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Steps for Promoting Greater Cooperation Between the U.S. Government and the American Muslim Community

The recommendations below emerged from a conference that took place in March 2006 at which representative leaders of the American Muslim community met with U.S. security officials and foreign policy practitioners to explore ways to begin working together for the common good. The conference was jointly sponsored by the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy (ICRD), the International Institute for Islamic Thought (IIIT), and the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA).

American Muslim Actions

1. Establish an American Muslim Advisory Council to work with a U.S. Interagency Task Force (or some other USG organizational equivalent) to explore policy issues that affect the Muslim community and its attitudes toward the government.
2. Through the AM Advisory Council, advise the USG of how its policies toward the American Muslim community affect the U.S. image abroad, and work together to identify steps to improve USG-American Muslim relations. Demonstrate that improvements in the perceived status of the American Muslim Community will enhance its value as an intellectual and cultural asset in improving US relations with the Muslim world.
3. Create a directory of American Muslim activities and paths of influence overseas that demonstrates how the USG and the American Muslim community can capitalize on these ties to pursue their shared interests in encouraging the emergence of tolerant religious, civil and political institutions in the Muslim world.
4. Create a directory of articulate American Muslims in various areas of expertise who can represent the American Muslim viewpoint in the mainstream media and provide technical and policy advice to USG agencies. Take steps to make this directory widely available and to promote American Muslim speakers and consultants as unique and valuable cultural assets.
5. Establish programs to encourage greater Muslim involvement in local government, and foster a positive image of government service as a career option among young American Muslims. Such programs will help instill in the American Muslim community the conviction that government service is a responsibility that

- can bring considerable benefits. Encourage the participation of young Muslims in law enforcement careers.
6. Working through mainstream American Muslim organizations, open Track II dialogues with Muslim opinion leaders overseas, especially in the areas of educational reform, political freedom, and humanitarian relief.
 7. Develop an effective lobbying and policy analysis capability for influencing members of the Legislative and Executive branches of the government. Encourage high-profile Muslim intellectuals, scientists, engineers, and educators to pursue jobs in the public sector.
 8. Promote the study of Muslim cultures and languages. Establish educational programs at the local level that introduce non-Muslims to the rich variety of Muslim cultural and religious practices in their communities.
 9. Take steps to promote Sunni-Shi'a comity in the United States, with an eye toward modeling and actively influencing the emergence of civil societies tolerant of sectarian differences in Muslim countries overseas, such as Iraq and Pakistan.

U.S. Government Actions

- Increase American Muslim involvement in the design and implementation of U.S. public and official diplomacy, especially with regard to media projects directed to the Muslim world more generally (e.g. Voice of America).
- Include American Muslim representatives in U.S. government delegations to international organizations and in other high-level bodies and advisory commissions.
- Work with mainstream Muslim organizations to establish cultural competency training programs for government agencies at the federal, state, and local levels. Design these programs in cooperation with American Muslim educators and community leaders.
- Appoint more Muslims to high-profile positions, including political appointments that may or may not be directly related to Public Diplomacy and Foreign Policy. Recruit young Muslims into law enforcement and government careers.

Joint Actions

- Develop roundtables of American Muslim community representatives and representatives of USG domestic security agencies that can meet on a regular basis to identify and resolve specific issues of concern. Examine and seek to institutionalize the kind of coordination that appears to be working well in Chicago.
- Engage Muslim parliamentarians and opinion leaders from overseas in policy-relevant activities, and facilitate intellectual exchange programs that encourage the participation of Muslim opinion leaders in visiting scholar programs of US educational and policy institutions.
- Establish Muslim expert groups to advise and assist Muslim governments in activities relating to education, civil society, good governance, and public health.
- Convene another American Muslim/USG conference in 12 months to (1) review the progress that has been made in promoting better AMC/USG relations and (2) develop additional ideas for accelerating improved cooperation.