

# DXING THE ARAB WORLD

## A Few Tips

Hans Johnson

### ● INTRODUCTION

Who is an Arab? Who is a Moslem? Without knowing, country lists are inaccurate and awards are discontinued. There are a few misconceptions people have about the Arab world. The first involves the religion of Islam. While Islam had its origins in the Arabian peninsula during the 7th century, one must understand that the borders of the Islamic world today are much larger than those of the Arab world. The Arabs, once confined to the Arabian peninsula, took their new religion and conquered other lands at a rapid pace. Persia fell and the Arabs not only converted the inhabitants, but influenced the Persian language. The Iberian Peninsula also fell to the Arabs and became known as Andalusia. The Arabs remained until 1492 and left their mark. Some of it is expressed in the beautiful architecture of the city of Cordoba. A better known expression of their influence is the Spanish "El" which came from the Arabic "Al". Even more impressive than the rapid pace of the Arab conquests was the spread of Islam, as its boundaries came to encompass lands far beyond the Arab conquests. Therefore, one who is a believer in Islam is a Moslem (Muslim means the same thing, it is simply another transliteration.) Being a Moslem rests on five pillars, the first of which is Shahadah (Witness)1. In order to become a Moslem you simply have to state and believe the following: That there is no God but God and Mohammad is his messenger. (Incidentally, this is the inscription on the Saudi Arabian flag.) But to go back on this belief after you have become a Moslem is apostasy. Second of the pillars is Salat (Worship). Moslems pray five times a day. The most important prayers are at noon on Friday because a sermon follows the prayers (Witness the many policy pronouncements that come out of Iran during these sermons on Fridays.) The third pillar is Sawm (Fasting). All Moslems are suppose to fast during the month of Ramadan. The Moslem calendar is a lunar one so Ramadan is going to come a little earlier each year. The hours of fasting are from sunrise to sunset. There are many banquets to make up for it once the sun sets. The fourth pillar is Zakat (Tithing). Moslems should donate some of their income to help out the needy. The final pillar is Haj (Pilgrimage). Moslems who are able to afford it should make a pilgrimage to Mecca during their lifetime. The final month of the year is the time to make this pilgrimage.

But not all Moslems are Arabs, and not every Arab is a Moslem. It is true, however, that the language of Islam is Arabic. Therefore, the Arab world is part of the larger Islamic world. What criteria do we use then in determining whether a country is part of the Arab world or not? How about the countries with substantial Arab populations? It is not quite that easy though. Literally entire volumes have been written on the question: Who is an Arab? The most widely accepted definition is that an Arab is one who speaks Arabic as a native language. However, I am using a slightly different, but widely accepted, criteria. An Arab is a resident of those countries which are members of the Arab league, a body of "Arab" states formed in 1945. (See Appendix 1). While this criteria is not in complete agreement with the first criteria listed above (Sudan, Djibouti, and Somalia being exceptions of varying degrees), it is a format that is accepted by the Arabs themselves. Having determined which states are Arab, let us examine some that are often thought to be Arab, but are not.

The most notable of these states is the nation of Iran. Iran is part of the Islamic world and a member of OPEC. As previously stated, its language is Farsi and uses many Arabic script and it has many words derived from Arabic. But Farsi is an Indo-European language whereas Arabic is a Semitic one. Iranians were in some minds lumped together with the Arabs in the 1970's and 80's: As Kufiyah headed, greedy oil sheiks and terrorists. Yet to consider Iranians as Arabs was almost as ignorant and inaccurate as the caricature itself. The current rivalry between the Iranians and Arabs goes back many centuries. In the end however, the vast majority of Iranians consider themselves Iranians, not Arabs. While there are some similarities, the differences are much greater. Therefore, the eastern border of the Arab world is the Shatt Al-Arab waterway. Does a similar situation exist in other directions?

Turkey is also part of the Islamic world. The precursor of modern Turkey, the Ottoman Empire, ruled much of the Arab world for 300 years until the end of World War One. This all changed with the rise to power of the founder of modern Turkey, Ataturk. With the Old Ottoman Empire in ruin, Ataturk decided that closer ties with Europe were in order. What was once considered part of the East now wanted to become part of the West. While the physical ties of the Ottoman Empire were no longer there, Turkish was still greatly influenced by Arabic. Ataturk promptly did away with Arabic script and adopted Roman letters and he purged Turkish of all its Arabic words. Although there are many historical links between Turkey and the Arab world, the people of Turkey consider themselves Turks and not Arabs. Having determined the geographical limits of our survey, the second most important factor in Arab stations will be dealt with.

