



Council Chronicle

2012: Vol. 6, No. 2 (Spring)

The National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations is pleased to provide the *seventeenth* edition of the *Council Chronicle*, the Council's newsletter. The *Chronicle* seeks to keep the Council's alumni, donors, and other supporters informed and updated. One among other efforts to do so on an ongoing basis is achieved by presenting highlights and special reports related to the Council's year-round educational programs, events, and activities. For new readers interested in learning more about the Council's vision and mission, together with the ways and means it utilizes to pursue both objectives, please visit the Council's website at ncusar.org.

About the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations

Founded in 1983, the National Council is an American educational, non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to improving American knowledge and understanding of the Arab world. It endeavors to do this through leadership development, people-to-people programs, academic seminars, an annual Arab-U.S. policymakers' conference, specialized publications, and the participation of American students and faculty in Arab world study abroad and Arabic language learning experiences as well as intensive year-round and summer university student internships combined with an academic seminar in the nation's capital.

The Council's *vision* for the U.S.-Arab relationship is one that rests on a solid, enduring foundation of strategic, economic, political, commercial, and defense cooperation, strengthened continuously by exchanges of present and emerging leaders among Americans and Arabs alike.

The Council's *mission* is educational. It seeks to enhance American awareness and appreciation of the multi-faceted and innumerable benefits the United States has long derived and continues to obtain from its relations with the Arab world.

In pursuit of its mission, the Council serves as a U.S.-Arab relations programmatic, informational, and human resources clearinghouse. In so doing, it provides cutting edge information and insight to national, state, and local grassroots organizations, media, and public policy research institutes, in addition to select community civic, religious, business, and professional associations.

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The National Council's October 25-26, 2012, 21st Annual Arab-U.S. Policymakers Conference in Context

On the eve of the 21st Annual Arab-U.S. Policymakers Conference, the National Council is pleased to welcome to the nation's capital its Arab and Muslim participants, international registrants, and distinguished guests from the Arab world and other countries as well as the United States. Your American counterparts and the Council greet you in the spirit of friendship and strategic partnership. We extend our deep gratitude to the Ambassadors and staffs of the Embassies of Bahrain and Jordan for hosting the Conference Sponsors, participants, and registrants at their respective embassies for evening receptions and dinners and to the U.S.-UAE Business Council for its hosting of the second day's luncheon.

The National Council is especially grateful to the record high number of conference sponsors this year. Many of them occupy a special niche for their having long been among the Council's first and foremost friends. Alongside them, however, is something new and, given the state of the international economy, unexpected: a significant number of first-time sponsors have chosen to extend their assistance in support of this year's Conference. The supporting corporations, embassies, organizations, and individuals are cited below. Collectively, personnel in the U.S Congress, Departments of Commerce, Defense, and State, as well as numerous others have enabled the Council to accomplish what it could not have achieved alone: a program that is arguably among the most varied, strongest, timely, and relevant that the Council has ever assembled.



Dr. John Duke Anthony is and has been the Facilitator and Moderator for each of the Annual Arab-U.S. Policymakers Conferences since they began in 1991. He is also presently serving a second term as a Member of the Secretary of State's Advisory Committee for International Economic Policy and the Committee's Subcommittee on Sanctions. The author of numerous works on the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf Cooperation Council, he is the only American to have been invited to attend each of the GCC's Annual Ministerial and Heads of State Summits since the GCC's inception in 1981.



HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal is Chairman of the King Faisal Foundation for Islamic Studies and Research; former Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Great Britain and the United States; and former Saudi Arabian Director General for Foreign Intelligence. HRH Prince Turki has addressed several of the National Council's previous Arab-U.S. Policymakers Conferences. In response to the overwhelming positive reaction to his remarks on each of those occasions he has agreed to return as a Keynote Speaker at the 2012 Arab-U.S. Policymakers Conference.

The National Council's 21st Annual Arab-U.S Policymakers Conference is but one component of the Council's educational mission to do whatever it can to improve the overall Arab-U.S. relationship. The mission is pursued through this annual event and seven other Arab-U.S relations educational programs: the Council's (1) Model Arab League/Arab-U.S. Relations Youth Leadership Development Program for University and High School Students; (2) Malone Fellows in Arab and Islamic Studies Program for American University Faculty, Students, and Armed Services Officers; (3) Arabic Language and Study Abroad Programs; (4) Capitol Hill and Public Affairs Briefing Events for Members of Congress and Congressional Staff; (5) University Student Internship and Summer Academic Seminar Programs on Arabia and the Gulf;

(6) a proactive and much-visited website that highlights the Council's programs, events, publications, and activities as well as an active blog on "Arabia, The Gulf, and The GCC;" and (7) Specialized Briefings for Executive Branch, Corporate, and Organizational Sponsors. By helping to strengthen and expand these efforts in support of what the Council seeks to accomplish, the Conference Sponsors have chosen to become integral parts of the Council's vision of an Arab-U.S. relationship that is anchored in the firmest foundation possible of a mutuality of enhanced understanding and shared economic, commercial, educational, cultural, and national security benefits.

