



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

82 TRW/HC
SHEPPARD AFB, TX 76311

15 April 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR: SHEPPARD AFB COMMAND TEAMS

FROM: 82 TRW/HC

SUBJECT: RELIGIOUS ACCOMODATION CONSIDERATIONS FOR RAMADAN

1. References: a. Department of Defense (DoD) Instruction 1300.17, Accommodation of Religious Practices. AFI 1-1, 2.11, Government Neutrality Regarding Religions, 2.12, Free Exercise of Religion and Religious Accommodation.
2. Chaplains advise Commanders on Airmen's religious needs to promote religious freedom within the Air Force and to assist in meeting unique mission requirements. People of the Islamic faith observe Ramadan, the Holy month of fasting, in recognition of the revelation of the Quran, and celebrate its conclusion through Eid-al-Fitr. This year, Ramadan begins on or about 23 April 2020 and ends 23 May 2020.
3. Considerations based on unit mission and religious accommodation. Commanders may:
 - a. Grant liberal leave in part or all of the 29 or 30-day fasting period from 23 April through 23 May 2020.
 - b. Exempt Airmen/International Training Students/NATO Forces from morning PT, as they may spend up to 18 hours without food or water during daylight hours. Command teams must be aware of heat/weather risk factors in conjunction with the potential for insufficient hydration and make every attempt to appropriately manage associated risks.
 - c. Grant practicing Muslim personnel three days of leave/pass from 23-26 May 2020 for celebration of breaking the fast (Eid-al-Fitr).
 - d. When possible, allow practicing Muslims to participate in less strenuous or physically demanding duties.
 - e. Release practicing Muslims from duty each day, 30 minutes before sunset, to allow time for preparations for Iftar (fast-breaking meal) and the sunset prayer.

MORE INFORMATION: Sheppard AFB leaders, Ramadan, the Holy Month of Fasting for Muslims, will start on 23 April 2020 and will end by approximately 23 May 2020 this year. These dates coincide with sister service observance dates. (Regional customs or moon sightings may cause a variation of the date for Islamic holidays, which begin at sundown the day before the date specified for the holiday. The Islamic calendar is lunar and the days begin at sunset, so there may be one-day error depending on when the New Moon is first seen). Under our current COVID-19 directions published by the CDC, SECDEF and our wing, everyone, to include our international personnel must follow all social distance guidance, the wearing of masks, not gather in groups more than ten (10) and all public health emergency directives. All the while affording every individual the right to religious freedoms while protecting everyone as best we can during this global pandemic.

Eid Al-Fitr celebrates the end of Ramadan and will tentatively occur on 24 May 2020, more information will be provided as it becomes available. Ramadan is a month of fasting, self-discipline, sacrifice, and abstaining from pleasures while praying to become closer to God. Muslims may spend up to 18 hours without food or water during daylight hours. During this time of fasting, closely monitor students for potential safety concerns.

US FORCES

As military members we swore to support and defend the Constitution. IAW our oath, we have a moral and legal obligation to support the free exercise of religion of all US Forces. In the context of US Forces, DoD Policy specifically provides that commanders should approve requests for religious accommodation when approval will not have an adverse impact on military readiness, unit cohesion, standards, or discipline. Additionally, DoDI 1300.17 provides a list of factors, in addition to any other factors deemed appropriate, to consider when deciding whether to accommodate religious practices. Furthermore, Air Force guidelines, in accordance with federal law, provide that the Air Force will accommodate the free exercise of religion and other personal beliefs unless there is a compelling government interest and that any limitations imposed will be in the least restrictive means feasible for furthering that compelling government interest.

INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL TRAINING STUDENTS

The rules of engagement for International Military Students (IMS) are enumerated in AFI 16-105. The single point of contact for religious accommodation of International Military Students is the International Military Student Office (IMSO). A copy of Religious Observance Guidance (dated 2 Jan 19) can be found on the IMSO SharePoint Site (<https://usaf.dps.mil/sites/aetc-spd-82trw/IMSO/Shared/Forms/AllItems.aspx>). As with all holidays, training schedules and academic progress will determine whether IMS are excused from training. .

Please note: Based on the CY19 calendar, IMS from the following countries are authorized to observe Eid Al-Fitr: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Gambia, Guinea, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Ministry of the National Guard, Morocco, Niger, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia MOI, Somalia, Tunisia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Not every

country has the exact same observance, therefor please view the most current lists of holiday and religious observance dates as posted on this site. IMSO would like to emphasize, that this policy for IMS to attend religious observances is that the student is in good academic standing and the activity does not interfere with training. Additionally all of our international students/partners MUST adhere to all Public Health Emergency orders as directed by the 82d Training Wing Commander. The instructor makes this call. Certainly, where possible the course may make concessions when it does not cause negative impacts to training. Most training course have designated areas that IMS can go and pray within the schoolhouses and we encourage you to make all concessions needed for the IMS to use them. It is IMSO's request that this information be disseminated to all Instructor Supervisors, Instructors and Faculty.

NATO FORCES

International Students assigned to the 80 FTW should consult their Senior National Representative for accommodation.

Please direct all questions and concerns to IMSO (Mr. Taylor - 676-5272 or via email; ralf.taylor@us.af.mil <<mailto:ralf.taylor@us.af.mil>>) stands ready to help commanders make informed decisions regarding religious accommodations for International Military Students.