In order to understand Arabic as a language, one must know something of its relationship with Islam. When the Angel Gabriel revealed the Koran to Mohammad, he spoke to Him in Arabic. Arabic became the language of the Koran and it is blasphemous to recite it in any other language. With the advent of Islam, Arabic became more than just the language of some tribes in the Arabian peninsula. It became the language of a world religion that was rapidly spreading in all directions. Islam is an all-encompassing religion: Islam not only instructs Moslems in matters of worship, but also in matters of daily life. With millions of believers following the precise instructions of the Koran, a new precision was needed in the language of the Koran and Fusha Arabic was born. When you hear Koranic recitations, be they from Kaduna, Hargeisa, or Jakarta, they are in Fusha (Modern Standard) Arabic. The Koranic recitations that you hear are recited by a man trained in the art of Tajwid. Only those trained in this art are allowed to recite the Koran for others. The Koran is not read like a book over the air; it is only recited. The term a "reading" of the Koran refers to an acceptable version/interpretation of the text of the Koran. Permitting only trained reciters to recite the Koran in public helped preserve uniformity in the text before the advent of modern Arabic printing presses in this century. Despite this effort, at one time there were as many as ten different orthodox readings of the Koran.<sup>2</sup> Over time, most of these have fallen by the wayside, and now there is a single reading that has virtual universal acceptance in the Islamic world. Before modern time pieces, the muzzein (prayer leader) would call people to prayer with a "call to prayer" from the top of the minaret (tower) of the mosque. Now the call to prayer is on tape and loudspeakers are used. The times of prayer are also printed in newspapers. In spite of the fact of pray times being known, listeners can still hear an occasional call to prayer proceeding the Koranic recitations. The muzzein will let the people know that prayers are about to begin and he will extol the virtues of prayer over other activities such as sleeping. In summary, keep in mind the following. Arabs are residents of the states of the Arab League, whereas Moslems are believers in the Islamic faith. Not all Arabs are Muslims. Arabic is the language of the Arabs as well as the language of Islam.

1 Goldschmidt, Arthur Jr. "A concise history of the Middle East" (Westview Press Boulder, Colorado 1983) p. 39 A good one volume treatment.

2 Gibb, H.A.R. "Mohammedanism" (Oxford University Press, London 1980) p. 34

### ● SUGGESTED READING ●

"The Middle East, a geographical study" Peter Beaumont (John Wiley and son 1980) An excellent volume on the geography of the Middle East.

"Anthology of Islamic Literature" James Kritzeck (New American Library, New York 1975) Good selection of Arabic poetry.

"Islam" Fazlur Rahman (University of Chicago, Chicago 1966) This one deals with the history of Islam.

"The Arabs" David Lamb (Random House, New York 1987) Some light reading on the Arabs by an American.

Members of the League of Arab States (courtesy of John Bryant)

|          |            |                             |
|----------|------------|-----------------------------|
| Algeria  | Lebanon    | Saudi Arabia                |
| Bahraini | Libya      | Somalia                     |
| Djibouti | Mauritania | Sudan                       |
| Egypt    | Morocco    | Syria                       |
| Iraq     | Oman       | Tunisia                     |
| Jordan   | Palestine  | United Arab Emirates        |
| Kuwait   | Qatar      | Yemen (Democratic Republic) |
|          |            | Yemen (Republic)            |

●THE ARAB WORLD ON SHORTWAVE●

●ALGERIA This station suffers from a highly irregular schedule as well as transmitter problems. Try 6160 khz in the North American evening. Short newscasts are on the hour but otherwise the programming is Arabic music without interruption. The Sout Al-Filistine service can be found at 1700UTC on 15215khz. Be patient as this is not a daily catch. The program of the Sout Al-Sahara Al-Hurriya consists of speeches in front of cheering crowds with numerous mentions of the "Sahara" and commentaries on the deeds of the Moroccan government with an occasional interlude of Arabic music.