Featured Conference Speakers Include:



The Honorable Jose W. Fernandez is Assistant Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs at the U.S. Department of State.



H.E. Ambassador Dr. Mohammed Alhussaini Alsharif is Chief Representative of the League of Arab States to the United States; former Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Canada and Turkey; and former Head of the Saudi Arabian Consulate in Houston.



Ambassador Chas W. Freeman is, inter alia, former Assistant Secretary for Regional Security Affairs, U.S. Department of Defense, former U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, and former President, Middle East Policy Council.



Dr. Anthony Cordesman is the Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy, Center for Strategic and International Studies; consultant to the U.S. State Department, Defense Department, and intelligence community; and former Director of Intelligence Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense.

As with each of these Conferences since they began in 1991, this one has gathered an assemblage of internationally renowned specialists. Over a two-day period in the national capital's premier venue at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, the participants will discuss, debate and assess issues of over-arching importance to the American and Arab people's needs, concerns, interests, and key foreign policy objectives. What they will share in the way of privileged information, insight, analysis, assessments, and recommendations to policymakers during these two days can hardly be regarded as a mere annual update of international and regional trends and indications. To the contrary, the policy-centric proceedings are vitally important to the definition of issues, the ordering of priorities, and the direction of policy formulation and implementation among foreign affairs practitioners in American and Arab governments alike. Taking place amidst a period of unprecedented change along with continuity in the Arab world and the overall Arab-U.S. relationships -- much of it unprecedented and with implications for Americans and Arabs alike -- the substance of this Conference could hardly be more challenging. The atmosphere could hardly be more receptive. And the timing could hardly be more propitious.

The complex issues that impact the interdependent and globally consequential Arab-U.S. relationship demand not only our respective people's attention, creativity, and sensitivity. They also demand that we tap into what remains of, is added to and sometimes subtracted from, the long-standing reservoir of historical Arab-American goodwill. The National Council, its strategic American and Arab partners, and its Corporate Sponsors do so collectively for the following reasons: to expand reciprocal respect as well as trust and confidence with a view to reducing inter-state conflicts, to consulting continuously with a view to achieving consensus on issue-specific policies, to seeking conciliation rather than confrontation, and to focusing on what most needs to be done through new initiatives and cooperative ventures for mutual benefit.

Model Arab League

Arab-U.S. Relations Youth Leadership Development Program

2011-2012 marked the 29th year of the **National Council's flagship Arab-U.S. Student Leadership Development Program, the Model Arab League (MAL)**. The Models are similar in organization and format to the older and more widely recognized Model United Nations, with its 193 members. An important difference between the two is that the MAL focuses only on the 22 member countries that comprise the League of Arab States. Established in February 1945, and thereby pre-dating the founding of the United Nations, the Arab League is the world's oldest regional political organization dedicated to, among other things, the diplomatic and peaceful settlement of disputes.

The Models provide primarily American but also Arab and other international students' opportunities to develop invaluable leadership skills. In few if any other ways do the student participants have a comparable chance to work with their fellows for common goals and shared interests. We know of no other opportunity that allows emerging leaders to learn firsthand what it is like to put themselves in the shoes of real-life Arab diplomats and other foreign affairs practitioners. In the process, the students come to realize unavoidably and inevitably how different these international relations realities are in comparison to what they previously thought and wrongly assumed to be true based on what they had read and "learned" or not read, "not learned" and therefore not known before.



Student delegates from Bishop Ireton High School in Alexandria, VA, with faculty advisor Mr. Michael Rauer, display their award certificates after the National High School Model Arab League.

Grappling with the international challenges of representing the needs, concerns, interests, and foreign policy objectives of a government other than their own, and especially that of an Arab country, has obvious merit in and of itself. In the process, students not only deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Arab world and its peoples. In addition, they develop and practice useful analytical, organizational, writing, editing, and public speaking skills. In so doing they strengthen their ability to engage in the art of reasoned argument and spirited debate. In the process, they have an unparalleled opportunity to hone and refine leadership attributes that for many are often unavailable or otherwise difficult to acquire in the course of reading a book, viewing films, videos or television, listening to a specialist, participating in academic classes, attending briefings, or accessing blogs and the Internet.



