



National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations

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23rd Arab-U.S. Policymakers Conference

*Framing and Charting the Region's Issues, Interests, Challenges, and Opportunities:
Implications for Arab and U.S. Policies*

**Washington, D.C.
October 28, 2014**

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Speakers:

Mr. David Bosch – Chairman, Board of Directors, National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations.

Dr. John Duke Anthony – Founding President and CEO, National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, and author, *inter alia*, of *Arab States of the Lower Gulf: People, Politics, Petroleum; Historical and Cultural Dictionary of the Sultanate of Oman and the Emirates of Eastern Arabia*; and *The United Arab Emirates: Dynamics of State Formation*.

Remarks as delivered.

[Mr. David Bosch] On behalf of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations and its Board of Directors, I'd like to welcome you to this twenty-third annual policy makers conference. We are so glad and honored to have all of you here today.

[Arabic Greeting] As they say in the Middle East. I also would like to thank the Ronald Reagan Building and the International Trade Center for partnering with us to make this prestigious venue available. Also thanks to the sixty or more leading corporations, many of them shown here on the screens to my right and left and also in your books, whose sponsorships have made this possible, including also the many embassies and U.S. government agencies that have also sponsored and contributed. In addition, we have to thank all of the speakers who have made their time and talents available. Without all of your support we could never have organized a conference like this, so thank you all.

Last year when I opened this conference all of us were acutely aware of the problems, the serious problems in Libya and Syria. Today as we open the sessions not only is the situation more serious in Libya and Syria, but the war in Syria has now engulfed Iraq. We see what looks like a regional war attracting many more players and becoming more complicated.

Likewise, last summer we had the killing and the wounding of thousands of civilians in Gaza and the effective destruction of its infrastructure. Today we see also increased instability in Yemen. Many people in the Arab world are looking at their future security with some trepidation, their future prosperity, and particularly the minority groups. There is a fear that inter-communal violence could spread and engulf the region and bring about the demise of the states that have kept order in the area since the colonial times.

In America, I perceive that Americans are confused and worried about what America could and should do that would help the situation. This may be complicated because indeed many in the Arab world believe that U.S. policies, actions and inactions have directly contributed to the current crises in the area. So there are no easy, no obvious solutions.

We're therefore very fortunate today to have such a strong and varied group of speakers who can bring their ideas, their recommendations to us, and I encourage everybody to listen carefully, to ask your questions, to if you'd like meet with our speakers after their respective sessions. One thing I would respectfully ask is that you please wait until they have a chance to leave the dais, the podium here, and get behind the back of the room so that you don't inadvertently disturb or delay the next session involved.

One other thing I'd like to draw your attention to at the back of the room - another resource - a book fair with hard to otherwise get books on the Arab world from the American Education Trust over to the right behind you there.

Now I have the honor to introduce the Council's founding president, Dr. John Duke Anthony. He founded the Council in 1983, and in the last 31 years just one of their programs, the Model Arab League, has reached over 35,000 American young people, people in high schools and colleges, in programs in which they represent different countries in the Arab League. They get to play act as the Ambassador from Saudi Arabia or Oman or Bahrain. And this not only provides them with important leadership skills in ways to give short, pithy speeches, but it also helps them to learn how to form compromises, how to make group agreements, and many other life skills.

This year we're going to be expanding this program from 16 cities throughout the U.S. to 20, and we'll be able to reach an additional 2,500 students with this single program.

Dr. Anthony also has taken more than 1000 American professors to the Arab world - American professors, policymakers from the U.S. Congress and staff, other national and state leaders, and also American military officers. This enables them to directly see the Arab countries involved, to meet with the people, to get really first-hand opinions and also to establish relationships with their counterparts.

Besides that, Dr. Anthony has held dozens of briefings on Capitol Hill. He's written hundreds of documents for the National Council. There's really no way to quickly summarize his CV, but if you look in the book I will mention just a couple of other things. He's the only American that is so respected in the Gulf that he's been invited to every single annual summit meeting of the Gulf countries, the GCC leaders. He's also the only head of an American non-profit organization who has been knighted by the King of Morocco.

Now, I have the great honor to introduce a long-time friend, the man who has led the National Council for 31 years through thick and thin, and the very determined person who insists on leading this particular conference even though he's still recovering from surgery for a very, very bad back. Dr. John Duke Anthony.

[Dr. John Duke Anthony] Thank you, David. Welcome ladies and gentlemen to the 23rd annual U.S.-Arab Policymakers Conference.

Why do we have this conference? At the end of the American liberation of Kuwait in 1990, the restoration of national sovereignty to Kuwait, the restoration of political independence to Kuwait, the restoration of Kuwait's territorial integrity. It had been erased from the map by the aggression from the north. We asked Foreign Service officers what is it that no one has ever done for you, with you, to help you in your mission? And the answers to a woman and a man were uniformly that we wrestle all the time with the "W" questions - what needs to be done, who needs to do it, why does it need to be done, when does it need to be done, where will we be if we do it, where will we be if we don't do it, and sometimes even whether something needs to be done - if something's not broken you're not supposed to try to fix it.