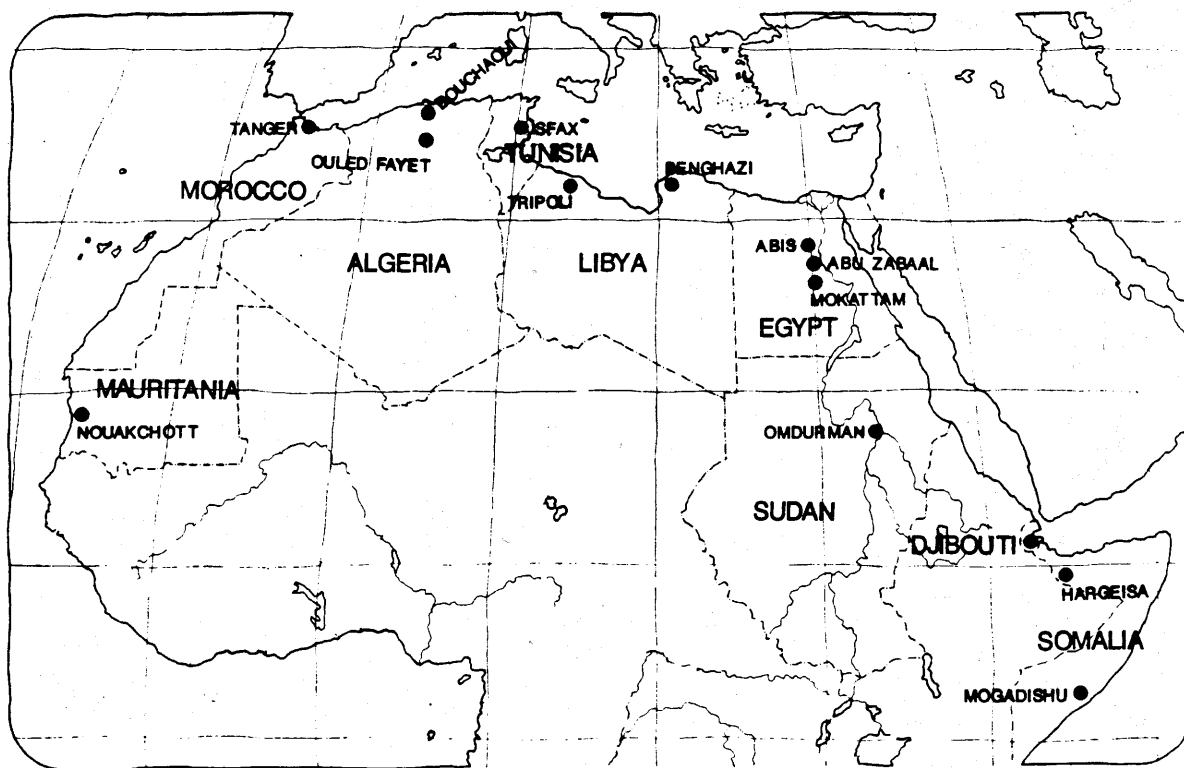
|   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Identifications                               | Frequencies                 |
| Huna Jaza'r Itha'at Al-jumhuriya Al-jazziriya | 6160khz(app.)(Home)-0100UTC |
| Sout Al-Filistine                             | 15215khz-1700UTC(Palestine) |
| Sout Al-sahara Al-hurriya                     | 15215khz-2200UTC(Sahara)    |

●BAHRAIN Perhaps the most exciting development of Arab world broadcasting in 1988 was the "addition" of Bahrain to the Arab countries heard on shortwave. Although Bahrain has no shortwave transmitters of it's own, it is heard via Radio Kuwait for 1 hour a day. The relay is from 1130-1230 daily. There is plenty of music as well as news at 1200UTC. A weather broadcast is often heard at 1155UTC.

Identification Huna Bahrain Frequency 15505khz(via Kuwait)

●DJIBOUTI The best shot to hear Djibouti is on 4780khz at 0300UTC sign on. Koranic recitations will be heard in Arabic, but the remaining programming is either in Somali or Afar. My own logs of this station, which are old, noted the following: 0300UTC sign on with local music following the Koranic recitations. News was heard at 0330UTC with the station fading out shortly afterward. (This differs from the current schedule published in the World Radio and Television Handbook.)

