

NAFSA: ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS

GULF CRISIS ALERT -- January 23, 1991

Since the outbreak of hostilities in the Persian Gulf, the Association's leadership and staff have been gathering information that might be of help to members in making what are invariably difficult decisions. We share with you what we have learned to date, and ask in return that you answer the questions at the end of this Alert in order to enable us to develop an even more complete understanding of what is going on around the country.

1. The Gulf Crisis and Foreign Students on Campus

a. FBI Contacts NAFSA has received many inquiries on recent press reports that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is questioning Arab Americans as well as Arab students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities. An FBI representative confirmed that the agency is interviewing Arab American community and business leaders to gather information on terrorist activities as well as on hate crimes and violence committed against Arab Americans. The same representative declined to comment on whether nonimmigrant Arab students are among those to be contacted. However, NAFSA has received reports from several campuses which have been asked to provide lists of Arab students to the FBI, or, in one case, to a local police department.

In terms of dealing with requests for names of students, NAFSA members are encouraged to consult with their institution's legal counsel and/or registrar's office before releasing information to the FBI or any other outside party. Many campuses have well defined procedures in this area, following the legal limits established by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (also known as the "Buckley Amendment"). For more details about the FERPA as well as current requirements on the release of information to INS representatives (which vary somewhat from FERPA limitations), refer to NAFSA's Adviser's Manual on Federal Regulations (see Section 4. below).

Many foreign student advisers may also be faced with having to advise their Arab students on what to do if they are contacted individually by an FBI agent. If they are willing to cooperate with the inquiry, students should know that they have the right to specify a time and place to respond to questions. If it is so desired, they also have the right to have a foreign student adviser or other party present during the interview.

b. New Procedures for Kuwaitis and Iraqis Arriving in the U.S. In a notice published in the Federal Register on January 16, 1991 (pg. 1566), INS announced that all nonimmigrants holding Kuwaiti and Iraqi travel documents will be photographed and fingerprinted upon entering the United States. The new requirements went into effect on January 10 and will remain in place for an indefinite period of time. INS cited concern about terrorists intending to target U.S. citizens and the need to prevent the improper use of stolen Kuwaiti passports as the reasons for the security procedures.

c. Campus Climate and the Response from Schools During the past few weeks, many NAFSA members have been monitoring closely the mood on their campuses and in their communities, in an attempt to safeguard their Arab students from harassment. Reports received at NAFSA so far indicate that conflicts between American and Arab students, and among Arab students, have been relatively few. However, many campuses remain concerned about the possibility of increased tension during the weeks and months ahead.

In response to these concerns, schools have developed a variety of different programs and services. Many international offices have increased individual and group advising for their Arab students, as a means for them to voice their feelings and for campus personnel to provide guidance on personal behavior that may help them avoid conflict situations. In many cases, community volunteers have also offered their assistance by hosting students in their homes, accompanying spouses when they go shopping, etc.

Several NAFSA members also report that they have been successful in organizing programs focused on increasing American students' understanding of the Arab world and the roots of the current crisis. Frequently, these events have also included guided discussion to allow students a forum for their opinions about the Gulf conflict. (For information on resources that may be useful for campus programming, see section 4. below.)

d. CAFSS Team and NAFSA Central Office Collecting Information The CAFSS national team is collecting information on problems which Arab students are now facing, along with information on programs and services which campuses are providing in response to the Gulf crisis. CAFSS regional representatives, who will serve as contact persons for NAFSA members, are listed below. Members are encouraged to get in touch with their regional reps to share problems and solutions and to learn more about how other campuses are responding to the situation.

- Region I: Parandeh Kia, Oregon State University, (503) 737-3006
- Region II: Donna Davis, Kansas State University, (913) 532-6448
- Region III: Jack Muthersbough, West Texas State University, (806) 656-2072
- Region IV: Maureen Fitzgibbon, Grinnell College, (515) 236-2189
- Region V: Toni Liston, Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, (618) 692-3701
- Region VI: Denise Ng, Ohio State University, (614) 292-6101
- Region VII: Jennifer Lund, Georgia State University, (404) 651-2209
- Region VIII: Judy Corello, Old Dominion University, (804) 440-3701
- Region IX: Peter Li, West Virginia University, (304) 293-5611
- Region X: Lynn King Morris, SUNY-Stony Brook, (516) 632-7025
- Region XI: Steve Sjoberg, Wentworth Institute of Technology, (617) 442-9010
- Region XII: [scholars] Kath-Ann Gerhardt, University of California-Davis, (916) 752-0864
[students] Barbara St. Urbain, University of the Pacific, (209) 946-2246

2. The Gulf Crisis Impact in the Community

We have heard of very few incidents of "Arab bashing" in the community, but are aware of concerns being expressed about the isolation of students and spouses and about treatment of foreign students arriving at some airports. We ask that Community Section members use the survey section below to let us know what impact the Gulf crisis is having in your community.