Students vote on a resolution in the Political Affairs Council at the Atlanta High School Model.

Educating, Training, and Developing Today Tomorrow's Arab-U.S. Relations Leaders

The Models enhance students' abilities to debate the national and regional defense, economic, political, social, and related issues and policies of the Arab countries they choose to represent. Using parliamentary procedure -- for those who have never had an opportunity to learn or practice it before, they soon acquire a mastery of the art -- the students wrangle with one another over matters pertaining to the proper course of concerted policy formulation and action with regard to such weighty matters as Palestinian affairs, human rights, justice, economic development, defense cooperation, and the environment.

As in real life public policy debates, participants have no choice but to learn how to advocate their viewpoints with facts, command of language, clear oral and written expression, and the passion of their convictions as well as all the logic, force of argument, and erudition they can muster in support of their position. What is more, the student participants have no option but to try to be as effective as they can within prescribed requirements and processes, including tight time constraints. For example, in keeping with established rules of order and depending on the issue

and procedural dynamics in play, the Models' Secretaries General, Assistant Secretaries General, and Standing Council Chairs (each of whom is elected by their peers) are tasked with limiting the authorized debates to variants of thirty seconds, one minute, three minutes, and/or a maximum of five minutes.

There's no mistaking either the rarity or the human resource development value of such an enterprise. Arguably few American students and other young adults receive or have received as comprehensive a level of training and firsthand experience as the Models provide in practicing and mastering what it takes to become proficient in public affairs leadership abilities. The more than 2,200 students that annually participate in the National Council's 15 Annual Model Arab Leagues held in 11 cities throughout the United States are unique in more than number and nature. Performing under the watchful eyes of their faculty advisers and adult judges, the students are eager to prove to themselves, their families, and their teachers that they are worth every penny of the investment in this one-of-a-kind component of their education. To that end there is no way around their having to study hard and conduct serious research in advance of the Models.



The delegates from Georgia State University display their Outstanding Delegation certificates after the National University Model in Washington, DC. (Right, front row, is their faculty advisor Dr. S. Rashid Naim).



(Left to right) HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Talal bin Abdulaziz Al Sa'ud with Dr. John Duke Anthony.

Strengthening and Expanding Arab-U.S. People-to-People Ties for the Period Ahead

First-time readers of the *Council Chronicle* often ask whether it is the case that, in some cities, there is more than one Model. The answer is yes. The reason has to do with popular demand. That is, what typically happens at the end of numerous Models is that most of the student and faculty participants immediately register to participate in the next year's Model at the same venue. As powerful and welcome a validation of a given Models' value as this is, there is another side to the coin. That is, no sooner does a Model end than veteran Model Arab League student participants rush to reserve space for their participation in the following year's Model. The result is that there is little if any room for new universities and students that would like to participate. Indeed, students newly aware of such opportunities and who want to participate would be unable to do so were new Models not established to accommodate the growing number of applicants. It is in this way that the early 1980s original number of slightly more than 100 participants has grown twenty-fold to more than 2,200 per year and continues to increase.

Beyond the proven leadership development achievements that are the hallmarks of the Models' experience, an additional incentive in recent years has been student and faculty awareness of the increasing number of extraordinary additional benefits for which Model alumni become eligible. Indeed, participation in the Models has become a gateway for Model delegates winning National Council fellowships granting them entry into, first, the Council's Annual University and High School Student Summer Internship Programs in the nation's capital and, second, the Council's Arabic Language and Study Abroad Programs in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, and Yemen. In addition, for the past two years, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have each sponsored study visits to their countries for outstanding MAL delegates.

In the past year, *a record* 73 young American alumni of the National Council's Model Arab League Program received, as a direct result of their participation in the Models, coveted educational fellowships or grants of one kind or another. Acceptance and fulfillment of the requirements of each of these awards has enabled the students to strengthen their Arab-U.S. leadership skills in preparation for careers in international affairs and service in their country's public and private sectors.

In the Council's 2011 ten-week summer internship programs that combined professional work experience in international affairs organizations with an academic seminar on Arabia and the Gulf, 12 of the 32 interns were Model Alumni. In the Council's first two cultural immersion visits for university students to Saudi Arabia in 2011, *all* 22 of the participants were Model Arab League Alumni. In addition, *three* Council 2011 Model Arab League participants were awarded an all-expenses paid six-week Arabic language fellowship, complete with home stays, in Oman; and (2) *five dozen* cadets and midshipmen from the U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Naval Academy, and U.S. Air Force Academy participated in separate Council two-week cultural immersion programs in the UAE in partnership with the internationally renowned Abu Dhabi-based Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research.