Identification Radio Djibouti Frequency 4780khz



MAJOR SWBC TRANSMITTER SITES IN ARABIC AFRICA

BRYANT, JOHNSON, 1989

● **EGYPT** The Voice of the Arabs is the most famous of all Arab radio stations. It was a vehicle for the speeches of Gamel Abdul Nasser which brought Arab nationalism and Arab unity to an all time high in the 1950's and 60's. Now only a shadow of it's former self, Sowl Al-arab is still a lively station. The station's programming is evidently aimed at a Pan-Arab audience rather than a glorified home service. Some sound effects are heard and at times it has an almost commercial sound. Although the newscasts are not parallel to any other Arab service, the clock chimes characteristic of all Egyptian stations proceed the news. Identifications are frequent, but it is not the easiest one to hear, at least in North America.  
Identification Sowl Al-arab Frequencies 11665khz after 2100UTC 11905khz at 0300UT

The Holy Koran program is similar in format and programming to that of Kuwait. Programming consists of Koranic recitations and other religious programming.  
Identification Idtha' Al-koran Al-karim Frequency 9755khz after 2100UTC

The General Arabic service is the Egyptian government's station for communicating with the Egyptian people. The schedule is extensive and is on almost 24 hours a day. Look for newscasts on the hour. Egyptian news is sometimes heard on the half hour. There is also a program of economic news. Citizens are kept well informed through a number of interview programs. Dramas and Arabic music provide the bulk of the entertainment.  
Identifications Itha'at Al-gumhuriya Misr Al-arabiya Huna Al-Qahira  
Frequencies 9455khz at 0350UTC sign on 17670khz-1400UTC 12050khz until 2350UTC sign off

The Sowl Al-Wadi A-Neal program is heard on shortwave. The program features programs of particular interest to people of the Nile Valley, Sudanese as well as Egyptian. There is also a Palestinian service with similar type programming.  
Identification Sowl Al-wadi A-neal Frequency 11785khz at 0500UTC

The Arabic foreign service of Radio Cairo is transmitted to many regions of the world with specialized programming for each region. The stations also use a number of identification but all will eventually broadcast a "Huna Al-Qahira" identification. Radio Cairo service beamed to North America is known as Sowl Al-misr. The news and features are designed for expatriates. News is on the hour and the signal is strong. There is also a service directed to South America with similar specialized programming. Radio Cairo's service to Africa begins with dictation speed news. The features are also spoken at slow speed. While I have been able to log Radio Cairo's service to Australia and South East Asia, reception has never been good enough for me to listen to the programs.

Identification-Ith'at Al-arabiya mao-ga-ha ela Al-america Al-ganobiya(Latin America)  
Sowl Al-Misr(North America) Qahira, min Al-Qahira(Africa) Huna Al-Qahira(AusAs)

Frequencies-North America 9900khz-0030 to 0330UTC 6194khz-0300 to 0430UTC  
South America 17720khz, 15220khz-2345 to 0040UTC Africa 17800khz-1100 to 1130UTC

● **IRAQ** Although the Iraqi station "Voice of the Masses" is confined to medium wave now, Iraq can still be heard in Arabic through a relay of it's Home Service. Offered on a variety of frequencies with a single schedule, this station will go right through the half hour without a break. On occasion the station has also been heard signing on with news rather than with Koranic recitations. Features consist of interviews with doctors or history programs. Surprisingly little in the way of propaganda is heard. Sign on is at 0400UTC and Iraq signs off at 2310UTC.  
Identification Itha'at Al-jumhuriya Al-iraqiya min Baghdad  
Frequencies 7210, 7280, 9660, 9730, 11825, and 15430khz at 2200UTC  
15430khz-1130UTC 11970khz-1900UTC 11925khz-0400UTC