3. The Gulf Crisis and U.S. Students Abroad

a. Current Assessment In spite of developments in the Gulf, spring semester and summer programs in Western Europe seem to be proceeding largely as scheduled. Although there have been rumors of a substantial number of program cancellations, we have been able to verify that the vast majority of these are untrue. In fact, we believe that almost all programs which have been suspended fall into the following three categories:

- programs in which there has been a significant decline in enrollment,
- programs where the overseas center has high visibility and high vulnerability, and
- programs in places where there have been State Department warnings and advisories.

We are at this point in time aware of no cancellations in Asia and Latin America, and, except for short term programs with considerable travel, only five institutions which have cancelled programs in Europe: Georgetown, in Florence; Duke, in Bologna; Trinity (CT), in Rome; University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, in Germany; and Texas A & M, one program.

b. Communications Network As the conflict in the Persian Gulf continues, there is understandable anxiety and concern about U.S. study abroad programs and the safety of American students around the globe. SECUSSA has established a network for disseminating and receiving current information through a network of its regional SECUSSA reps. Marv Slind, Chair of SECUSSA, has announced that Michael Laubscher at Penn State (Bitnet: MRL1 @ PSUADMIN Phone: 814-865-7681 Fax: 814-865-3336) is serving as the SECUSSA Team's liaison to the regional reps and will maintain contact with the NAFSA Central Office, as well as those NAFSA members who are connected with Bitnet.

NAFSA members who have study abroad program information to share with colleagues, or questions about program cancellations, rumors, etc., can contact their SECUSSA regional rep, Laubscher, or Slind (Bitnet: Slind @ WSUVMI phone: 509-335-7099 Fax: 509-335-4171). SECUSSA reps are:

- Region I. Ellen Summerfield, Linfield College, 503-472-4121
- Region II. Gary Johnston, U of Arizona, 602,621-1900; bitnet: BARTOCHA @ ARIZRVAX
- Region III. Marcelle Saussy, Tulane, 504-868-5669
- Region IV. Mickey Hanzel, U of Minnesota, 612-625-2571; bitnet: MHANZEL @ UMINNI
- Region V. Joanne Reszka, U of Illinois, 217-333-6322
- Region VI. Joanne Wallace, Antioch College, 513-767-6366
- Region VII. Elizabeth Adams, UNC-Charlotte, 704-547-2464; bitnet: FISOOEAA @ UNCCVM
- Region VIII. Jennifer Rohling Wright, George Washington U, 202-994-6240,
- Region IX. Ron Pirog, Dickinson College, 717-245-1341
- Region X. Ned Quigley, Syracuse U, 315-443-3471
- Region XI. Jane Cary, Amherst College, 413-542-2265
- Region XII. Andrew Carothers, Council Travel/CIEE, 415-661-6124

c. Travel Advisories Schools and programs are urged to pay careful attention to the travel advisories issued by the State Department. The Citizens Emergency Center (telephone: 202-647-5225) administers the travel advisory program. Unfortunately, this number is often difficult to reach during a crisis. If you can't get an answer to a question at that number, you can try to reach the State Department's Operations Office for Crisis Management, at 202-647-0900.

In anticipation of possible international problems, NAFSA, in November, arranged for State Department warnings and advisories to be sent to all NAFSA members who use Bitnet. For those at an academic institution, you should be aware that almost every college and university in the United States is connected to one or more academic computer networks, all of which are connected to an overall network called Internet. Any office on a campus that has a terminal connected to the mainframe, or a PC with a modem and telephone line connection to the mainframe, can receive these travel advisories and otherwise utilize the electronic mail system at no additional cost to the institution. You can consult with your campus computer center or with one of NAFSA's INTER-L managers, Jim Graham (telephone: 303-493-0207) or Bernard LaBerge (telephone: 703-231-6271).

Members who are not at an institution may be able to access the advisories directly through the Overseas Security Electronic Bulletin Board (EBB). Those interested must apply to the Executive Director, Overseas Security Advisory Council, Department of State, Washington, DC 20522-1003. This is a free service for American organizations doing business overseas. In addition, the Official Airline Guides (OAG) offers the full text of travel advisories on many online computer services (CompuServe, Dow Jones, Western Union Easylink, etc.).

- o As of this date, the U.S. Government has removed its personnel from the following countries, and advised Americans to defer all travel: Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait.

