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ACTION NEA-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AMAD-00	A-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	SRPP-00
	DS-00	MEDE-00	UTED-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	M-00	AC-01	DCP-01	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	DHS-00	EPAU-00	PA-00	PER-00
	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SS-00
	TEST-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	SA-00	R-00	EPAE-00
	IIP-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	SAS-00

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R 190410Z JUL 03
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0322
INFO <<IRAQ>> COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
SECDEF WASHDC

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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/RA, NEA/PPD (JDAVIES), NEA/NGA,
NEA/IPA, IIP/NEA/G, PM
SECDEF FOR OSD, CENTCOM

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: KPAO, PREL, OIIP, MU
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR ENGAGES ARAB MILITARY OFFICERS

SUMMARY

1. THE AMBASSADOR TOOK ADVANTAGE OF A SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT AT THE OMANI COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE JULY 15 TO PROVIDE A MULTI-MEDIA PRESENTATION OF USG POLICY POINTS ON <<IRAQ>> TO AN AUDIENCE OF 80 MID-LEVEL ARAB MILITARY PERSONNEL. THE OFFICERS ALSO POSED QUESTIONS TOUCHING UPON CHANGES IN U.S. VISA POLICY, PERCEPTIONS OF ARABS AND MUSLIMS AS TERRORISTS, THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI DISPUTE, AND U.S. <<TREATMENT>> OF <<DETAINEEES>> AT CAMP X-RAY. WHILE THE OFFICERS HAVE ADDRESSED SHARP QUESTIONS TO SPEAKERS IN THE PAST, THEIR TONE WITH THE AMBASSADOR REMAINED SURPRISINGLY MILD. END SUMMARY.

CREATING A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE

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2. AT THEIR INVITATION (AN ANNUAL EVENT), THE AMBASSADOR ADDRESSED THE OMANI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE'S COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE JULY 15 ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES. THE ENTIRE STUDENT BODY OF OFFICERS FROM VARIOUS OMANI MILITARY BRANCHES, INCLUDING A FEW FOREIGN OFFICERS (FROM GCC STATES, JORDAN, YEMEN, EGYPT, FRANCE AND THE U.S.), PLUS FACULTY MEMBERS AND OTHER GUESTS ATTENDED. THE ROUGHLY HOUR-LONG SPEECH AND VIDEO PRESENTATION WAS FOLLOWED BY A 30-MINUTE QUESTION/ANSWER PERIOD. POST'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY SECTION ORGANIZED THE VIDEO PRESENTATION AND INFORMATION PACKETS FOR EACH AUDIENCE MEMBER, AND ALSO COMPILED A SELECTION OF ARABIC-LANGUAGE AMERICAN TITLES FOR DONATION TO THE COLLEGE'S LIBRARY. AFTER THE AMBASSADOR'S SPEECH ON AMERICA'S GENESIS INTO A WORLD POWER, U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB WORLD, AND AN OVERVIEW OF U.S.-OMANI RELATIONS, THE ATTENDING OFFICERS POSED QUESTIONS RANGING FROM VISA POLICY, TERRORISM, ISRAEL-PALESTINE, HUMAN RIGHTS AND <<IRAQ>>.

 <<IRAQ>> SLIDE SHOW SETS TONGUES WAGGING

3. ON <<IRAQ>>, A CIVILIAN ENGINEER WITH THE OMANI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE ASKED WHY THE USG HAD SOLICITED EGYPT AND INDIA FOR SECURITY PERSONNEL TO PATROL BAGHDAD, WHETHER THIS INDICATED THE U.S. WAS INCAPABLE OF PROVIDING SECURITY, AND WHETHER THERE WERE ULTERIOR MOTIVES IN SEEKING AN EGYPTIAN AND INDIAN PRESENCE. THE AMBASSADOR TOOK THIS OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT OVER 100 SLIDES PROVIDED BY THE BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAMS (IIP) WITH IMAGES OF COALITION FORCES' WORK IN <<IRAQ>> THAT RARELY GETS COVERAGE IN ARAB MEDIA, AND FACTS ABOUT SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS, FOOD DISTRIBUTION, ELECTRICAL POWER PRODUCTION, ETC. HE OUTLINED U.S. PRIORITIES IN <<IRAQ>>, OFFERING EXAMPLES OF PROGRESS IN EACH FIELD. THE AMBASSADOR LIKEWISE DESCRIBED THE INTERNATIONAL COALITION ON <<IRAQ>> AS BEING FAR BROADER THAN MERELY THE U.S. WHILE COALITION PARTNERS SUCH AS INDIA AND EGYPT ARE PROVIDING WHAT HELP THEY DEEM APPROPRIATE, THE ULTIMATE AIM IN <<IRAQ>> IS TO TURN RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL MATTERS, INCLUDING SECURITY, TO IRAQIS THEMSELVES. THIS MULTI-MEDIA PRESENTATION ON <<IRAQ>> STIRRED MORE ANIMATION FROM THE AUDIENCE THAN ANY OTHER PORTION OF THE PROGRAM.