● **JORDAN** When it commissioned three 500KW transmitters late in 1988, Jordan became a much easier country to hear. The domestic service is broadcast on a number of frequencies and times. The programming is equally balanced between short features and Arabic music. Newscast are on the hour and weather forecasts and correspondent's reports are sometimes heard. Listeners tuning in at the 0330UTC sign on should be prepared to listen up to half an hour of Koranic recitations before the news at 0400UTC.  
Identifications Itha'at Al-mamlakatu Al-urdiniya Al-hashimiya Huna Amman  
Frequencies 11955khz-0330UTC 9835khz-1910UTC 11820khz-2100UTC

● **KUWAIT** Using a number of high powered transmitters, Kuwait puts out a number of services. Prominent among these is the Main Arabic Program. This is actually an extension of the Home Service. I have heard information on which pharmacies are going to be open all night as well as arrival and departure times of the various flights at the airport. These "Home Service" items are carried in along with features, news and dramas. Station identifications are frequent and there is usually a news summary if not a complete newscast on the hour. A "special" Arabic program is broadcast (currently 15505khz at 0700-1300UTC) to Europe and North America. This service operates in parallel with the Main Arabic news program. It broadcasts a lot of sports, especially soccer, at other times. The Holy Koran service features recitations from the Koran and other religious programming. Signal strengths and modulation are of a very high quality. While Kuwait demonstrates its solidarity with the Arab world (For instance, referring to Israel as the "enemy" in its newscasts.) it is by no means as radical in its tone and rhetoric as say, Libya.  
Identifications Huna Kuwait Itha'at Koran Al-karim min Kuwait  
Frequencies 15505,9840khz for Home Service 15505khz-Special(0700-1300UTC only)  
15345khz-Holy Koran(0200-0500UTC)

● **LEBANON** Control for Lebanon is contested on the airwaves as well as the streets. A few of the factions broadcast on shortwave and each represents a different viewpoint.

Sowt Al-Lubnan is the voice of the Christian community in Lebanon. Programming is music, equally divided between Western and Arabic music. The only station break is at quarter past the hour when there is a newscast, usually read by a woman. Be prepared for a few advertisements in French around news time. Identification Sowt Al-Lubnan Frequency 6549.6khz-0300UTC

The King of Hope/Voice of Hope station has recently returned to the air after being bombed. Always under the protection of the Israeli army, the station has now moved very close to the Israeli border. The Israelis have extended their border fence to enclose the station behind the fence. The station draws its power from the Israeli city of Metullah. The Arabic programming is Christian religious programs with English identifications inserted around the hour. Identifications King of Hope, Voice of Hope Frequencies 6280, 6215khz

Sowt Al-Jabel is the voice of the Druze community in Lebanon. It is listed in the WRTH operating on 6052khz from 0400 to 2200UTC.

● **LIBYA** The most widely heard Libyan service is Sowt Al-watan Al-arabiya kabir, Sowt Al-lejan thowra. This station is radical to say the least and virtually all the programs are politicized. One recent drama dealt with the 1986 American bombing of Libya. With the continuing "intifada"(uprising) on the West Bank and Gaza, the program Sowt Al-Thowra As-Shabi fi Filistine is heard at a number of times. Another feature to watch for is "Muhadara Al-Leeoum"(Today's Lecture), which is a speech (often rambling) from Mu'amar Qaddafi. Short readings from the "Kitab Al-Akhdar"(Green Book), are heard around the news time. News, when it is broadcast, is a 15 minutes past the hour and is the best chance the listener will have for a station identification. (Consequently, the station will often run through the hour without a station break.) One thing you will hear very little of on this station is Koranic recitations or religious programming.  
Identification Sowt Al-watan Al-arabiya kabir, Sowt Al-lejan thowra  
Frequencies 15415khz-mornings 15450khz, 15235khz-evenings

To listen to the Libyan Home service after listening to propaganda is a breath of fresh air. Much more music is played and the programs are entertaining. Try the suggestion below but note that there is co-channel Tunisia here as well. Identification-Itha'at Al-jumahere Al-othma Frequency-15450khz-1230UTC

● **MAURITANIA** In listening to Mauritania, I realize how large the Arab world is. Not only is the music different but Mauritanian Arabic is vastly different than, let us say, Syrian Arabic. This station plays a lot of beautiful stringed music and there is a newscast at 2300UTC. Frequency-4845khz-2300UTC Identification Huna Nuahcot, Itha'at Al-jumhuriya Al-islamiya Al-mauritaniya

