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June 23, 2008

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Re: Existing Lease Between the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors for the Islamic Saudi Academy

Dear Madam Secretary:

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors ("the Board") of Fairfax County, Virginia ("Fairfax County"), I request that the United States Department of State ("the Department of State"), pursuant to 22 U.S.C. § 4311(b) (2004), provide the Board with specific direction regarding the Board's existing lease with the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia for the operation of the Islamic Saudi Academy ("the Academy"), which is located at 8333 Richmond Highway in Fairfax County, Virginia. A copy of the original lease is enclosed herein as Enclosure No. 1.

On May 19, 2008, the Board extended the lease for one year, with the option to extend for two additional one-year periods upon the mutual agreement of the parties. At the public hearing, which preceded the extension of the lease, the Board received no communication expressing concern from either the Department of State or the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom ("the Commission") regarding content of texts or curriculum at the Academy.

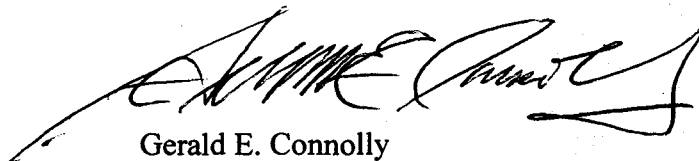
Thereafter, on June 11, 2008, the Commission released a statement stating that the Commission had acquired and reviewed 17 Academy textbooks and that the Commission "confirmed that these texts do, in fact, include some extremely troubling passages that do not conform to international human rights norms." See June 11, 2008, Commission Statement, p. 1, a copy of which is enclosed herein as Enclosure No. 2. The Commission stated further that "[i]t is deeply troubling that . . . students at a foreign government-operated school in the United States are discussing when and under what circumstances killing an 'unbeliever' would be acceptable." *Id.*, p. 5.

As a local governmental entity, Fairfax County is not capable of determining whether textbooks, written in Arabic, contain language that promotes violence or religious intolerance, or is otherwise offensive to the interests of the United States. The County simply does not employ the linguists and scholars required to make such a determination, and more important, such an effort is well beyond the scope and responsibility of local government. Indeed, the Foreign Missions Act expressly grants such authority to the Secretary of State. See 22 U.S.C.A. § 4303 (2004) (providing that the Secretary has the express authority, among others, to assist federal, state, and local governments with "ascertaining and according benefits, privileges, and immunities to which a foreign mission may be entitled"). In addition, it is the Secretary who "may require any foreign mission to divest itself of, or forgo the use of, any real property

determined by the Secretary . . . [to be] otherwise necessary to protect the interests of the United States.” 22 U.S.C.A. § 4305(b) (2004). In fact, our lease with Saudi Arabia expressly provides that “[t]his Lease is contingent upon and subject to the approval of the United States Department of State,” and thus, the Board specifically recognizes the State Department’s role and responsibility in this regard. See Lease Section 12.B.

In view of the Commission’s claims, which came to light less than a month after the Board extended the lease, I am formally requesting, on behalf of the Governing Body of Fairfax County, that the Department of State provide the Board with specific direction regarding your concurrence or non-concurrence on the matter of the lease renewal with the Saudi Arabian government for the operation of the Academy. Kindly direct your guidance on this matter to my attention. Given the serious nature of this matter, I trust that your response will be clear, prompt, and based upon your Department’s careful study of the Commission’s findings and conclusions.

Very truly yours,



Gerald E. Connolly

Enclosures

cc: Members, Board of Supervisors
Anthony H. Griffin, County Executive