival, or holiday, is held to mark the ending of the month of fasting. This festival is called the Eid Al-Fitr and traditionally lasts around 3-4 days. In some countries, gifts between friends and family may be exchanged, people may go visit friends and family, and some colored lights may be put up around the town for decoration. Employers often give their servants a new piece of clothing or money and may also given them some days off to celebrate the Eid.

j. Pilgrimage (Hajj). The Hajj is performed in the twelfth month of the Islamic year. In Saudi Arabia, support for the millions of pilgrims who make the pilgrimage every year is a major undertaking. This includes providing tents, food, water, medical care and transportation as examples. The Hajj includes a number of established rituals. During the Hajj, pilgrims visit the Ka'ba and Grand Mosque in Mecca and the Holy places at Arafa, Mina and Al-Mozdalifa. In performing the Hajj, Pilgrims begin by circling the Ka'ba seven times. Pilgrims then walk seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwa; this commemorates Hagar's walking between the hills seven times in search of water. After spending an evening at Mina, Pilgrims next visit and stay on the Mountain of Arafat for a day, traveling that evening to spend the night at Mozdalifa. Pilgrims complete the Hajj by walking the plain of Arafat and at three specific places the Pilgrims throw stones at pillars representing Satan. All pilgrims wear a simple white robe to indicate that all, regardless of wealth or class, stand equal before God. The end of the Hajj is celebrated with the festival called Eid Al-Adha, or feast of the sacrifice. This is the most important of all Islamic holidays and normally is observed over three to four days. The festival, while marking the end of the Hajj, commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son. On the first day, many sheep and goats will be slaughtered and the meat distributed to the less fortunate. Gifts may also be exchanged and families and friends will be visited. Servants normally receive additional money and are also given days off to celebrate the festival.

k. Holidays and Islamic Calendar.

(1) In order to better understand when Islamic holidays will occur, it's important to have some familiarity with the Islamic calendar. As noted earlier, the Islamic year, Anno Hegira, or A.H., began in the year 622 A.D. when Muhammed emigrated from Mecca to Medina. However, computing the Islamic, or Hegira, year in relation to the western, or Christian year, is not as simple as calculating a 622 year difference. The Islamic calendar is a lunar one, based upon the cycles of the moon with a month essentially equaling one cycle from new moon to new moon. The Islamic year, therefore, consists of 12 months and about 354-355 days. The twelve months and their corresponding days are:

1. Muharram	30	2. Safar	29
3. Rabi Awal	30	4. Rabi Thani	29
5. Jamad Awal	30	6. Jamad Thani	29
7. Rajab	30	8. Shaban	29
9. Ramadan	30	10. Shawwal	29
11. Dhu'l Al-Qa'da	30	12. Dhu'l Al-Hijjah	29/30

Which calendar a country uses varies. Some will officially use only the Hegira year, while most use officially the Hegira and Christian calendars.

(2) The Islamic year has a number of holidays or festivals, such as the Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha, as previously discussed. While these two holidays are normally celebrated throughout the Islamic world, others may not be, or may only be important to particular groups of Muslims, as indicated below. Muslim holidays are dated according to the Islamic calendar. Because the Islamic calendar is based upon lunar cycles, these holidays will rotate through the seasons and not occur on the exact same day or in the same season as do holidays based upon the Christian calendar. Major holidays, listed in chronological order as they occur during the Islamic year are:

(A) Ras Al-Sana – New Year’s Day. This is the first day of the month of Muharram. Religious ceremonies are normally not called for. In some countries this is observed as a work holiday.

(B) Ashura - Observed on Muharram, 10<sup>th</sup>. This is a special religious holiday for Shi’a Muslims. It is a day of sorrow commemorating the death of the Prophet’s grandson Hussein at the battle of Karbala. In some countries, there are parades of males, some of whom flagellate themselves in penance. Some Muslims will also fast.

(C) Maulid Al-Nabi – Prophet’s Birthday. Observed on Rabi Awal 12<sup>th</sup>. The birthday of the Prophet Muhammed is celebrated differently in Muslims countries. Because Islam does not encourage the veneration of the Prophet or other pious individuals, in some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, popular festive celebrations of the Prophet’s birthday are discouraged. In other countries, this day may be a work holiday and children may receive gifts of toys and candy.

(D) Lailat Al-Isra wa Al-Mi’raj – The Night of Journey and Ascent. Observed on Rejab 27<sup>th</sup>. This day commemorates Muhammed’s mystical night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and his ascent into heaven and return on the same night. The ritual of prayers were learned and conducted since this night. This commemoration does not interrupt daily activities, but the evening is often spent in prayer.



(E) Lailat Al-Bara’a – The Night of Repentance. Observed on Shaban 14<sup>th</sup>. Widely believed by pious Muslims as the night Allah approaches Earth to call to man and forgive his sins. Does not normally disrupt daily activities.

(F) Ramadan. The month of Ramadan is previously addressed in paragraph 5i.

(G) Lailat Al-Qadr – Night of Power and Greatness. Observed on Ramadan 27<sup>th</sup>. By custom this is a holy night and is to celebrate the time when Muhammed received the first

revelation of the Quran. It is believed that prayers said at a particular but unspecified time of this evening will definitely be answered, so many pious Muslims spend the evening in prayer.

(H) Eid Al-Fitr – Breaking of the Fast. Celebrated on Shawwal 1<sup>st</sup> after the month-long fast of Ramadan, when the new moon is sighted. See Paragraph 5i.

(I) The Hajj – the Pilgrimage. Conducted during the first ten days of the month of Dhu’l Al-Hijjah. See Paragraph 5j.

(J) Eid Al-Adha – Feast of the Sacrifice. Celebrated on Dhu’l Al-Hijjah 10<sup>th</sup> to mark the end of the Haj or Pilgrimage. See Paragraph 5j.

## 6. Culture, Customs and Tips.

a. This section deals with an overview of Arab customs, culture and offers some tips for interacting and living in the Middle East/North Africa region. It is by no means all-inclusive. No two countries are the same. The goal is to provide some generalities to assist the SAO in getting started and to give some frame of reference about the region.

b. While there are many differences among Arabs, there are some basic cultural similarities among them as well. Many cultural norms and customs pre-date Islam and derive from the desert Bedouin ideals and culture. Bravery, family values, generosity, and protection of the family honor are key concepts. Arabs strive to maintain dignity and respect is very important. Women are viewed as carrying the family honor. Thus, for a male, protection of the family’s women, and therefore the family honor, is absolute. If a woman loses her honor, for example, by having premarital sex or being alone with a non-related male, then the family also loses their honor and the males of the family are viewed as less masculine, even weak. They believe that if a man and woman are alone together that “the devil will be the third”.

A major difference between Americans and Arabs is the idea that actions speak louder than words. For Americans actions count. For an Arab words count. For example, if they ask you to do something and a rule or regulation prohibits you from doing so, they feel that people are more important than the rule. Instead of saying, “No, I can’t do that” in response to their request, they prefer to hear “This may be difficult, but I will try. God Willing (‘In Sha Allah’).” If you keep saying you’re trying, eventually they realize that it won’t happen and the subject will be dropped. Remember, they will likely do the same to you. You may not get a negative response to your request; you won’t get any response at all.

### c. Gender Roles.

(1) In general, two separate cultural norms or worlds exist for men and women. How much they overlap varies from country to country. In countries such as Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Tunisia, women work along side men and occupy governmental and business positions of authority. This is much different from the Arab Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia, where



women's roles are more proscribed. In Saudi Arabia, women are mostly limited to working in fields considered as women's work, such as education and health care for women; there are few, if any, opportunities for women in government. Even business opportunities are usually restricted to those, which cater specifically to women. Women may not attend classes or work with men, nor even drive. It is also difficult to generalize about women in many countries, whether in school or business because there are also class differences. Those from the upper, more affluent class, tend to be better educated and have more opportunities for employment and activities outside the home.