A U.S. Military Academy delegation visiting the UAE Zayed II Military College in Abu Dhabi during a Council study visit.



The Council's Ten-Week Summer Internship Program, the academic component of which is chaired by Dr. Anthony (7th from left), provides students a unique opportunity to work and study in the nation's capital.

Scope and Focus of the Council's Network for Model Preparation and Participation

In preparation for participating in a Model, all the students are able to benefit from assistance provided by the National Council's national network of supporters and volunteers. For example, each of the participants is able to obtain additional assistance by accessing *the Council's staff, the entirety of which is comprised of alumni of the Model Arab League Program.* Many also gain from contacting the numerous Arab embassies that support the Models. Still others are guided by one or more of the faculty advisers in 800 American universities where alumni of the Council's Malone Faculty Fellows in Arab and Islamic Studies Program are resident. What makes the Fellows unique sources of information and insight is that that they have participated in the Council's educational and cultural immersion study abroad programs in one or more of the 12 Arab countries that have hosted the Fellows.



Student delegates representing Saudi Arabia make a speech in favor of a motion during the National University Model.



Cadets from the United States Military Academy at West Point display their Outstanding Delegation certificates from the National University Model.



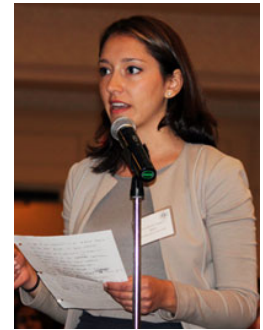
At the National University Model Arab League at Georgetown University, the National Council presented Ambassador Andrew Killgore and Mr. Richard Curtiss awards commemorating their lifetime commitment to Arab-U.S. understanding. Above (left), Ambassador Killgore accepts his award, and (right) Ms. Delinda Hanley accepts the award on behalf of Mr. Richard Curtiss.



The Council on Social Affairs votes on a resolution at the National University Model.



Student delegates from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville attend the Southwest Model Arab League. (Right, front row, is faculty advisor Dr. Najib Ghadbian).



Students who participate in the National Council's Model Arab League Program develop persuasive public speaking skills that are invaluable regardless of whatever career they pursue.



A student delegate speaks in support of a motion in the Political Affairs Council at the National High School Model.



High school students from The Madeira School in Virginia accept Outstanding Delegate awards at the National Model.

From November 2011 through April 2012, the National Council sponsored and administered 15 Model Arab Leagues in 11 U.S. cities for 2,200 students in more than 100 American secondary schools and universities. University Model Arab Leagues were conducted in Boston, Massachusetts at Northeastern University; Allendale, Michigan at Grand Valley State University; Oxford, Ohio at Miami University; Spartanburg, South Carolina at Converse College; Washington, DC at Georgetown University; Little Rock, Arkansas at the University of Arkansas; Houston, Texas at the University of Houston; Oakland, California at Mills College; and Salt Lake City, Utah at the University of Utah. High School Models were conducted in Atlanta, Georgia at The Marist School; Boston, Massachusetts at Northeastern University; Little Rock, Arkansas at the University of Arkansas; Newport News, Virginia at Christopher Newport University; and Washington, DC at Georgetown University.



Students gather around computers to jointly draft a resolution in the Council on Environmental Affairs at the Ohio Valley Model in Oxford, Ohio.



The National University Model in Washington, DC brings together more than 300 students from schools across the United States.

The National Council's Model Arab League Program helps prepare students to be knowledgeable, well-trained, and effective citizens as well as civic and public affairs activists. The skill sets acquired and practiced in the course of the Models are designed to serve the participants well regardless of the career or profession they elect to pursue. As MAL Program Coordinator Megan Geissler has noted, "We're providing future leaders the experience of being in the shoes of and having to deal with someone they might never understand or be able to deal with effectively otherwise. The beneficiaries are America and the world's coming generation of diplomats, other international relations specialists, business representatives, and educators as well as humanitarians, peace and justice activists, armed services personnel, and future conflict preventers as well as resolvers."



Students vote on an amendment to a resolution in the Council of Arab Environmental Affairs Ministers during the National University Model in Washington, DC.



Student delegates from Missouri Southern State University, led by veteran faculty adviser and National Council Malone Fellow Dr. Conrad Gubera, attend the Southwest Model Arab League at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.



