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Iraqi Ambassador Wants to Personally Thank Veterans for Service

Sep-13-2011

When His Excellency, Samir Shakir Mahmood Sumaid'ie, Iraqi ambassador to the United States, visits the campus of Eastern Illinois University, he intends to thank local veterans and their families for their service.

A formal presentation in which he will talk about the future of Iraq and the Mideast, begins at 7 p.m. Monday, Sept. 19, in Dvorak Concert Hall, located in the Doudna Fine Arts Center. A question-and-answer session will take place immediately afterward. Admission is free and open to the public.

The Charleston High School Band is scheduled to perform both the U.S. and Iraqi national anthems as part of the event.

Prior to his formal talk, however -- from 6:15 to 7 p.m. -- the ambassador plans to meet with veterans, personally shake their hands and offer them the Iraqi people's thanks. All those who have served in Iraq, along with their families, are welcome to attend, with seating available on a first-come, first-seated basis.

Prior to becoming ambassador to the U.S. in 2006, Sumaid'ie previously served as Iraqi ambassador to the United Nations (2005-2006) and was Iraqi secretary of homeland security, working with the U.S. military to train and supervise Iraqi police, in 2004.

His background is as an electrical engineer. He served on the Baghdad Electricity Board and with the Iraqi Petroleum Company until 1973. He then lived in the United Kingdom and China, engaged in opposition to Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime from 1973 to 2003.

Other related events scheduled to take place in connection with Sumaid'ie's EIU visit are two panel discussions planned for earlier in the day. "Uprisings in the Arab World," featuring Mohamed Zabarah, former EIU student from Yemen; Asef Bayat, Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Illinois; and Nash Naam, an Effingham physician who is a native of Egypt, will begin at 1 p.m.

At 3 p.m., Bassam Yousif, professor of economics at Indiana State University; Hadi Esfahani, South Asia and Middle East Studies, University of Illinois; and Max Kashefi, professor of sociology at Eastern, will discuss "Arabs and the Outside World."

Both discussions will take place in the Charleston/Mattoon Room, located in Eastern's MLK Jr. Union.

The day's events are being sponsored by the Public Policy Institute of Eastern Illinois University, the College of Sciences, the College of Arts and Humanities, the Lumpkin College of Business and Applied Sciences, and the city of Charleston.