(2) Patriarchal Society. The countries of the Middle East and North Africa are generally patriarchal. Men are in charge, especially in public, and children ultimately belong to the father's family. A woman will rarely criticize her husband, father or other male relative in public. But in private, the woman will likely rule. As noted earlier, men have an obligation to protect their female relatives, and thus their family honor. A woman will never live alone. She will move from the household of one male to another. As a daughter she will be with her father, then, as a wife, with her husband; if something happens to her husband, she will be with a grown son or return to the household of her father, brother or other close male relative. Men are also judged by their generosity. A big man is generous; a stingy man is not viewed as a real man. Being generous is being seen as a good steward of the wealth God has blessed them with and sharing it with the less fortunate. Arab men are expected to provide financial support for their wives, mothers, daughters, sisters and unmarried female relatives.

(3) Arab Mother. The Arab mother is the emotional center of the family. The Arabs have a saying "Heaven lies at the feet of mothers." The mother sees to the rearing of the children and has a great deal of say in how the family's resources are spent. Because this is a patriarchal society, it is important for a woman to have sons because they will take care of her throughout her life. The strongest emotional bond in this society is probably the one between a mother and a son. The mother has first claim over her grown sons, above their wives, and may often be able to dictate or tightly control her son and his family.

(4) Marriage. In most countries of the region marriages are arranged, often to relatives. Dating, especially a single male and female together without a chaperone, is very uncommon. Marriages to first cousins used to be common in some countries, but are becoming less so due to



increasing concern about the adverse genetic effects. Arab expectations for marriage are much different from an Americans. Marriages for romance or love are rare; concerns about social status, financial security and children are key considerations when families look for spouses for their children. The male and/or his family, will usually pay a negotiated "bride price" or dowry for his future wife. This dowry is often paid in gold jewelry, which becomes the property of the woman, even if a divorce occurs. Marrying a relative though, is

a consideration as it keeps the family wealth in the family. Besides the dowry, the husband and his family will also provide a place for the bride to live. This includes completely furnishing it; the furniture also becomes the bride's property. The ideal wife is expected to follow the

obligations set forth in Islam and domestic responsibilities include such things as the care and raising of children, managing servants, and cooking. While Islam does allow a man to have up to four wives, multiple wife marriages are not as common as many Americans believe. One important reason for the establishment of this concept was to ensure that single women and children were not left to fend for themselves, but have someone to take care of them. In the early days of Islam, it was not uncommon for a man to marry the widowed wife of his brother or other male relative. When a man does have multiple wives, Islam requires that he provide fair, equal and just treatment for all wives – identical privileges for each wife. Often the first wife becomes the “first among equals” and may have to agree to her husband marrying another wife.

(5) Divorce. Divorce is accepted and a divorced person may remarry. While it is generally easier for a man to divorce a woman, rather than vice versa, even today a man is expected to have a reason for divorcing his wife. Women can, however, also initiate a divorce, though again, there are some differences between countries. In the case of a divorce, the father and his family generally get custody of the children.

#### d. Family.

(1) In Arab societies it is the family that is the most important group. This includes the extended family, including cousins, aunts, uncles, etc... Members of a family are expected to give support to their relatives. Knowing an Arab’s lineage often help us understand more about them and they are often quite proud to talk about their family lineage highlighting the family’s history, reputation, position and power. SAO personnel should expect to be asked about their family backgrounds. When describing one’s family it is important to stress the positive aspects and not discuss the negative. For example, highlighting that one’s father was an engineer is good, but noting that one’s uncle was an alcoholic is something to be avoided. Arabs believe in the concept that one inherits traits of the family, so accentuating the positive is important.



(2) Having children is expected in this culture and in Islam. Children are expected to be respectful and polite to their elders and are expected not to talk back to their parents in front of non-family members. Concepts of discipline also vary between Arabs and Americans. Arabs will rarely use physical means to discipline their children and think that American actions of “time out” or “sending a child to bed without supper” are cruel. It seems that Americans believe that Arab children are spoiled and they often think the same of ours. In the family group, their children have a lot of freedom and are often permitted to

interrupt. Boys are indulged even more than girls; having a son is very important to an Arab in order to carry on the family. Thus boys get first priority for an education, inheritance, and other opportunities. It’s important to remember, however, that older boys are expected to look after other family members, especially when



something happens to the father. SAOs who do not have or do not desire children, can expect to be questioned by their host nation counterparts and encouraged to have children. Rather than try and explain the desire to not have children, it is recommended that SAOs and their spouses indicate that “God willing, someday God will bless us with children.” For those who have no sons, only daughters, a recommended response is “God has blessed us with daughters and God willing, one day He will bless us with a son.” Arabs do not understand the American desire to not have children or even having only one or two, especially if there is no son.

e. Societal Status.

(1) Social status is important in the Middle East and North Africa. Status is gained by being born into the right family. Family status is not necessarily determined by wealth, though this may be a consideration; status may be based upon the distinguished history of a family or tribe. A related concept is the that of social class. In a sense, there are three social classes. The upper class, which consists of royalty and the wealthy; professional westerners may be considered in this class. The upper middle class, consisting of teachers and professors, wealthy merchants (without other family social status) and government workers (without other family social status). And the lower class of the peasants, farmers and poor.

(2) An Arab born into status must protect it from all challenges throughout his life. If he, or any member of his family fails, is criticized publicly, or has his honor impinged, he and his family lose some status. Status lies in the public face presented to the world and in an individual’s personal dignity. Arabs consider it shocking and inappropriate for anyone of importance to do any kind of manual labor, at home or at work. As an Arab becomes more successful, they will endeavor to arrange jobs for family members further away from manual labor and seek to arrange marriages for female relatives to men of higher social status. Thus, one way to protect one’s status is to have someone else do the work, i.e. to have servants. This protects status and shows generosity by sharing wealth.

(3) Professional westerners, including SAOs and their spouses, will normally be viewed as belonging to the upper class. This creates challenges for Americans since we’re used to doing many things for ourselves, such as washing cars, cleaning house and gardening. SAOs and their spouses will lose status in the eyes of their Arab counterparts if they are seen doing these kinds of activities. Plan on hiring a maid; someone to do the gardening and other work around the residence may also be in order. When entertaining, hire the maid, and if necessary, some additional help for serving and clean up. The cost is usually minimal, but the result is the enhancement, rather than the loss of the SAO’s status. Dressing well, as discussed in the next paragraph, is also important to enhancing one’s status in the region.

f. Dress.

(1) Dress varies widely between the countries in the region. In some countries, such as Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, men and women may dress



very western with business suits, stylish dresses and the like. In other countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the dress will be more traditional. However the people dress, they generally dress conservatively or modestly, in keeping with the tenants of Islam. Men will wear long pants and long sleeves, while women wear loose fitting clothing that generally covers most of the body from neck to ankle. Traditional Arab clothing originates from Bedouin culture. Men may wear a long robe style garment called a 'thobe', or 'dishdash', for example, depending on the country. Men may also wear a large scarf over their head, called a 'gutrah' or 'keffiyah', which is held in place by a large double black cord called an 'igal'. Women, in some countries such as Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, will also wear a black floor length cape like garment called an 'abaya'. Women may also cover their hair with a scarf, or the abaya. Some women may cover their faces with veils or a face cover called a 'burgu' when they are out in public or in the presence of men. In public, Arabs will dress as well as they can afford to. Clothes are seen as important to one's status and the impression one makes with others.