The National Council's Model Arab League annually includes the participation of more than 2,000 students throughout the United States.



(Left to right) Dr. John Duke Anthony and H.E. Dr. Mohammed Alhussaini Alsharif, Ambassador of the League of Arab States to the United States, addressing the Opening Session of the National University Model in Washington, DC.



The student delegation from the University of Houston - Clear Lake participated in both the Bilateral Model in Houston, Texas and the National Model in Washington, DC. (Right, back row, is faculty advisor Dr. Jeff Lash).



Students display their Outstanding Delegate certificates at the Southwest Model Arab League, held at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.



Ms. Catia Sharp from Northeastern University was chosen to serve as the Secretary General of the 2013 National University Model. Ms. Sharp was also one of ten outstanding Model Arab League students chosen to participate in a study visit to Saudi Arabia this past winter (see pgs. 10-11).



A student from the United States Air Force Academy, representing Palestine, raises his placard to vote on a resolution in the Social Affairs Council at the Ohio Valley Model in Oxford, Ohio.



A student delegate makes a speech in favor of a resolution during the Closing Session of the National University Model at Georgetown University.

The National Council's Model Arab League Student Leaders Visit Saudi Arabia

The National Council, in partnership with the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) and the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), organized and escorted a delegation of ten Model Arab League students on a cultural immersion study visit to Saudi Arabia, December 27, 2011 to January 9, 2012. The visit provided the young American leaders a hands-on experience in the Arab world that few others their age have had.

In the 2010-2011 academic year, nearly 28,000 Saudi Arabian students, forty percent of them females, were enrolled in American universities across the United States. Accompanying them were more than 40,000 spouses and dependents. In marked contrast, fewer than fifty American students in U.S. institutions of higher education were among those privileged over the same period of time in having a firsthand university level educational experience in Saudi Arabia.

In an effort to help narrow this "knowledge and understanding gap," the National Council has partnered with the SACM and the MOHE. The goal: to provide an empirical educational introduction to the kingdom's culture and society for a select group of American students who have performed exceptionally well in the Council's Model Arab League student leadership development program. During the course of the visit, the students met Saudi Arabian educators, business representatives, civil society leaders, and American diplomats in addition to visiting numerous sites of cultural, developmental, and historical interest.



The delegation of Model Arab League students, led by National Council Board Member Dr. Mario A. Pascale (5th from left) met with H.E. Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Saeed (6th from left) during its study visit in Riyadh.

The study visit's participants were selected from applicants with outstanding records of professionalism, research, debate, and leadership at one or more of the National Council's 15 Model Arab Leagues in 2011. Led by veteran Council study visit escort and board member Dr. Mario A. Pascale, ten students were chosen from as many different universities involved in the Models, producing a delegation of talented American emerging leaders from institutions of higher education throughout the United States. The students have a minimum of two semesters remaining before completion of their undergraduate degree, ensuring they will have a full year to share what they learned in and about Saudi Arabia with their classmates, professors, and members of their local civic, business, and professional associations.

The program began with a pre-departure orientation session at the National Council's Washington, DC office. The objective: to introduce the participants to some of America's and Saudi Arabia's foremost scholars and specialists on Saudi Arabia and Saudi Arabia-U.S. relations with a view to providing the students with otherwise hard to come by background and perspective on what they would experience and ways of sharing their newfound knowledge and understanding with as many people as possible upon their return to the United States. Upon arrival in-country, the delegation visited Riyadh in the Central Province, Dhahran and Al-Khobar in the Eastern Province, and Jeddah in the Western Province. The delegation met with, among others, H.E. Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Saeed, Dr. Salwah Al-Hazza, Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Zamil, HRH Prince Turki Al-Faisal, Mr. Ahmed Al-Shugairy, and U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia James Smith. They also had the opportunity to visit numerous schools in Saudi Arabia, including King Saud University, Al Yamama University, King Fahd University for Petroleum and Minerals, Prince Sultan Center for Science and Technology, and the King Abdullah University for Science and Technology. The study visit enabled the students to meet Saudi Arabians from all ages and walks of life.



The Model Arab League student delegation met with H.E. Dr. Hussein Al-Athel (center), Secretary General of the Riyadh Chamber of Commerce and Industry.



The delegation visited the Prince Sultan Center for Science and Technology in the Eastern Province.



The National Council's university student study visit to Saudi Arabia provided the young American leaders -- each one an alumnus of the Council's Model Arab League Program and shown here enjoying Arabic coffee and dates -- a hands-on experience in the Arab world that many may have dreamed of but few others their age have had.