● **MOROCCO** Medi 1 is a commercial station that divides it's broadcast time between French and Arabic. The Arabic segments are from the half hour to the hour. Commercials are heard and the programming is pop music with a few newscasts. Identification Medi 1 Frequency 9575khz-2030UTC

The Home service of Morocco is relayed on shortwave with 15335khz as the main frequency. Reception is good and this is one of better stations to listen for if you like Arabic music. Identification Huna Rabat, Itha'at Al-mamlekatun Al-magribiya Frequencies 15335khz-1100-0100UTC 11920khz-afternoons

● **OMAN** With transmitters of only 50KW and 100KW, Oman is not heard quite as easily. Their schedule is quite extensive and the listener will have many opportunities throughout the day. The service is the Home Service. Not as strident in tone as some other stations, Oman does offer some interesting programs. History and plenty of Arabic music are the usual fare. Oman presents the listener with an opportunity to hear one of the few remaining Sultanates in this world. Identification Itha'at Al-omaniya min Muscat Frequencies 6085,17770khz-0200UTC 17735khz-1400UTC 11890khz-2030UTC

● **QATAR** With perhaps more money than some of their Arab brothers, the Qataris are broadcasting a very professional relay of their Domestic Service. Readings from Arab literary masters such as Taha Hussein are featured as well as different types of music, including jazz. This station broadcasts more Western music than most Arab stations. Reception used to be excellent on 17800khz at 1430UTC, but this channel is now blocked. If you wish to hear Qatar when it signs on at 0245UTC, try 7170khz. Identification Itha'at Al-qatar min Doha Frequencies 17800khz-1330UTC

● **SAUDI ARABIA** While operating some 350KW transmitters, Saudi Arabia is one of the most difficult countries to hear on the Arabian peninsula. The First program of the Home Service is the most widely heard service from Saudi Arabia and it has an extensive schedule. Newscasts are on the hour and half hour. Features consist of correspondent's reports and interviews. There is a Second program of the Home Service broadcast from Jeddah. I suspect that the programming is similar to the First program. The Call of Islam program offers Koranic recitations and other religious programming. Identifications Itha'at Al-mamlakatu Al-arabiya As-saudiya min Riyadh Da' Islam Frequencies 15060khz-1400UTC,9870khz-2100UTC,15060khz-1600UTC Islam

● **SOMALIA** One of our fringe countries, Somalia has 2 stations and 3 services. Radio Mogadishu has an external service and Arabic programming is offered among other languages. Listeners usually hear Somalia's Home Service, especially around the 0300UTC sign on. After Koranic recitations the rest of the 0300UTC hour is taken up with Somali programming. There is an Arabic newscast at 0400UTC. Identification Huna Mogadishu Frequency 7199.6khz

Radio Hargeisa is a station I have not heard, although not from lack of trying. Some Fters have heard the station around the 1230UTC sign off. I have also seen reports indicating that this station signs on at 0300UTC.

● **SUDAN** The General Service program is irregular at best. Most listeners log it at the 0400UTC sign on at 5039khz. Recent reports indicate that the station has moved to 6150khz.

National Unity Radio is a station run by the Sudanese Armed Forces. The objective of the station is to unify the country. Arabic is heard from 1430UTC to 1500UTC on 9435khz. Speeches and impassioned pleas for unity are among the fare of this station. Identification Itha'at wahada al-wataniya