(2) SAOs and their spouses need to understand and remember the importance of their own dress as well in the region. Shorts for example may be worn in some places, but generally this is not recommended, especially for women. For SAOs and their family dressing well in public, like the Arabs, is important, and not as casually as they would do at home in the U.S. Loud, flashy T-shirts are also not a good idea, if for no other reason, than for force protection considerations. For men, trousers in public are best along with long sleeve shirts, though in some countries, short sleeve shirts may also be worn. For women, long loose fitting skirts and dresses which extend well below the knee and long sleeve blouses are best. Wearing real jewelry, like gold, is also appropriate for women. (Gold is relatively inexpensive in the region and presents an excellent opportunity to upgrade a wife's jewelry collection.) Dressing nicely and modestly in public raises one's status and decreases the likelihood of incidents or harassment. When visiting Arab friends dressing well is very important, as a sign of respect. In some instances a coat, with or without tie, and the equivalent for women, may often be appropriate. This same advice holds true for children, especially older ones who have reached puberty.

g. Loyalty and Shame.

(1) For Arabs, loyalty and inclusion in a group are imperatives. This concept applies to Christian Arabs as well as Muslims. One is not expected to criticize one's group or a member of one's group. Group norms and standards define acceptable individual behavior. Americans must understand, however, that the farther an Arab is from his group or if they cannot be immediately identifiable with his group, then his behavior may change somewhat and not be in strict accordance with the group norm. However, an Arab will protect his group and endeavor to ensure that as an individual, he does not embarrass his group. In addition, they generally do not like to be singled out from their group, even when being praised,



(2) Arabs will belong or identify with more than one group, and there is a kind of hierarchical loyalty to these different groups. For someone from the Middle East and North Africa, this hierarchy of loyalty is generally as follows:



- (a) Family – immediate and extended
- (b) Tribe/Clan
- (c) Geographic region
- (d) Nation/Country
- (e) Arabs like us
- (f) Arabs unlike us
- (g) Muslims like us (or Christians like us)
- (h) Muslims unlike us (or Christians unlike us)

(3) SAOs must recognize that host nation interlocutors will also make judgements on the SAO's loyalty to the SAO's groups. The feeling will be that if an SAO is not loyal to his groups, how can they be trusted in their relationships with the host nation. For example, if the SAO's predecessor was culturally insensitive and alienated host nation counterparts, the new SAO should refrain from directly criticizing the former SAO. Rather, in discussing the problems with the host nation, the issue needs to be depersonalized. The new SAO could say "I realize there were some challenges in the past, how can I help to make things work better?"

(4) The concept of shame and personal responsibility and accountability is another where there are significant differences between Arab and American cultures. Americans want to know who is responsible; when something goes wrong, we try to determine who was to blame. It becomes personal, there is individual guilt. As noted, Arabs focus on the group; therefore, they seek to avoid bringing shame on themselves and their group(s). Again, the idea of not directly criticizing anyone is at play; a no personal fault culture. They seek to avoid affixing personal blame and depersonalize issues. This may be done by using the reflexive or passive voice in speech or writing. Besides avoiding bringing shame on themselves or their group, Arabs will also seek to avoid bringing shame on the SAO. If they do not like something or someone, they will seek to talk around it, this includes the SAO. This is one of the reasons Arabs may speak with double meanings. On difficult issues or in uncomfortable situations, they will speak very tactfully, but each remark has a second message. This tact protects the other person's public image, avoids insult, and shows that the speaker is cultured. In doing so, they will often avoid the use of a direct "no" or negative answer to a question or issue posed by the SAO; they likely will not answer at all and let the issue quietly fade away. Avoid directly criticizing an Arab, or trying to "prove" him wrong with "facts", or publicly evaluating his performance and forcing him to defend his belief or opinion. These are "no win" situations for the you and your family. To protect his "face", the Arab may react in a number of ways. He may "interpret" the facts to suit himself, deny your points, disregard your opinions as illogical. If something threatens him, his status, or could bring shame on him or his group, he will take action to protect himself, no matter how illogical the action seems to us. It's a matter of perspective, and in this regard, major differences exist in how an Arab and an American view things.

h. Gestures.

(1) The Arabs, just like Americans, have many hand and facial gestures. These gestures are not necessarily standard between countries. There is some variation from country to country in the region.

(2) Some of the more common gestures are:

(A) Stroking the mustache in connection with an oath or promise indicates sincerity.

(B) Placing the right hand or forefinger on the tip of the nose, top of head, lower right eyelid, mustache or beard, means "It's my obligation".

(C) Holding one or both hands at chest level, palms open and facing out means "It's not my responsibility".

(D) Extending right arm with right hand out, palm down and folding the fingers in toward the palm repeatedly is the sign for "Come here".

(E) Placing the palm of the right hand on the chest when greeting someone shows respect or thanks.

(F) Touching the tips of the right fingers to the forehead, while bowing slightly, connotes "respect".

(G) Holding the right palm up around waist to chest level and touching the tip of the thumb to the tips of the index and middle fingers and then rocking the hand back and forth slightly means "Wait a moment or Slowly".

(H) Grasping the chin with the thumb side of the right fist is a sign of wisdom.

(I) Hitting the side of one's face with the palm of one hand, head slightly tilted, eyes wide open means "Surprise".

(J) Hitting the right fist into the open palm of the left hand indicates obscenity or contempt.

(K) A quick snap of the head upwards, and a click of the tongue means "No or What is said is false".

(L) Rubbing the earlobe with the tips of the right forefinger and thumb may be asking "Do you want me to answer the question for you?".



(M) The American “A-OK” sign is, to the Arab, a sign of evil eye and used only in connection with curses.

(N) Biting the right forefinger, place sideways in the mouth, may be either a threat or an expression of regret.

(O) Don’t show the sole of the shoe while sitting and letting it point in someone’s direction.

(P) Don’t point finger directly at someone.

(Q) The left hand is considered to be the toilet hand. Therefore, do not eat, wave, or shake hands with your left hand.

i. Concept of Time.

(1) Unlike Americans, and especially American military and government civilians, most Arabs are not clock watchers or rigidly concerned about punctuality. Their lifestyle and work habits are directly affected by their concept of time. Arabs believe that time and life are controlled by God (Allah); nothing occurs without his will (In Sha Allah). Being late for an appointment, even forgetting about them or doing something else instead, is not unusual and not something that requires them to apologize for. Islamic teachings encourage Muslims to work as if life will last forever and to do everything they can to complete a job. This does not, however, mean “as soon as possible”.



(2) Many SAOs will find this concept of time very frustrating. In trying to hurry to get something accomplished, you will likely become even more irritated. Adjust your habits to allow more time. This includes not scheduling office calls and meetings tightly together. Allow much more time in between. Not only will your calls and meetings not start on time, they will also take much longer due to the requirements for socializing; this is discussed in paragraph 6k.

j. Greetings and Addressing People.

(1) In general, Arabs are extremely courteous and polite. They will exchange a variety of polite phrases when greeting each other, saying farewell, blessing and expressing good wishes in the name of God. They are much more effusive in these rituals than most Americans. One of the quickest ways for the SAO and their family to alienate their host nation counterparts and others with whom you come in contact is to be perceived as aloof and rude.

