



14 OCT 10

Bayonet Information Operations: Voices of Moderate Islam Reunion & Reintegration Shura



Purpose /Mission

On 14 OCT10 conduct the Voices of Moderate Islam Reunion & Reintegration IVO the Logar OCC-P on FOB Shank IOT to expand the influence and reach of the original 34 VoMI attendees among their circles of influence; expose a larger audience to the VoMI program and brand; identify attendee social networks; create opportunities for future VoMI-sponsored engagements; reduce the relevance and effectiveness of the INS narrative; facilitate a tolerant, moderate, Islamic message delivered by credible local Afghan and Jordanian key communicators tailored for a local Afghan audience

Discussion

The Voices of Moderate Islam initiative was initially launched by the 173rd ABCT (TF Bayonet) on 25 AUG 10 in partnership with TF Nashmi, the Jordanian Ranger Battalion attached to the 173rd, and the US Department of State. As part of the program, 34 Afghan key communicators selected from across Logar and Wardak provinces were sent from FOB Shank to Amman, Jordan aboard a US C-130 to participate in a comprehensive Islamic seminar, debate, and immersion tour experience in Amman, Jordan. The purpose of the Amman phase of VoMI was to expose Afghan key communicators to a more moderate, tolerant version of Islam as practiced in Amman, Jordan and embodied in His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan's *Amman Message*. The capstone experience of the VoMI program occurred when the attendees were sent from Amman, Jordan, to Mecca, Saudi Arabia aboard a Jordanian C-130 for the Umra, or lesser Hajj. The Umra portion was led by Shaikh Najm Muhammad, senior Imam for TF Nashmi. When the attendees returned back to FOB Shank on 15 SEP 10, COL Johnson invited the Hajjis to come back to meet at the base one month later with five guests to continue and expand the dialogue about their VoMI experience. On 14 OCT 10, TF Bayonet hosted the VoMI Reunion and Reintegration Shura. 204 Afghans total were invited to the event and 270 attended far exceeding our expectations. The reunion was a multi-faceted inform, influence and inspire psychological operation. By end-of-day, over 307 Afghan and CF guests attended the event. The primary objectives of the Shura were to consolidate and expand the gains of the VoMI initiative among the original attendees and their friends and family; market the program as a youth movement to achieve long-term strategic effects; and to expose all attendees to the VoMI brand using a distinct logo that embodies the VoMI values of: Respect, Tolerance, and Unity.

Picture above left, GIRoA Mullah Sadiqi Rahman of Wardak addresses over 300 predominantly Afghan key communicators from Logar and Wardak to include GOV Lodin and GOV Fidai as part of the Voices of Moderate Islam Reunion & Reintegration Shura; above right, Bayonet 6 COL Johnson presents a gift bag to Rahman in recognition of his achievement as one of the original 34 VoMI attendees from 25 AUG to 15 SEP 10.



Above, VoMI Reunion & Reintegration Shura attendees pose for a photo at the start of the event held at FOB Shank.



Pictured left, VoMI Reunion & Reintegration Shura attendees listen to featured guests speakers who included three original VoMI attendees; pictured right, Task Force Nashmi Commander COL Araf and his senior Imam Shaikh Muhammad Najm present the Holy Quran to the 34 original VoMI attendees in front of the assembled group.

S-7s Assessment + Future Impacts

VoMI is a program with tipping-point implications for the Afghan theater. The power of Islam among Afghans is central to their culture and psychology and the VoMI exploits that by investing in actions that simultaneously benefits the Afghan people while making the insurgent narrative irrelevant. By marketing the program to youth, and with financial assistance from external donors, assess that VoMI has exportability beyond Afghanistan with the power. Finally, assess that expanding the program too quickly without refining program TTP's in Afghanistan first, could be its undoing if not carefully managed.