

Jordanian USASMA student urges better understanding of Arab culture

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USASMA Public Affairs

The country of Jordan, located in one of the most turbulent parts of the world, is today an oasis of stability and cooperation with the United States. The region and its people trace their history back to the dawn of time.

Jordan gained its independence in 1946, following 25 years as a protectorate of the British after World War I. During its first two decades under the rule of the Hashemite tribe, Jordan was drawn into some of the conflict in the region. For the past 40 years, however, this Arab nation – about the size of Indiana – has pragmatically created a place for itself as a peaceful force in the Middle East and the world.

If you ask Warrant Officer Osama Zaina, a Jordanian soldier now attending the U.S.

Army Sergeants Major Academy, this comes from the ability of Jordanians to be aware of their own culture, but to be open to the differences of others. Zaina is likely more aware of this due to his early “nomadic” experiences.

He was born in Kuwait in 1970 to Jordanian parents, grew up in Jerusalem, and then moved to Jordan with his parents in 1987. He wants to learn more about others, but he is equally proud of his own unique heritage. For example, he can trace his

family lineage – by name – back more than 1,000 years – information he will pass on to his child.

“Culture isn’t a scary tool. It shouldn’t keep us apart,” he said, noting that he finds it odd that many people around the world are afraid of the unknown – such as people with different cultural beliefs and practices.

‘It is unfortunate. We do have some differences, but we also share so much in common, and we can learn so much from each other.’

Warrant Officer Osama Zaina

An example of this openness found in Jordan was the country’s former Hashemite monarch – King Hussein (not related to the late Saddam Hussein). Hussein led the country from 1953 until his death in 1999. In 1978, he married an American of Middle Eastern descent – Lisa Hallaby, the daughter of Najeeb Hallaby, the President of Pan-American Airlines at the time. Hussein encouraged his wife, who became known as Queen Noor, to pursue her passion in helping underprivileged children in her adopted

country.

Hussein was open to the West in more than love, however. He was also a leader in the pursuit of peace and democracy in the region. In 1989, for example, he reinstated parliamentary elections in his county and gradual political liberalization. He also signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994.

His son, King Abdullah II, has followed in his father’s footsteps. Soon after ascending to the throne, he affirmed with Israel and the United States



COURTESY PHOTO

Warrant Officer Osama Zaina relaxes in his classroom at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy. Zaina is the first Jordanian to attend USASMA and hopes to use what he learns in both his military and civilian life.

his commitment to peace. The major focus of his agenda since then has been economic reform, resulting in participation in both the World Trade

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