(2) Be prepared to shake hands frequently with Arabs of the same sex, such as whenever you meet or depart from them. At conferences, meetings, social occasions and other similar situations, shake hands with everyone you meet, exchange pleasantries and chat briefly and then shake hands when you move on or leave. When entering a room or office, shake hands and greet everyone of the same sex in the room. When greeting an Arab woman, do not offer your hand,

but let her do so. If she offers her hand, shake it gently, generally grasping about half the fingers. Female SAO personnel and spouses may decide whether or not to offer their hand to a male Arab. If the man refuses to shake hands or wraps cloth over his hand before shaking hands, this should not be interpreted as a slight or as rudeness. It simply means that he is observing the religious restriction to not touch a female who is not his wife or relative. Greeting an older person is also very important. Arabs respect age. Older persons are usually greeted first, and when they enter a room, it is polite to go and greet them.

(3) Besides shaking hands, there is a lot more embracing and touching between same sexes in this region. It demonstrates friendship and platonic feelings – they are not sexual in nature nor considered to be non-masculine. It is quite common for two men or two women to greet each other, embrace and touch or kiss the other person’s cheek and to walk holding hands. Touching between opposite sexes, even husbands and wives, in public is considered obscene and in some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, is against the law. If an Arab is not touching the American SAO, it is likely they are trying to not upset you, given our cultural attitudes about same sex touching, or he doesn’t like you. Hopefully, it is not the latter.



(4) Personal space is another potential challenge for SAOs and their families to deal with. While conversing, Arabs generally prefer to stand much closer than Americans do. Again, this is for conversations between same sex individuals. They may stand as close as a foot away, rather than arms length which Americans generally do. While SAOs may initially find this uncomfortable, with practice it can be handled. Additionally, an Arab will tend to look someone directly in the eye when speaking. Techniques such as focusing one’s gaze over the Arab’s shoulder or at their forehead will help become accustomed to the closer conversational distance. Backing away and trying to increase the distance between you and the other individual may unintentionally send the signal that the you do not like or wish to talk to your counterparts; a signal that will adversely impact your ability to successfully and easily work with them.

(5) Properly addressing an Arab is also very important. Arabs address each other differently than Americans do. While Arabs will generally tolerate our addressing them in the same fashion as we address ourselves, the SAO and their family can indicate cultural awareness by using their system. To know how to address an Arab, a basic understanding of the Arabic naming system is helpful. While this system may vary somewhat from country to country in the region and among Muslims and Christians, the system is generally as follows.

(a) Using the following male Arabic name as an example: **Colonel Ziad bin Abdullah Al-Majali**. **Ziad** is the individual’s first or personal name. The term **bin** means “son of” and may or may not always be present when written or spoken. If it is not present, its meaning is assumed to be there. **Abdullah** is the name of Ziad’s father and **Al-Majali** is Ziad’s family name or tribal affiliation. Sometimes in place of the family/tribal affiliation name, the “last” name may be the name of a geographic location or city where the individual’s ancestors are from or it may be a trade/work name – the Arabic version of “Goldsmith”, for example. Titles and rank are very important to Arabs and are normally used when addressing an Arab,

especially a senior or older person. Arabs do not address each other by the “family” name as Americans do; rather, they use the individual’s first name as the formal address. While an SAO may be inclined to address him as Colonel Al-Majali, he is correctly addressed as **Colonel Ziad**.

(b) Using the following female Arabic name as an example for Colonel Ziad’s wife: **Hanan bint Abdul Kareem Al-Ashban**. The same general pattern as discussed above concerning the use of ranks and titles and what may be considered the “family” name also apply to female names as well. Here, **Hanan** is her first, or individual name. The term **bint** means “daughter of” and, likewise, may or may not always be present, but is assumed. For a woman, the name which follows bint, such as **Abdul Kareem**, is always a male name – her father’s. And **Al-Ashban** is her family/tribal affiliation name. So, while the SAO may expect to address her as Mrs. Al-Ashban or even Mrs. Al-Majali, neither of these is correct. Unlike the western custom where a wife will normally take her husband’s last name, this is not the case for Arab women. They keep their original “last” name and are also addressed using their title and first name – **Mrs. Hanan**.

(c) As previously noted, children are very important in Arab society and raise an individual’s status. Arabs also have a habit of addressing each other, usually close friends or even as a sign of respect, using the name of the individual’s oldest son. As an example: Colonel Ziad and his wife have a son named Nadir. So Colonel Ziad may be addressed as: **Abu Nadir** which means “Father of Nadir” and Mrs. Hanan may be addressed as **Umm Nadir** which means “Mother of Nadir”. The use of a daughter’s name, even if she is the oldest child, in this form of address is very rarely done. This goes back to the concept of protecting the female members of a family and not calling attention to them. SAOs should generally not address an interlocutor by the Abu/Umm title unless indicated by the individual.

(d) For the SAO, when talking to a more senior Arab officer, it is also respectful to use the equivalent of “sir” just as is done when speaking to a senior American officer. The word “Sidi” can be used in this context.

#### k. Meetings and Office Calls.

(1) One of your greatest challenges as an SAO is conducting meetings and office calls with your host nation interlocutors. The reason this is a challenge is because of the significant differences in the way Americans and Arabs conduct business. In the first meetings and office calls you have with your counterparts, you should not plan on getting much “business”, if any,



accomplished. Before you can even begin to start talking official business, your Arab counterparts must get to know you and you should be doing the same with them. An Arab will want to know your social, professional, and academic background. He will want to know as much about you as possible and you must take the time to let them do this. To work effectively in the region, you must keep in mind that this society functions best on personal relationships. To an Arab, getting to know you or anyone else they do business

with is important; they want to understand you so they do not misjudge you. Establishing this personal relationship or friendship is very important. Understanding their background and social and family connections is important for you as well – how much influence or “wasta” does your counterpart have. In the office, Americans generally want to keep the business relationship and personal relationship separate. Arabs find it extremely difficult to split the two – they want to be personal. Once you have established a personal relationship with your counterpart, it is generally easier to get work accomplished. You are taking care of things “for each other”, in addition to the expected official reasons. A good rule is that what they do for you in their office, you should reciprocate and do for them in your office.

(2) Another important point to remember is that just because someone you are working with does not speak English well, it does not indicate that they know less than you do. Be careful not to become patronizing or condescending to your counterparts as they struggle with English – most SAOs are intelligent, successful military personnel, but try doing all of your job in Arabic! There may be times, that due to language difficulties, you may have to explain something more simply in English; but do this on an adult to adult level, not as if you are speaking to a child. Your Arab counterpart will likely have to do the same for you if he is explaining the concept in Arabic. It works both ways.

(3) As mentioned earlier, when entering a room or office, cordially greet everyone present. You may encounter some occasions where your interlocutor has others present and will be conducting business or visiting with them before getting down to business with you. They do not see this as rude like an American may. Wait patiently, and if drawn into the conversation, participate. Do not be offended if they take a phone call, sometimes lengthy, during your discussion; again, this is seen as being polite to all parties, not as a sign of rudeness. If the meeting were in your office and you received a phone call, they would understand.

(4) When scheduling office calls and meetings, do not schedule events too closely together – allow plenty of time. While you may have an issue that can be resolved in five minutes of discussion, it will take significantly more time conversing before “getting down to business”. A successful and effective SAO in the Middle East/North Africa is one who is easy going, extroverted, chatty and exudes personal warmth. Rather than immediately discussing business, inquire of your interlocutor’s welfare and the welfare of his family (ask about the “family” rather than the “wife or children”), discuss sports or other inconsequential topics. First deal with the person, then the business. You should not display undue haste or impatience; this may be interpreted as evidence of insecurity or a lack of self-control.



