MEMORANDUM FOR:  EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS, FIELD OPERATIONS
DIRECTORS, FIELD OPERATIONS
DIRECTOR, PRECLEARANCE

FROM:  Executive Director
Admissibility and Passenger Programs
Office of Field Operations

SUBJECT:  Muslims Performing Hajj

The Office of Field Operations is forwarding information for mandatory discussion during
musters. The information provided in the attached documents should be disseminated to all ports
of entry for inclusion in muster discussions held during the week of December 16, 2007.

Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca will take place beginning December 18, 2007, through
December 21, 2007. Most related travel occurs during the weeks immediately preceding and
following these dates.

CBP Officers should be prepared to interact with large numbers of travelers who have
legitimately attended this major religious event. The attached muster provides a cultural context,
situational awareness and direction to officers encountering Muslims participating in Hajj.

Questions or concerns may be directed to Admissibility and Passenger Programs, at

Attachments
Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca (in Saudi Arabia), is one of the most important religious obligations in Islam. Every adult Muslim physically and financially capable of doing so is required to perform Hajj at least once in his or her lifetime. More than two million pilgrims, including thousands of American Muslims, participate annually. We expect that upwards of 15,000 U.S. residents may plan to attend this year’s Hajj.

This year Hajj will take place beginning December 18, 2007, through December 21, 2007, with most related travel occurring during the weeks immediately preceding and following these dates. CBP Officers should be prepared to encounter large numbers of travelers who have legitimately attended this major religious event.

- Pilgrims often wear very simple white clothing. Males may be clothed in an Ihram, a white robe required in Mecca.
- It is common for returning participants to perform prayers in public areas including airports and aircraft.
- Expect travelers to be carrying items of religious significance including the Qur’an and other Islamic literature, prayer beads, sand from the area around Mecca and water, considered sacred, from the Zamzam well. The attached fact sheet contains guidance regarding permissible and prohibited items.
- Some Muslims cut their hair or shave at the conclusion of the pilgrimage.
- Many attendees travel in groups. While these may be family or locally based, commercially arranged pre-packaged tour groups are common.
- Officers should be aware that the large influx of travelers during this time period may be

Persons returning from the Hajj should be treated using the same standards, procedures and care that would be afforded to any international traveler entering the United States.

All existing directives, guidelines, operations and processes that normally apply to specific individuals and nationalities remain in effect.

No extraordinary or special enforcement measures have been or should be initiated based solely on the fact that a traveler is returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca. As in all interactions with the public, the highest standard of professionalism is to be maintained at all times.
Fact Sheet

- **What is Hajj?**
  The Hajj is a pilgrimage to Mecca (or Makkah), one of the holiest cities in Islamic faith. Hajj is one of the 5 Pillars in Sunni Islam and one of the 10 Branches or practices in Shi’a Islam and must be completed by every able-bodied Muslim at least once in his or her lifetime. Hajj has its origins in the time of the prophet, Muhammad.

- **What are Hajj pilgrims called?**
  Pilgrims who have taken part in the Hajj will take the name “Hajji” or “el-Hajji” or “al-Hajji”. This will never be used in a surname.

- **When is Hajj?**
  Hajj occurs during the final month of the lunar Islamic calendar and will take place beginning December 18, 2007 through December 21, 2007. Eid-ul-Adha, (Festival of the Sacrifice) a four-day holiday, begins December 20.

- **When will Hajji return to the United States?**
  Hajji will begin to return after December 22, 2007. Most travel will take place during the last week of December, but may continue for two to three weeks. Many purchase a side-trip to their home country once Hajj is completed.

- **What types of articles might Hajji bring back with them from Saudi Arabia?**
  Religious articles a Hajji might come home with are the Quran, prayer rugs, and beads. Other articles Hajji may have acquired include holy water from the Zamzam Well. These items are admissible when declared and covered under the personal exemption.

  Sands from the areas around Mecca and Medina may also be encountered by returning Hajji, however this is less likely to occur. According to Agricultural regulations, sands from that area are regulated, as soil is prohibited entry.

  It is not expected that animal meat will be imported from the animal sacrifice, as a Hajji today typically pays for someone else to sacrifice the animal in his or her name. Additionally, the meat from sacrificed animals, to include goats or sheep, is shipped to poor people in other Muslim countries. However, if meat is encountered it will need to be referred to a CBP Agriculture Specialist for final determination. The entry status of animal products and animal by-products vary depending upon the state of the product (cooked, uncooked, dried, canned), the country of origin, and the class of meat (beef, pork, poultry, fish).

  Other items travelers might typically bring from Saudi Arabia include food items such as dried dates and roasted almonds (fresh dates are out of season at this time of year), or dried plant parts and herbs. Dried dates and roasted almonds, if declared and found free from any agricultural plant pests are admissible entry. Dried plant parts and herbs also need to be declared and need to be referred to a CBP Agriculture Specialist for an entry determination.
CBP personnel are reminded to obtain a binding declaration from travelers for all products and monetary instruments.

- **What are some of the rituals of Hajj?**

Before arriving in Mecca, Hajji must wear an Ihram. One must also be devoid of colognes and jewelry. This strict dress code is meant to make everyone equal.

The most well known act familiar to westerners is the Tawaf. Tawaf is the act of circumambulation around the Ka’bah (or Kaaba), which is the holiest site in Islam. The Ka’bah is located inside Islam’s most important Mosque, the al-Masid al-Haram Mosque in Mecca. This process will be completed many times during Hajj in between other rituals. After the Tawaf is complete, a Hajji goes to the Place of Abraham (i.e., where Abraham stood and worshipped).

During the Stoning of the Jamarat ritual, pilgrims throw seven pebbles at the large jamrah (wall) in Mina. This ritual will be repeated two more times.

Optional rituals include a visit the city of Medina and the Mosque of the Prophet.

One of the rituals of Hajj involves the sacrifice of a goat or sheep. This act is meant to recount Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son Ismail, but instead, the sacrifice of a lamb was accepted instead. Today most pilgrims buy a sacrifice voucher in Mecca before the greater Hajj begins allowing an animal to be slaughtered in their name without the pilgrim being physically present.