- o Also, the U.S. Government has removed all non-essential personnel from the following countries, and advised Americans to defer non-essential travel: Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Pakistan, Sudan, and Yemen.

- o The U.S. Government has advised non-essential personnel and other American citizens to voluntarily depart these countries and defer non-essential travel until the current crisis abates: Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Djibouti, India, Israel and the occupied territories, northern Nigeria, Qatar, eastern province of Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, and United Arab Emirates.

- o The U.S. Government has also advised Americans to defer non-essential travel to the following countries or regions due to the current crisis: the Philippines, Tanzania (Dar El Salaam and Zanzibar), and Turkey.

In addition, there are other travel advisories unrelated to the Gulf crisis (such as in the Baltic States) that may be of importance to study abroad advisers. Schools are especially encouraged to check for advisories pertaining to countries where there has been a history of conflict or unrest.

d. Safe Travel The State Department encourages adherence to certain guidelines in order to increase the likelihood of safety abroad. If you have not already done so, you may want to share with your students the following suggestions for safe travel during periods of political unrest:

- use common sense, and avoid travel to areas where there has been a persistent record of terrorist activity

- schedule direct flights whenever possible, and minimize the time spent in public areas of an airport, which are the parts of the facility that are least protectable

- keep a low profile, dress conservatively, avoid luggage tags, dress and behavior which make you conspicuous, and avoid places where Americans are known to congregate

4. Resources

For a discussion of how to handle requests for information on foreign students, see the Adviser's Manual of Federal Regulations Affecting Foreign Students and Scholars (Smith and Althen, NAFSA, 1989), section 3.5.2 on release of information from records. The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), tel. 202-244-2990, may be able to advise schools on other matters related to the questioning of Arab students.

For advice on handling real and perceived emergency situations, see the Special Report by Brenda Robinson in the November issue of the NAFSA Newsletter. Also see Crisis Management in a Cross-Cultural Setting (P. Burak, NAFSA: 1987), chapter 10 on "terrorist activities."

If you are experiencing any intercultural problems on your campus or in your community, you may want to talk with one of the NAFSA field service consultants. Contact Juliette Gregory in the Central Office, who can put you in touch with a consultant with the appropriate expertise.

For those wishing assistance, the NAFSA Central Office will help you in dealing with calls from the media. We can respond to calls on your behalf, suggest ways to deal with difficult requests, or refer calls to NAFSA members who are knowledgeable about particular issues.

For materials to be used in cross-cultural workshops, contact AMIDEAST (202-785-0022) about "Introduction to the Arab World", a video + guidebook, and other publications. The National Council on US-Arab Relations (202-293-0801) can also provide materials.

For those wishing information about contributions: InterAction (American Council for Voluntary International Action) (212-777-8210 in New York and 202-822-8429 in Washington) has a list of member agencies accepting donations. Contributions can also be sent to American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA) at 1522 K Street, NW, Suite 202, Washington, DC 20005, tel. 202-347-2258.

Individuals or companies wishing to assist in the relief effort can contact VITA (Volunteers in Technical Assistance, tel. 703-276-1914), or their local Red Cross Chapter. Blood donors are particularly needed.

5. Further Support for Members

Since we do not yet know the dimensions and the duration of the Gulf crisis, it is difficult to do much in the way of long range planning. The Association, however, has added a staff member, on an interim basis, who will be dedicated full time, during regular office hours, to collecting information, responding to inquiries, and otherwise helping members to keep up to date. To enable us to serve you during non-business hours, we have added a telephone message service which will enable us both to receive your queries and to dispense the most recent information we have received. Call 202-462-4811 to speak with the Gulf Crisis Support Coordinator during business hours, or to get the NAFSA message service at other times.

6. NAFSA Gulf Crisis Member Survey

Your response to the following questions will assist NAFSA in keeping members informed about the impact of the Gulf crisis on the higher education community. Please mail your reply to the Gulf Crisis Support Coordinator at the NAFSA Central Office, send your bitnet to NAFSA @ VTVM2, or fax your response to 202-667-3419. Be sure to give us your name and the name of your institution!

- (1) Are you experiencing student cancellations for spring semester programs? For which countries? How many students? What percentage is this of your study abroad students?
- (2) Which, if any, of your programs been cancelled or postponed? What sort of special instructions, if any, have you given to students studying abroad? What advice have you sought/received from legal counsel?
- (3) Of the students you have studying abroad, how many have chosen to return home? How flexible are you being in terms of on-campus registration for students who have returned home? What has been your policy on program/transportation refunds?
- (4) What, if any, problems have developed on your campus, or in the community, related to the Gulf conflict?
- (5) Has your campus found it necessary to develop special services to assist Arab students?
- (6) How else can NAFSA be of help to you?