And so we have this conference for not the "W" questions, but the "H" questions - how. There's no way a person can answer a how question with a yes or no. And these are deliberately crafted to draw out speakers, and the audience, and people in their discussions to try to probe deeper. What is it that needs to be done more? What is it that needs to be done less? What is it that needs to be done, period? And what does need to be done not at all?

This is after all the one part of the planet to which America and its allies have mobilized and deployed more tens of thousands of forces, killed more people, had more people killed, expended more of scarce treasury and other finite resources than any other place on earth. So to think that the region is well or the relationship is well - anyone who would think thusly would be probably smoking something.

We exist to try to assist policymakers by focusing on these how questions, and we do so as an organization that's been in existence now for more than three decades.

What is our vision? Our vision is a firmer foundation of the relationship between the United States and America's Arab friends, America's Arab allies, America's working strategic partners. And that foundation would rest on a multifaceted number of sectors. There would be strategic commonality, reciprocity, mutuality of benefit. There would be economic aspects. There would be political, in the realm of foreign policy. There would be commercial. There would be defense cooperation. There would be people-to-people ties, cultural ties, and things of that nature. These would be the pillars of that firmer foundation.

What is our mission? Our mission is just one word, and it's education. This is but one of seven programs that we have. David Bosch made reference to the Joseph J. Malone Faculty Fellows in Arab and Islamic Studies. By some accounts there are 2,800 universities in the United States. We have someone in 800 of them, where

we've taken professors from the arts, humanities, and the social sciences to more than 12 Arab countries. High school program, the Malcolm Kerr High School Scholars Program in 36 cities – 353 of these sixteen and seventeen year olds we took to Egypt, to Jordan, to Kuwait, to Oman, to Tunisia, to Syria, to Palestine, before they entered their university careers.

We have a Joe Alex Morris Arab World Journalism Internship Program – some 53 budding journalists right straight out of one of America's 88 schools of journalism and mass communications. We put them on newspapers in Kuwait, in the United Arab Emirates, in Jordan, in Saudi Arabia for three and a half months in that particular program.

So far as I know – anybody can correct me if I'm in error – we're the only group in the field that works assiduously with the American Armed Forces. Since 1986 we've taken just under 160 officers for the U.S. Central Command's combatant commander, most of them to Oman. What David Bosch did not mention was that David was raised partly in Oman, and one of the residues of American good-will in the region were those American nurses, doctors, and teachers that went to Arabia in the 1890s at the turn of the last century, not this one. Indeed, when he was in Oman his father was the only surgeon in the entire country, if one can believe that, during the 1950s. But we take the officers to expose them. As the commanders have said to me, "John Duke, they're very good at inflicting their military might on the unwilling." However, they are walking sticks of dynamite in terms of cultural interaction and social graces with regard to knowing about Arab culture, Arab society, Arab history, and Islamic culture, the Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Islamic world. So we take them for these reasons, to introduce them to the culture.

David made reference to our trying to train the next generation of Americans who will shoulder the burden of managing this relationship better than those of us who are somewhat older, have been doing. And he mentioned the Model Arab League and the 35,000 there, but we're trying to train young people in the real skills of public debate, to debate in one minute, three minutes max. When you've never done this before you are trembling, and you'd rather mow the teacher's lawn and paint the back fence rather than stand up in front of people and argue with passion and erudition for one minute or three minutes. And we have judges, like many of the grown ups here in the shadows, scoring them, and the best of these come to Washington in the summer for ten weeks, from June the 1st to August the 10th, for a seminar on Arabia, the GCC, and the Gulf countries. They work with 18 sister organizations – many of them are represented here – full time, nine to five, punctuality, discipline, bearing, demeanor, organization, administrative skills, volunteering, teamwork – and then two nights a week we bring them to George Washington University for what we call a cerebral massage.

Most of them come to Washington dead set on what it is that they want to be when they finish their studies. That's because they come from small places, often in the United States, where no one has challenged their charismatic personality. But when they come here and they meet some twenty different people who brief them they become delightfully confused and they change their mind about what it is that they really want to do to become a foreign affairs practitioner.

We do what we can in terms of follow-up with regard to Congressional briefings. In the last three months, for example, we've had eight. Many people think that we're somewhat overly focused on Arabia and the Gulf, and perhaps we are because this is the place where I mentioned we've made the most monumental mistakes and where the implications have been severe and damaging and dangerous in the extreme, as Ambassador Freeman will shortly underscore, italicize, neonize, and capitalize in his particular remarks in that regard.

These are amongst the reasons why we're here, and to raise people's awareness, to enhance their information, to expand their insight, to increase their knowledge, to underscore their understanding. We're pleased to be here.

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