

GP 35

January 2, 2002

To: Karen Hagerty
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers

Re: Proposed "Muslim Youth Camp"

From: Richard Hoefler
1700 13th St.
Coralville, Iowa 52241

I believe the proposed lease of property by the Corps of **Engineers** to Muslim Youth Camps of America may violate the Bill of Rights of the **United States Constitution**. The **First Amendment** to the **United States Constitution** states, "**Congress shall make no law** respecting an **establishment** of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

I spoke with John **Castle**, the **Corps** official in charge of Coralville Lake, a few days before Christmas. **He** told **me** that while exact rent has not been discussed, it would likely be at a very small amount. I believe the girl scouts used to rent this area for one dollar per year. The tacit sponsorship of a religion by leasing property to a religious organization at far below the fair market value is a gross violation of the First Amendment. The **First Amendment** states "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion..." The Corps, in leasing this land to the **Muslim** Group for a "**token**" amount, would display a promotion of established religion and therefore be against the First Amendment. A low rent lease from the government clearly promotes a religious belief. 7-16

However, the First Amendment also says, "Congress shall make no law...prohibiting the free exercise thereof." I believe the Muslim group should be able to apply to lease the land based on fair market value. Lakeside property is an ideal location for a youth camp because of all the recreational opportunities. I believe the land in questions is 106 acres. Using \$100 acre per year rent results in \$10,600 rent per year. Because of its lakeside location, resulting in excellent recreational and developmental possibilities, this land might sell for \$25,000 an acre or more, which would make it worth in excess of \$2.5 million. \$25,000 per year (1% of value) rent would seem quite reasonable. I don't know exactly what the fair rental value is; but requiring the Muslim group to pay a fair market rental does not prohibit the free exercise of their religion or constitute discrimination based on religious beliefs. 33-21

One other issue is access to the lakeshore. Since property owners around the lake can only own property down to the high water mark, public access to the entire lakeshore is protected. Mr. Castle told me that the Corp is planning to lease the land down to the water's edge, which would restrict public access to this part of the lakeshore and give this organization lakeside privileges not provided to others. This would also be improper preferential treatment for one particular group. 3-10