(5) Coffee or tea will normally be offered. If they are offered and you do not desire them, politely say “no thank you” and ask for something else, such as juice or water. Never

refuse to accept something in these situations; if you must, ask for something else. The offer and acceptance reflect the relationship and a willingness to share and work together. This is what is important, not necessarily the item being offered. For example, smoking is quite common in the region and you may often be offered a cigarette. Rather than refuse, you could, for example, ask for something to drink or accept the cigarette and put it in your pocket. What's important is that you accepted something. (A note about coffee – in some countries a coffee boy/man may come into the office and pour a small amount of bitter coffee into a small round cup and offer it to you. This is a Bedouin act of hospitality. When handing the cup back to him, wiggle the cup gently side to side to indicate you have had enough.)

(6) The art of conversation is very important to success in the region. Americans pride themselves on speaking directly, getting the point across quickly and efficiently. Sound bites and “bullet” statements do not work well here. Arabs believe that language is more than just for effective communication and eloquence is most important. There's no such thing as getting to the point quickly, or even directly at times. Monosyllabic answers are considered rude, so be prepared to elaborate on every question you are asked. In other words – use the gift of gab. Listen carefully, attentively and do not demonstrate impatience – be aware of the signals you send by your body language. For example, you make be saying you have all the time in the world, but sitting and fidgeting or looking at your watch conveys exactly the opposite. Ask questions and seek information. Your Arab counterpart will take great pride in helping you understand more about his country and culture. On controversial subjects, like politics, it is best to seek information and not an argument. Never become angry – you lose face with your counterparts if you lose your temper in front of them and run the grave risk of offending them. Always try and take a positive approach.



(7) How one sits and stands during a meeting is also very important. Generally sit up straight and with both feet on the floor. Slouching or draping oneself over the chair can give the impression that you are bored. This also prevents the inadvertent showing of the soles of your shoes at anyone which, as noted earlier, is insulting. Women generally do not cross their legs at the knees, but will cross their ankles. It is also best not to lean against the wall, as if you're too tired to stand up, or for men to stand/walk with their hands in their pockets. If you are giving a presentation, try to avoid, as much as possible, turning your back to someone. If you must do so, especially on a regular basis, it is polite to say, “please excuse me,” the first time you must do so.

(8) During your tour, your counterparts may offer you small gifts – these can include unit plaques or other small trinkets. It is advisable that the SAO have some items available for reciprocating or for presenting to your counterparts when you complete your tour. These items should be relatively inexpensive and of no real useful intrinsic value. Items such as coffee cups, plaques, tie-tacks, picture book on the U.S. or home state, are some examples. Again, what is important is the relationship with the individual and the aspect of reciprocal generosity.

## 1. Visiting and Hospitality.

(1) In the Middle East and North Africa, invitations may sometimes be vague, and even complex. One is expected to show hospitality, especially in the home and office. It is part of protecting one's public image, dignity and status. Failure to be hospitable and generous, to not share the wealth bestowed by God, goes against cultural and religious mores. An Arab is expected to show hospitality and generosity, regardless of personal cost. SAOs and their families need to be aware that there are many “unwritten” rules in the region that determine the roles of guest and host. For example, a chance meeting in a restaurant generally makes the person already there, the host; the host should invite the other to share in the food and drink. The second person, the guest, may say “yes” if they are free, or may politely decline if they are meeting someone else. You may be invited to a “home” for drinks without an hour specified. Upon arrival, you may find a meal waiting as well and you would likely offend your host if you declined to eat something. The same holds true for the SAO. Do not say to an Arab, as Americans do in the U.S. “we must have you over sometime” without the clear intent to carry through with the invitation. This is a quick way to be labeled as insincere and even inhospitable.

### (2) Visiting an Arab Home

(a) During your tour you may be invited to a meal or drinks by your counterpart. This may be at their home or at a local restaurant. The invitation may or may not include the wife as this varies from country to country. In countries like Jordan and Tunisia, the wife is more likely to be included in the invitation than in Saudi Arabia or another Arab Gulf country. Children are normally not included. If the wife is included in the invitation, upon arrival, she may find that she is separated from her husband and spends the time with the women and he with the men. Each country is different and the situation may also vary as well depending on the occasion of the dinner or event as well. Be flexible.



(b) When extending the invitation the Arab will likely specify a day, but may not always specify a time. If a time is not specified, you may ask them and they may indicate a time. Remember, however, that this time may be more a general guide than in keeping with the American concept of punctuality. Checking with other personnel assigned to the SAO and/or embassy, such as the protocol office, will help determine what's appropriate in your country of assignment. But don't plan on arriving exactly at the specified hour; your hosts may not be completely ready to receive you.

(c) When visiting or socializing with your counterparts, either in their homes or in public, always dress well. How well depends on the occasion and the country. For example, casual to an American may mean polo shirt and Dockers, while to your Arab counterpart, it means sport jacket with or without tie. Again, check with others to determine what the local customs are. The best rule is to dress well. As previously noted, Arabs judge others by how they dress and dress indicates status. To dress down for an event with your counterpart could easily be seen by them as an insult. For women, a dress or skirt is normally appropriate.

(d) Upon arrival at your host's, drinks and or snacks may be served. Dinner may be served much later, so it's often advisable to plan accordingly; remember, however, that when the food is served, it will be abundant. The time will be passed in conversation, though there may be times when the conversation may lag. This is natural, though for an American it can feel uncomfortable. When the food is served, there will usually be three or four times as much as the guest can eat, and perhaps a number of different entrees. Expect the table to be full – abundance is part of hospitality and generosity and also means that your host thinks a great deal of having you as a guest.

(e) Prior to and after the meal, wash your hands. Your host will likely offer water and indicate a washbasin for this purpose. During the meal, expect to be offered a great deal of food to eat. In some countries, you may be expected to take food at least three times before stopping. Eating lightly the first course may be advisable so you are able to eat subsequent offerings. Do not be surprised or offended if your host puts food on your plate. This is part of being generous and they will ensure that the guests receive the choicest pieces. After receiving and eating a number of helpings or courses you will eventually be able to politely decline further offerings. Praising the quality of the food, without over doing it, is also polite. The use of the left hand for passing, receiving or offering food should be avoided. Some meals, such as rice and a whole sheep, may be served very traditionally on a large common platter, and the guests may stand or squat around the platter. This can be quite an experience; some tips for success. First, a strong reminder –never use the left hand; put the left hand behind your back or in the crook of the leg if squatting. Second, eat only from the platter area directly in front of you. Do not reach around in front of another guest; your host may tear pieces of the best meat or other items and place them in front of you. Third, tear small pieces of meat or roll the rice into small balls that are easier to manage and get into the mouth.



(f) It is often appropriate to take a small gift when invited to visit an Arab's home. Depending on the country, flowers may or may not be appropriate so it's best to check first. If you take a gift, the important thing is that it should not be anything extravagant nor have any practical value. Taking something useful, even including food or baked goods, implies that your host is unable to adequately provide for his family. Some kind of decorative trinket is probably best. Present it to your host upon arrival, but do not expect or request that they open it. To them, you the guest are more important than the gift, the "thing", and they want to focus on you. So, don't be insulted if they do not open it and in fact seem to ignore it and never say thank you.

(g) When departing, shake hands with your host and say goodbye. It is polite to thank your host for a pleasant time and that you enjoyed the opportunity to visit. Do not thank your host specifically for the food or drink – this is not necessary. It would be best if you could say goodbye using one of the traditional Arabic phrases as these generally carry a meaning or connotation for God to bless them as well.