Led by National Council Board Member and veteran escort Dr. Mario A. Pascale (center), the delegation visited the headquarters of Saudi Aramco, the world's largest energy company, in Dhahran in the kingdom's Eastern Province.



Student delegates viewed firsthand some of the numerous immense construction projects underway in Saudi Arabia, the one pictured here being the site of the Riyadh-based future HRH Princess Noura Bint Abdulrahman University, which, upon completion, will be the world's largest all-women's institution of higher education.



The Model Arab League delegation surveyed plans for King Abdullah Economic City before observing the actual progress on the ambitious project.

My Relationship with the Arab World

By John Mulholland

By whatever genetic twist that has been in play, I have always been interested in other people's cultures, countries, languages, and histories. At age ten a teacher remarked, "that's as far away as Yemen." I flattered myself that I knew every country on the globe but this was one I had obviously missed. I ran to the Atlas to fill the void. Although I found Yemen and its nearby countries of interest, I could hardly have imagined that, thirteen years later, I would dedicate most of my adult life to the Arab world and various aspects of the Arab-U.S. relationship.

At the age of seventeen, I was fortunate to spend over a year traveling around Mexico and Central America. The experience inspired me, for the first time, to learn a language and assimilate a culture. I joined the Army at eighteen years of age and was stationed in Livorno, Italy. At the time, I was a fanatical bicycle rider trying hard to be the first Lance Armstrong. After my Army stint I remained in Italy to race but finally realized, sadly, that I was not built to be a first rate professional rider. Even so, I gained another language and knowledge of another culture.

By chance, the headquarters for Middle East operations of the US Army Corps of Engineers was located at the Army base where I had served in Italy. They offered me a position in their Jeddah office running their high frequency communications. By then I had read everything I could find by the great mid-twentieth century traveler and explorer in the Arab world, Wilfred Thesiger, who stoked my romantic interest. I also read everything else I could find on the region. I already knew the general geography, a little history of Saudi Arabia and the Arab-Israeli conflict, but none of this prepared me for Beirut, where I landed in October, 1968 during what in retrospect was viewed by many as the city's golden age in the modern era. Nothing could have prepared me for the kaleidoscope of cultures, cuisines, and languages I found there, all picture postcard framed by the Mediterranean Sea in front and the terraced mountains behind. I said to myself, "If this is the Middle East, I'll take it."

Only a few days later I landed in Riyadh. If Beirut was filled with Western influences that I was familiar with, Riyadh was different. I was hardly put off, I was ecstatic. Now, after Latin America and Italy, I felt prepared to tackle another culture and language. I quickly found a superb classical Arabic teacher who within a month had taught me to write, basic grammar, and the beginnings of Gulf dialect. In those days, Riyadh was still a city constructed mainly of mud brick dwellings, with a road into the desert to the airport lined by Egyptian-built ministerial offices. On weekends and holidays, I used every spare minute to explore Riyadh, the central province of Najd, and also the Eastern Province, center of the country's massive energy reserves.

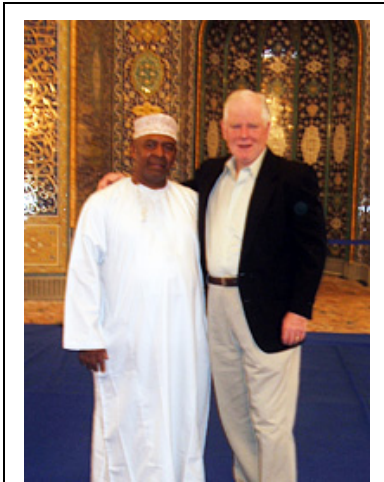
All too soon, I was moved to my permanent assignment in Jeddah. Even though Riyadh was the capital of the kingdom, all the embassies and most of the foreign companies were in Jeddah. (The Corps of Engineers was the first foreign concern allowed to be established in Riyadh). In Jeddah I was fortunate to find an office of only five people and was able to avoid having to live in a corporate compound. If Americans or any other foreigners wanted a social life, they had to go out and make it. I soon found that Jeddah offered incredible opportunities. Many of our government's best diplomats and Arabists served in the US Embassy in Jeddah in the 1960s and 70s. People like Hermann Eilts, Ray Close, Charles Cecil, Bill Stoltfuz, and, to my mind and many others, the most remarkable of them all, Hume Horan, who would become a lifelong friend and mentor, were stationed there.