 ON PALESTINE-ISRAEL

4. A MAJOR FROM THE ROYAL AIR FORCES OF OMAN (RAFO) CHARGED THAT, POST-SEPTEMBER 11, THE U.S. HAD TAKEN UPON ITSELF THE

RIGHT TO PROJECT ITS SELF-DEFENSE INTERESTS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, ASKING WHY AT THE SAME TIME PALESTINIAN EFFORTS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES IN THEIR OWN LAND IS BRANDED BY WASHINGTON AS TERRORISM. HE LIKewise ASKED HOW THE U.S. COULD LABEL ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER SHARON "A MAN OF PEACE." THE AMBASSADOR REMINDED THE AUDIENCE OF PRESIDENT BUSH'S HISTORIC CALL FOR AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE. LABELLING CHARGES THAT U.S. CRITICISM IS RESERVED ONLY FOR THE PALESTINIAN SIDE AS UNFOUNDED, THE AMBASSADOR INVITED THE AUDIENCE TO READ THE DEPARTMENT'S ANNUAL REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS SECTION ON ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. HE HIGHLIGHTED THE ADMINISTRATION'S ROADMAP FOR PEACE AS OFFERING CLEAR STEPS FOR AN END TO THE CONFLICT.

 VIEWS ON CAMP X-RAY

5. AN OMANI ARMY MAJOR CITED AMERICA'S HIGHLY ADVANCED JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND RENOWNED RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND ASKED HOW IT IS POSSIBLE THAT ARAB AND MUSLIM PRISONERS IN

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PRISONERS AT CAMP X-RAY ARE AS YOUNG AS 16 YEARS OLD. IN REPLY, THE AMBASSADOR ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE CAMP X-RAY <<DETAINEEES>> FALL OUTSIDE THE NORMAL SCOPE OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM, PARTICULARLY GIVEN THE FACT THE DETENTION FACILITY IS LOCATED OUTSIDE THE <<UNITED>> <<STATES>>, AND THAT KEY ISSUES PERTAINING TO THEIR STATUS ARE STILL WORKING THEIR WAY THROUGH THE COURTS. THE AMBASSADOR ALSO NOTED THAT A NUMBER OF <<DETAINEEES>> HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED BACK TO THEIR NATION OF ORIGIN, A PROCESS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE UNTIL THE FACILITY IS ULTIMATELY EMPTY.

 PUTTING VISA PROCEDURES INTO CONTEXT

6. ANOTHER OMANI ARMY MAJOR TOOK NOTE OF THE AMBASSADOR'S EXTENSIVE TRAVELS AND EXPERIENCES IN THE ARAB WORLD AND ASKED IF HE PERSONALLY FOUND ARABS TO BE AS INCLINED TOWARD TERRORISM AS THE USG APPARENTLY VIEWS THEM TO BE. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT TERRORIST ACTS ARE THE CRIMES OF INDIVIDUALS, IRRESPECTIVE OF RACE OR RELIGION. A RAFO MAJOR FOLLOWED WITH A SIMILAR QUESTION, ASKING WHY OMANIS ARE SUBJECTED TO GREATER OBSTACLES AND SECURITY SCRUTINY WHEN SEEKING VISAS FOR THE <<UNITED>> <<STATES>>. THE AMBASSADOR PUT

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RECENT CHANGES IN U.S. VISA POLICIES IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND COMPARED THE NEW SYSTEM WITH THOSE LONG IN PLACE IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD, INCLUDING EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST. HE ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT THE NEW SECURITY PROCEDURES PUT IN PLACE AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS EFFECT AMERICAN CITIZENS JUST AS THEY DO FOREIGN VISITORS. WHILE CONDEMNING ISOLATED INSTANCES WHERE INS OFFICERS ALLEGEDLY POSED INAPPROPRIATE QUESTIONS TO ARAB AND MUSLIM VISITORS AT PORTS OF ENTRY, THE AMBASSADOR DEFENDED USG EFFORTS TO REASONABLY ENSURE THE SECURITY OF ITS CITIZENS AND FOREIGN GUESTS ALIKE.

COMMENT

7. COMPARED TO OUR PAST EXPERIENCES, QUESTIONS FROM THE STUDENTS WERE SURPRISINGLY MILD IN THIS SESSION. EXPECTING A PREOCCUPATION WITH <<IRAQ>> AND ISRAEL-PALESTINE, THE OFFICERS RESEMBLED MANY OF OUR CIVILIAN AUDIENCES IN RAISING QUESTIONS ABOUT PERCEIVED U.S. HOSTILITY TO ARABS AS REFLECTED IN CHANGES IN VISA POLICY AND THE WAR ON TERROR. POST EXPRESSES STRONG APPRECIATION TO IIP FOR SUPPLYING IMAGES TO GO WITH OUR WORDS IN COMBATING THE ARRAY OF NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS.
END COMMENT.
BALTIMORE

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