(3) In a Restaurant. If you are invited by an Arab to a restaurant for a meal or drinks, than he, as the host, will normally pay unless this is decided otherwise in advance, prior to arriving at the restaurant. The concept of “going dutch” is not followed in this region, so do not argue with your host about splitting the bill. Conversely, if you invite an Arab to a restaurant, you should expect to pay for all your guest(s).

m. Entertaining in Residence.

(1) Inviting Arab interlocutors for dinner and/or drinks in the home is a good way to continue to build the foundation of a personal relationship. Even entertaining in our “American” residence, there are some considerations that the SAO and family should keep in mind in preparing to entertain. Remember, if you decide to invite someone to dinner at a local restaurant, the SAO is the host and expected to cover all costs. When entertaining at home, consider the following tips:



(a) In planning the dinner time, remember that Arabs generally eat later.

(b) While entertaining, it is recommended that the wife play the role of hostess. The husband can serve drinks, but generally should refrain from cooking. While Americans think nothing of a man cooking, doing this while entertaining could inadvertently reinforce a negative image of American men and lower the male SAO’s status in the eyes of his counterparts. SAO’s should consider hiring servants for the event to help with the cooking, serving and clean-up; if you have a maid, ask her to work and arrange for additional help as needed. This permits the SAO and wife to focus on their guests.

(c) If you have pets, such as dog or cat, it is best to keep them away from your Arab guests. Arabs will use dogs for security, but generally do not have them as family pets. Many consider the American habits of petting or holding a dog or cat, letting them nuzzle and lick, disgusting and unclean. While we may consider our pet clean, a Muslim knows, as explained by the Prophet, that they are dirty.

(d) If an Arab guest brings a gift, remember that the focus of your attention should be on your guests and not the gift. Rather than unwrap the gift when presented, place the gift aside, thanking them for their generosity and thoughtfulness. Welcome them to your home and ask them what they would like to drink. (If they bring flowers, after seeing to your guest(s), you can have the maid place the flowers into vase.)

(2) Inviting an Arab for Dinner or Drinks

(a) When extending the invitation, you should decide whether or not to include the wife. In some countries, such as Saudi Arabia or the Gulf countries, the wife may not attend, even if invited. To protect his wife, the Arab man may not bring her along the first time until he has checked out your residence. Do not be offended if your guest does not bring his wife. In

countries such as Tunisia and Jordan, the wife will often attend if invited. In the more conservative countries, it is generally polite to invite the wife, indicating that “my wife would like to invite your wife”.

(b) Even if you request an RSVP to your invitation, Arabs will generally not do so. You may have guests which do not show up, even if they did respond and indicate they would come; if a more important family matter arises, they will forego your invitation. On the other hand, your invited guest may show up with a couple of other family members or friends, that you had not expected. This should be seen as an honor since their “face” depends upon your hospitality and they have a lot of trust in your generosity and hospitality. Finally, even if you specified a time in the invitation, do not expect your Arab guests to arrive on time. Remember the concept of definitive time is relative in this region; they will likely show up late.

(c) As your guests arrive, welcome them warmly to your home. Americans tend to socialize for a short period, then eat dinner and then socialize some more before having dessert and coffee. Arabs on the other hand, as noted when visiting their homes, tend to talk and socialize for an extended period, often hours, before finally eating and then have coffee or tea before departing. Given that your guests will likely not arrive on time, it is best not to plan to eat at the time scheduled on the invitation or even too close to it. You will likely end up with overcooked food. Plan on allowing plenty of time for socializing and for later arrivals of your guests. After the meal, serve coffee or tea. They will normally depart shortly after the coffee and tea is served.

(d) Muslims are proscribed from drinking alcoholic beverages. They generally are not offended by your asking them if they would like an alcoholic drink, though this does depend on the country. Ask in your office what’s appropriate in your country. Some Arabs may have an alcoholic drink, though this may also depend on the situation. For example, your counterpart may drink alcohol with Arab is present, especially a stranger just you present, but if another to him, he may decline.



(e) In planning dietary restriction on eating well. Quantity represents them. So, just as they do, plan the menu, remember the Muslim generosity and also what we think of on having 2-4 times as much food as you believe is required. The food need not be fancy or culinary masterpieces, but should be well prepared and plentiful. This also ensures that you have plenty of food to feed any unexpected guests that they bring along. It is best to have 2-3 entrees, plus rice, bread, a couple of different vegetables. Casseroles and pasta also work well, as do salads. The best method of serving is a buffet; try to cover most of the table with dishes of food to present the visual effect of abundance, and thus, generosity and hospitality. When seating guests around a table, especially when wives are present, avoid separating the couples. Seat the wife next to her husband. Unlike in the U.S. where couples are often separated to make for more lively dinner discussions, an Arab wife surrounded by strange men will feel very uncomfortable.

(f) Arabs will likely take small portions of food the first time. As host, continue to offer food. A rule of thumb is 2-3 servings should be offered to the guests. While the Arab may politely decline additional servings after the first one, continue to warmly insist and they will likely accept additional servings. After 2-3 servings, when the Arab guest declines, they will likely not accept additional food and the standard of hospitality has been met. After the meal, serving coffee or tea with some kind of dessert and fresh fruit is the norm. When fresh fruit is set out, include some small plates and knives.

## 7. Miscellaneous.

a. Conversation and Action. When in doubt about what to do in any social or public situation, be conservative. Don't be the first to do anything, such as smoke, drink, or even cross your legs; watch what the locals do and then decide what you want to do. Generally, take the lead in conversation from what the Arab brings up, especially until you get to know someone very well.

b. Privacy. The concept of privacy and being alone by oneself (except when using the bathroom) are alien concepts to Arabs. They have a difficult time understanding why an American would want to be alone from time to time; they do not like to be alone and feel empathy for those who are alone. Consequently, they will endeavor to make sure that we are not left alone; as indicated earlier, they will stand close and on public transportation they will sit next to someone. For example, when using a taxi (if you are a male), sit in front with the driver, rather than in the backseat. This lack of privacy can initially be a bit disquieting to an American.

c. Friendship. Americans and Arabs have different concepts of friendship, including what is owed to friends.

(1) Americans tend to make friends with people we like to deal with. Americans will help each other without expecting something in return. Arabs are very hospitable and can be overwhelming in attention to friends. They will go out of their way to do a favor for someone, including American friends; but, they will also feel that they have a right to ask favors in return.



(2) Arabs always have time for friends and expect their friends to have time for them. They will sit down and talk anytime and go to great lengths, whenever possible, for a friend. Americans can easily disappoint their Arab friends. Americans are often seen as smiling a lot, seemingly nice, but when really needed, failing to meet the Arab standard of friendship. As an SAO, you must be very careful about how you indicate that you are in a hurry and don't have time to see them. An Arab friend will be disappointed and think that the SAO is saying "I don't have time for our friendship." Given a SAO's often busy schedule, it will be

necessary from time to time, to indicate to an Arab friend that you are busy. Try and say it in such a way so that it sounds like there is nothing more important to you than them.