*Mr. John Mulholland,
Chairman of the Board of
Directors, National Council on
U.S.-Arab Relations*

My neighbor was Sultan Ghalib al-Qa'iti, the then recently exiled Sultan of Qa'iti State, one of the numerous former British-administered protectorates of the Hadramaut, that eastern region of what until November 1967 was long known as the Eastern Aden Protectorate that, upon the transfer from colonial sovereignty to national independence, would become part of the People's Republic of South Yemen (1967-1969) and its successor, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (1969-1990). (His remarkable wife, Sultana (her real name), is a sister of the renowned Pakistani journalist, Ahmed Rashid). Through Sultan Ghalib, I got to know members of most of the rest of the exiled ruling families from South Arabia and was introduced to their remarkable and fascinating sub-culture. Through Sudani friends I was introduced to groups from various parts of the Sudan and, in particular, citizens of the northern city and area called Dongola.

In short order, I became a squash player. Anyone who knows the game will not be surprised that this sport afforded me a unique window into Pakistani society and culture. My friends and I also had an organized running group (to which we invited the Saudi national track team). Through this group I developed a wider range of friendships from Indonesia to Tanzania, all connected by a common Hadrami heritage. The point is that Jeddah, having been both the entrance to the Hajj for fourteen centuries and home to most of the country's foreigners, offered an incredibly rich cultural environment. Where else in the Arab world could one become familiar with half a dozen Arabic dialects in one location?



John Mulholland (right) with the Council's Annual Oman Cultural Immersion study visit guide (left) at the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Muscat.

If that weren't enough, what about Jeddah being host to some of the best diving in the world in the Red Sea? Or what of the unique opportunity to participate in an economic and commercial gold rush of a magnitude that the region had never seen before? At one time there were 200 ships backed up in the Port of Jeddah to unload and some were unloaded by helicopter.

When I left Italy I had left my Italian girlfriend behind. For the next two years I used up every spare penny I had commuting to Italy. Finally we decided there was only one option besides bankruptcy: get married. Marriage for a foreigner in Italy is the Mt. Everest of all bureaucracies. It would have taken at least a couple of years to fulfill all the requirements. I discovered that since there was only one law in the Kingdom, Islamic religious law (Shariah), that

it therefore applies to all, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. Yes, we could get married in Saudi Arabia. Mercifully the documentation requirement was minimal. We had a civil wedding which consisted of an interview through an interpreter by a local Islamic judge (qadi). The process went smoothly enough until the very end when the judge advised the bride not to kiss the groom in respect of the local culture. Gabriella politely obeyed. However we had about eight, all male, friends with us. She hugged and kissed them all. I tried to intervene but her response was, "the judge told me I couldn't kiss you but said nothing about the others." I think the old fellow (a very nice and kind gentleman) is still shaking his head. The moral of the story is obviously that you can take the Italian out of Italy but you can't take Italy out of an Italian.

During her two decades of residency in the Kingdom Gabriella carved out her own unique life. In, fact, for my years, in certain circles, I was often introduced, simply, as Gabriella's husband. She opened her own boutique representing a famous Italian dress designer. With seven models she traveled Saudi Arabia putting on fashion programs for mainly Saudi ladies. These were done with a runway, flashing lights, synchronized music, and as many as 500 people in attendance. Who says life for ladies in the Kingdom has to be terribly restricted?

While living in Riyadh the Italian Embassy (then in Jeddah with no presence in Riyadh) asked Gabriella to follow up an Italian engineer who was being held in jail to force his Italian employer to return to the country to make good on the bills he owed. She worked closely with the Italian authorities, the Saudi authorities, and

Rafik Hariri (yes, the same man who would later become the Prime Minister of Lebanon and be tragically assassinated on Beirut's Corniche) to finally resolve this situation. In the process she assisted many others being held without judgment as to their individual cases. The upshot of her efforts was to be recognized by the Italian government with the title of "Cavaliere della Repubblica Italiana," Italy's equivalent of knighthood and its highest civilian award. I couldn't be prouder.

I returned to the United States during 1978-9 to obtain a long-missing Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. In 1979 I returned to the Kingdom to start my own firm with a Saudi Arabian partner. Because I spoke halfway decent Arabic and had lived in the Kingdom for eight years, I thought I knew Saudi Arabia. Big mistake. Few people really know the kingdom unless they have been an entrepreneur, especially a small one. It is one thing to work for a firm filling some specific role. It's quite another to have to get to know the government entities for company registration, postal service, port clearance, commercial adjudication, and other requirements for operating a business in the country. Sales are always tough, but collections are a chapter unto themselves.

