

# IRIS

Iowa Resource for  
International Service

March 11, 2003

Dick Mattson  
Chief, Management and Disposal Branch  
Rock Island Corps of Engineers  
Rock Island, IL 61204-2204

Dear Mr. Mattson,

Yesterday, I read an article in **The Des Moines Register** regarding the potential leasing of land to Muslim Youth Camps of America. While I am not familiar with the environmental and access issues, I am writing to strongly support the wisdom of placing such a facility in Iowa.

I am a former Lieutenant Governor of Iowa and currently I lead a non-profit organization that provides education programs for international guests. Currently, we have a project with the U.S. State Department to bring thirty Muslim youths to Iowa from Nigeria. I know our program is a small part of a national effort to help young Muslim leaders from around the world learn more about American life and how Muslims and Christians have lived together peacefully in the United States. Especially after September 11<sup>th</sup> and now with our efforts to disarm Iraq, it is vitally important that such programs continue and grow.

A Muslim youth camp in Iowa will be a great asset to our efforts. Cedar Rapids, Iowa is already home to the first or "Mother Mosque of North America." The Muslim community there is one of the oldest in the country and has always made a very positive contribution to the area, Iowa and the nation. Locating a Muslim youth camp in the area will help contribute to religious understanding as well as to international understanding and peace.

After the events of the last two years, I can understand why local residents might be uneasy and voice personal concerns, but from my knowledge of local Muslim leaders in Cedar Rapids and the positive work that they have already done, I am confident that such a camp will be a benefit to the area in many ways.

Sincerely,



Robert Anderson

Cc. Ron Fournier, CEMBR Public Affairs

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## **IRIS, Inc. (Iowa Resource for International Service)**

**IRIS, Inc.** is a 501.c3 non-profit, non-religious organization that was formed in 1993 and is located in Ames, Iowa. Its mission is **to promote international education, development and peace through rural initiatives.** Its founder and president is Robert Anderson, former Lieutenant Governor of Iowa and former executive director of the Iowa Peace Institute.

### **Summary of Accomplishments**

Generated 24 contracts or sub-contracts of the United States Information Agency, the Education and Cultural Affairs division of the State Department, Academy for Educational Development, and American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR/ACCELS) totaling more than four million dollars over the past eight years.

Facilitated Sister City relationships for Newton, Oskaloosa, Grinnell, and Adel. Collaborated with local Sister City groups in Marshalltown and Muscatine.

Arranged educational workshops and internships for 121 journalists from Ukraine, Bulgaria, Russia, Georgia, Mongolia, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Collaborated with the journalism schools at the University of Iowa, Iowa State University and Drake University to conduct journalism workshops in Bulgaria, Ukraine, Mongolia, Hong Kong, and Thailand.

Placed international journalists in 35 newspapers, eight radio stations, and nine television stations in 24 Iowa communities.

Placed 430 business and professional persons from Ukraine, Russia, Georgia and Armenia in internships with volunteer hosts in forty-four Iowa communities.

Conducted follow on trips to meet with business and professional persons in Ukraine, Russia, Georgia and Armenia.

Conducted an educational program for 16 journalists and human rights advocates from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Zimbabwe.

Conducted follow on activities in Zimbabwe and the DRC and helped create an NGO for journalists, lawyers and human rights specialists in the region.

Hosted Muslims and Christians from Nigeria for practical training in conflict resolution and led a training visit to Nigeria by six Iowans in July 2002.

Programs for 2002-03 will include participants from Armenia, Georgia, Russia, Ukraine, Nigeria, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Hungary, and Poland.