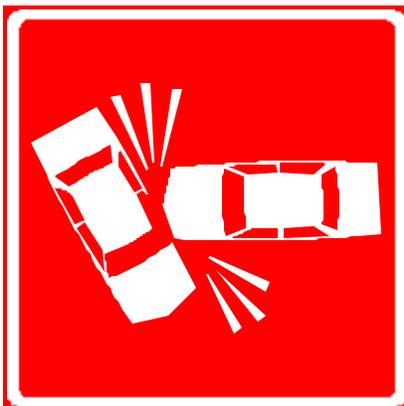
(3) Another key concept of friendship to an Arab is that a friend never says “no” to a friend. The expectation is that a friend will find a way to take care of a friend, even going around the rules. If an Arab cannot do something for a friend, and does not want to specifically say “no” they will often say “In Sha Allah” and eventually the issue will quietly fade away. The same holds true when a Arab friend asks an American for a favor. If you cannot do as they ask or it is difficult, it is best to indicate “I don’t know, but I’ll see what I can do”, or “I’ll try for you”. If they inquire again you can say something like, “In Sha Allah, I tried; let me try again”. Eventually, if you don’t return with an answer or have not accomplished what they requested, they will likely let the request quietly drop, knowing that you aren’t able to do what they asked.

d. Answering Personal Questions. You may be asked some questions during your tour that you consider personal or uncomfortable answering. Some of the common questions are:

(1) “When will you have more children?” Arabs prefer bigger families and having a son is very important. Answering that you cannot afford more children, or that you decided not to have any children could lead to questions in their minds about you and negatively affect their perceptions of you. Even if this is the case, a better answer may be something like, “In Sha Allah, we hope that one day God will bless us with a son/more children”. They will normally accept this.

(2) Single SAOs will likely be asked “Why aren’t you married?”. As previously indicated, Arabs do not like to be alone. In this culture and religion, it is expected that everyone will one day get married. We recommend not using the answer “I don’t want to” or I’m not interested in being married” because it creates a negative perception of you. It is better to indicate that you are interested, such as “In Sha Allah I hope that one day to marry a woman as good as my mother”. If you are divorced, this is generally acceptable; at least you were married. You could answer indicating your were married and hope to be married again.

(3) “How much do you make?” Arabs believe that all Americans make lots of money and live comfortably. An indirect answer is probably the best, such as “It seems that the more I make the more the government takes in taxes and the more I have to pay to take care of my family.”



e. Driving. Driving in the Middle East and North Africa is generally a real experience for SAOs and their families. Experiences run the gamut from the orderliness in Muscat, Oman to the chaos and traffic density of Cairo, Egypt. In general, Arabs are very aggressive drivers. They will drive fast, tailgate, cut in front and use the horn a great deal. While traffic lights are normally obeyed, though they will often run yellow and red lights if given the window of opportunity. Other traffic signs (stop, yield etc...) often appear to be more “suggestions” rather than “rules”. Drive defensively and

always expect the unexpected. Driving at night, especially outside built up areas, can be very hazardous and some embassies restrict night driving due to safety concerns. Night hazards include vehicles, especially large trucks, driving without headlights or taillights and camels in the highways. Another seasonal driving hazard is after the first seasonal rains. The roads will often become extremely slippery when wet, almost like driving on ice. In determining the right of way, two overall concepts seem to apply. First, the “nose rule” which is “the vehicle with any part of the vehicle ahead of the other vehicle has the right of way”. Second, the “law of gross tonnage” which is “the largest vehicle has the right of way”.

f. Other Frustrations. Other situations that the SAO and family may encounter in the Middle East/North Africa that can lead to frustration and anger include the following. The important thing in some of these situations is not to display anger. You may have to react firmly, but losing one’s temper affects your “public face”.

(1) While standing in line, Arabs may break or jump the line. Standing quietly in a queue is not the norm.

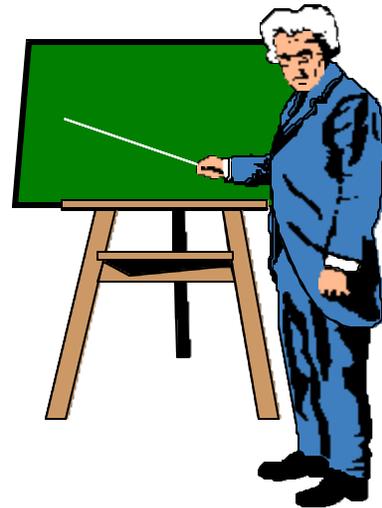
(2) On airplanes, they may not always sit in their assigned seat, but rather where they wish. Many flights in the region still allow smoking, and they will sometimes also smoke in the designated no-smoking sections.

(3) Littering in public, such as along the streets, is quite common. Some blow their noses and spit onto the streets. They use disposable tissue. They do not understand the American habit of using a handkerchief for blowing our noses and then “saving” it in the pocket; they view this as filthy. Inside their homes, in their private spaces, they will keep things clean and neat. They do not, however, feel the same sense of responsibility for public spaces.

g. Training Tips. While most SAOs are not directly involved in training or conducting training, SAOs often manage and support military training personnel and teams while in the SAO’s host country. Therefore a few tips on training are provided, though these are not comprehensive:

(1) In the Middle East/North African culture, the teacher, not the student, is responsible for the student’s learning. This is the opposite of the way Americans think and train. Thus, in the Arab view, if a student does not understand something, it is because the teacher did not explain it properly, not that they did not work to understand it.

(2) Arab schools tend to instruct and students learn by rote memorization. If an Arab student does not understand something, he will often want to know where he can read the information. This often is to bridge the oral English comprehension issue.



(3) American trainers must avoid the use of slang or acronyms. These do not often translate easily into a foreign language, thus making it a challenge for the foreign student to understand the exact meaning. The SAO trainer should always remember that the Arab students are learning in English which is not their native language. SAOs who studied Arabic will be able to appreciate the challenges facing the Arab students learning in English.

(4) An Arab student should never be singled out from his group or the class, even for exceptional performance. As discussed in this guide, Arabs prefer to be identified as part of their group. Singling out an Arab student, even for a positive achievement, could adversely affect how the other members of his group treat him, for a variety of reasons.

(5) Asking Arab students questions that require a “yes” or “no” response is ineffective in determining what a student knows. If an American instructor asks an Arab student if they understand something, the student will likely say “yes”. To indicate that he does not, would bring shame on the instructor, since the instructor is responsible for their learning, and the student. They will seek to avoid this by answering affirmatively.

(6) Because of the focus on group loyalty and group performance, Arab students are inclined to assist each other and share information even during exams or other times when individual performance is desired or required. Instructors must make it clear when individual performance is required and an explanation as to why may also be helpful. For example “because in combat you must perform this action individually”.

(7) Never select the leader of a group of Arab students. Americans will tend to select the senior ranking individual, but in an Arab group, he may not be the one the group would select because of other group and cultural considerations. It is best to ask the group to select a representative to work with the trainer. The individual they select becomes the “wasta” or facilitator for working with the group.

8. Recommending Changes. Recommended changes and comments on this guide may be sent to DISAM’s Director of Middle East Seminars. The name and address of the current seminar director can be obtained from DISAM’s web page at: <http://disam.osd.mil> .



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**Glossary of Terms Used in Islamic and Arab Culture**

Islam	The religion established by the Prophet Muhammed. Means to surrender to the will of God.
Muslim	One who surrenders his will to God.
Allah	The name for God in Islam.
Shihadah	The profession of faith for a Muslim. “There is no god but Allah and Muhammed is the messenger of Allah.”
Sunni	Refers to Muslims who follow the customs of Muhammed and his companions, including selection of a religious leader by consensus. The majority of Muslims are Sunni
Shi’ah	Refers to Muslims who believe that the religious leader should be of the family of the Prophet Muhammed. In early Islam they supported the Prophet’s son-in-law Ali (Shi’ah translates as Party of Ali) as the legitimate successor to the Prophet Muhammed. Other doctrinal differences between the Sunnis and Shi’as have developed.
Hajj	The pilgrimage to Mecca. One of the five tenants of Islam.
Quran (Koran)	The sacred book of the Islamic religion. Contains the collection of revelations which Muhammed received from God through the Angel Gabriel.
Shari’ah	Islamic Law – often referred to as “the way”. Comprises a set of dogmas including beliefs, rituals, social and legal principles for governing the Islamic community. Based on the totality of Allah’s commandments as elaborated and interpreted by Islamic theologians and judges.
Hadith	Sayings and traditions attributed to the Prophet Muhammed. Supplements the Quran in providing a guide to Islamic ritual and practice.
Ijma	Consensus. In Arab tribal society consensus or mutual agreement of elders or leader is the primary means of resolving disputes and making decisions.