My company was small but we had customers in eleven cities throughout the kingdom. This gave me the opportunity to know the country in a way that few can. Saudi Arabia, on first impact, can appear to be a dry and sterile place. However, my travels introduced me to a variety of life that one can hardly imagine. When I asked a date farmer in Hofuf how many hectares (roughly two and a half acres) were covered by his date farm, his answer was, "I don't know but I have between 2-3 million trees." Many know of the famous Nabatean archaeological treasure in Jordan, Petra (overcarved by the Roman motifs of Trajan's armies) and those in Syria, but how many know of the incredible Nabatean ruins at Mada'in Saleh? We think of the kingdom as one vast desert, and most of it is, but it is hard to believe that when visiting the terraced mountains of the Asir in the country's southwest. Hail, a six-hour drive north of Riyadh, is called the "Pearl of the North," and when you visit it you will know why.



H.E. Adel A. Al-Jubeir, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to the United States, (left) and John Mulholland (right) at the Council's Annual Arab-U.S. Policymakers Conference.

Now that I was a businessman, I joined the American Business Association in Jeddah (ABJ). I quickly headed up the Issues Committee, which was an education in U.S.-Saudi Arabian relations. I developed a specialty in trade, tax, and arms sales issues, and was soon leading delegations to Washington, initially under the wing of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, to represent our issues to members of the Legislative and Executive Branches of the U.S. government. These visits to Washington were called "Doorknocks" and eventually involved all the U.S. business associations throughout the Gulf region. In time, we learned which Members of Congress and congressional staff to visit on which issues.

In this process it was inevitable that we would become involved in policy-related issues related to America's relations with the Arab world. In 1987-88 I was elected President of the ABJ. We were assisted by several groups but none more than the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations. In turn, we were only too happy to reciprocate the Council's support in Washington by offering the same assistance and hospitality for its visiting delegations of American leaders to the kingdom. How many people know that the Council, assisted by the various groups of American business representatives in the Kingdom, played a key role in influencing the views of prominent members of Congress together with innumerable Chiefs of Staff, state governors, and many more. We also became involved in visits for American professors to the kingdom's universities.

These activities allowed me to enter into diplomatic and commercial circles that I would never have been able

to access otherwise. Here I refer to diplomatic briefings at the ambassador level, introduction to the highest levels of the kingdom's commercial associations and major companies, meetings with key members of the ruling Al Sa'ud family, and an introduction to Saudi Arabia's intellectual society. It was an extraordinary experience and education.

Thinking I should formally acquire additional education on the region, I was accepted in 1999 into Georgetown's MAAS (Master of Arts in Arab Studies program) from which I graduated with a Master's Degree in Arab History in 2001.

I have always maintained close ties to the National Council over the years and couldn't have been more honored than when I was invited to join its Board of Directors in 2009. Since then I have assisted with the Council's Atlanta High School Model Arab League, co-escorted representatives of the U.S. Central Command (selected by Commanding General David H. Petraeus) to participate in a cultural immersion course in Oman, and supported the Council in any way possible.

My commitment to the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations is influenced by the high esteem I hold for its Founding President and CEO, Dr. John Duke Anthony, and other key members of the organization. The overarching reason, however, is that, after all my years in the Arab region, I remain appalled by the abyss of understanding between our two worlds and committed to do whatever I can to help close this vital gap. In spite of the long road still in front of us, I know of no group that comes within miles of educating America on the Arab world as much as the Council and I couldn't be prouder of my association with it.

National Council Leaders' Publications

Following are examples of the National Council leadership's recent contributions to the national dialogue on aspects of the dynamics of America's relations with the Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Islamic world:

by Dr. John Duke Anthony:

(1) "The Intervention in Bahrain through the Lenses of its Supporters" appearing on the website of the Abu Dhabi-based Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research:

<http://ncusar.org/pubs/2011/06/intervention-in-bahrain/>;

(2) "Challenges Facing NATO in Afghanistan, Libya, and Iraq" appearing on the website of the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research:

<http://ncusar.org/pubs/2011/10/challenges-facing-nato/>;

(3) "The Future Significance of the Gulf Cooperation Council" appearing in the volume on *Global Strategic Developments: A Futuristic Vision* published by the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research:

<http://ncusar.org/blog/2012/06/future-significance-gcc/>;

by Board Member Randa Fahmy Hudome:

(1) Remarks and analysis at the 2012 C3 Summit, held September 2012 in New York, New York:

<http://www.c3-summit.com/agenda>; and

(2) Remarks and analysis at the National Council's Public Affairs Briefing on "Infrastructure and Business Opportunities in North Africa":

<http://ncusar.org/blog/2012/09/infrastructure-and-business-opportunities-in-north-africa/>.

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