Qiyas	Analogy. Another source of Islamic law besides the Quran, Hadith, and Ijma.
Ummah	Term used to refer to the Islamic religious community, regardless of political and national divisions.
Ulama	Plural of the word Alim – one who knows. Refers to those knowledgeable of Islamic law and the Quran who are considered to be traditional guardians of Islamic practices and beliefs.
Imam	Means the “one who is in front”. In Sunni Islam, the Imam is the leader of prayers. Among Shi’as, the Imam is viewed as a descendant of Muhammed, chosen to lead the Muslim community.
Mullah	Term used in Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey to designate a man learned in Islamic law and traditions.
Sufi	Sufis are Islamic mystics who believe in the immanence of God in the human soul. Some Sufis adopted a practice of whirling and repeating Quranic verses to induce a trance like state. In Turkey and Iran they are called Dervishes and gave rise to the term “whirling dervish”.
Fatwa	A “legal” opinion or edict issued by a religious scholar which specifies a course of action to take based upon, or that a practice is in accordance with, Islamic law or Shari’ah.
Jihad	Often interpreted as “holy war”, but more correctly refers to the struggle between good and evil, or between believers and non-believers. May be an individual personal struggle, or Islamic community actions to defend the faith.
Caliph	Based on the word for successor, the Caliph was to inherit or assume the political, legal and religious functions of the Prophet. The selection of the first four Caliphs led to the Sunni-Shi’ah split in Islam. The Caliph was to be head of the Muslim community and commander of the faithful. The Caliphate was abolished in the 1920s.
Sheik	Honorific title, often used to refer to a tribal/clan chief or elder.
Majlis	Based on the word to consult or sit together. Refers to a consultative group formed to discuss issues with and provide advice to a leader. Also may refer to a physical place where men or outsiders are received.

**Glossary of Arabic Greetings and Words**

(The Arabic is spelled phonetically to assist with pronunciation)

(This glossary is a compilation of standard Arabic and common spoken dialect phrases)

God is Great	ALLAHU AKBAR
In the Name of God	BIS MILLAH
If God Wills	IN SHA ALLAH
Thanks be to God	AL HAMDU LILLAH
Peace Be Upon You (may be used for a greeting)	ASSALAAMU ALAYKUM
And Peace Upon You (used as a reply)	WA ALAYKUM ASSALAAM
Good Morning (greeting)	SABAH IL KHAYR
Good Morning (reply)	SABAH IL NOOR
Good Afternoon/Evening (greeting)	MASSA IL KHAYR
Good Afternoon/Evening (reply)	MASSA IL NOOR
How Are You (standard Arabic)	KAYF HAALAK/HAALIK (male/female)
How Are You (Gulf Dialect)	SHLONAK/SHLONIK (male/female)
I'm fine, Thanks to God	BEKHAIR, AL HAMDU LILLAH
Good-bye, Go in Peace (may also be a reply)	MAA ASSALAAMA
Good-Bye, Go with God's Protection	FE AMAAN ALLAH
Good-Bye, God with You (reply)	ALLAH IS AHL MAK
It's an Honor to Meet You	TAH SHA RUFNA
Welcome	AHLAN WAS SAHLAN
Welcome (reply)	AHLAN BEEK
Hello	MARHABA
Hello (reply)	MARHABTAIN
My Name Is.....	ISME....
What is Your Name	SHOE ISMAK/ISMIK (male/female)
Thank You	SHUKRAN
I Thank You	ASHKURAK
Thank you Very Much	SHUKRAN JAZEELIN
Sir or Honorific Title	SIDI
Do You Speak English	TATAKALLEM AL-INGLIZEA
I Don't Know	MA A'AARIF
I Did Not Understand	MA FAHAAMT
Please (request)	MIN FADLAAK
Please (offering)	TAFADDAL/TAFADDALI (male/female)
It Doesn't Matter	MA LESH
Slow(ly)	SHWAY (SHWAY)
Stop	QIF
I'm Sorry	ANA AASIF or MUTA-AASIF
I want/desire	BIDEE

Yes	NAAM
No	LAA
Forbidden or Sacred	HARAM
Good/Acceptable	KWAIS
Not Good/Unacceptable	MISH KWAIS
You're Welcome or Excuse Me	AAFWAN
It's Not Important/No Big Deal	MA LESH
What is This	SHOE HATHA or MA HATHA
Congratulations	MABROOK
To the Right	AL YAMEEN
To the Left	AL YASAAR
Straight Ahead	DUGHRI or ALA TOOL
North	SHAMAEL
South	JANOOB
East	SHARQ
West	GHRAB
Today	ALYOUM
Tomorrow	BUKRA
Day After Tomorrow	BADA BUKRA
Yesterday	AAMS
Sunday	YOUM AL-AHAD
Monday	YOUM AL-ITNAIN
Tuesday	YOUM AL-THALATHA'
Wednesday	YOUM AL-ARBAA'A
Thursday	YOUM AL-KHAMEES
Friday	YOUM AL-JOUMAAGH
Saturday	YOUM AS-SEBT
Later	BADAIN
Bazaar (or Shopping Area)	SOUK
Money	FLOOS
How Much	KEM or A'DAISH
That's Enough	BESS
Where	WAIN
Way/Route/Direction	TAREEQ
Street	SHAARIA'A
House	BAIT
City	MEDINA
City Center	WASAT AL-MEDINA
When	META or EMTA
Coffee	Q'AHWA
Tea	SHAY
King	AL-MELAK
Queen	AL-MELAKAH
Prince	AL-AMIR
Princess	AL-AMIRAH
Minister	WAZEER

Prime Minister	RA'IS AL-WUZARA'AH
Husband	ZOUJ
Wife (My Wife)	ZOUJAH (ZOUJAHTEE)
Son(s)(My Son/Sons)	IBN/IBNAA'H (IBNEE/IBNAA'EE)
Girl/Daughter(s) (My Daughter/Daughters)	BINT/BINAAT (BINTEE/BINAATEE)
Child/Children (My Children)	WALID/OULAAD (OULAADEE)
Military Headquarters	QEEYADAH
Military Camp or Base	QA'IDAH
Armed Forces	AL-QUWAAT AL-MUSELLAHAH
Army	AL-JESH
Air Force	SILAH AL-JOE
Navy	AL-SILAH AL-BAHREEAH
Special Forces	AL-QUWAAT AL-KHAAS
General	AL-FAREEQ OWL
Lieutenant General	AL-FAREEQ
Major General	AL-LIWA'H
Brigadier General;	AL-AAMEED
Colonel	AL-AAQEED
Lieutenant Colonel	AL-MUQAADDEM
Major	AL-RA'ID
Captain	AL-NAQEEB
First Lieutenant	AL-MULAAZEM OWL
Lieutenant	AL-MULAAZEM
Sergeant	AL-RAQEEB
Soldier	JUNDEE
Zero	SIFR
One	WAHID
Two	ITNAIN
Three	TALAATA
Four	ARBA'H
Five	KHEMSAH
Six	SITTA
Seven	SEBAA'H
Eight	TAMAANIA
Nine	TIS'AH
Ten	AASHARA