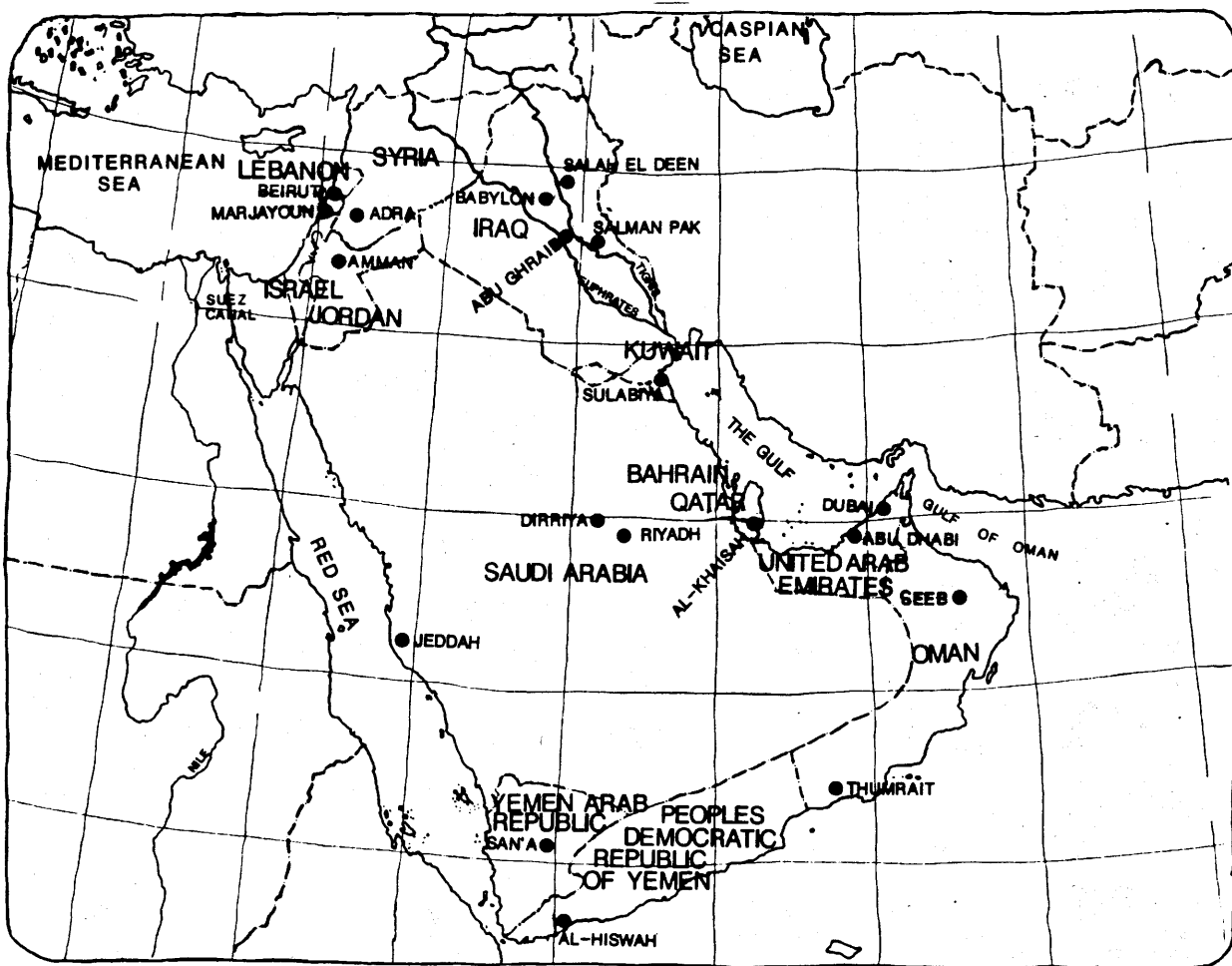
● **SYRIA** Syria has three services which the listener can hear with varying degrees of success. The most frequently heard is directed to Latin America from 2215 to 2315UTC. This program strives to keep Syrians living in Latin America up to date with events at home. News is at 2230 and a number of short features are broadcast. Identification Huna Dimasq Frequencies 9950,12085khz

Syria also relays it's Home Service on shortwave. The schedule is longer but the station is more difficult to hear. Newscasts are on the hour and long blocks of Arabic music are transmitted. Identification Itha'at Al-jumhuriya As-syriya min Dimasq Frequency 15095khz-1135UTC

Iraq and Syria are rivals in a number of spheres. For instance, both claim to be the legitimate representative of the Baath party. Extending the rivalry to shortwave, Syria broadcasts a program directed to Iraq which is an hour long. The programming is anti-Saddam Hussein commentaries with little or no music. This service is usually jammed. Identification Sowl Al-Iraq Frequency 9470khz-0400-0500UTC(usually jammed by Iraq)

●TUNISIA Like most Arab countries, Tunisia broadcasts it's Home Service on shortwave. This station features lectures and poetry readings. If you hear an Arabic newscast in which the first 5 minutes are spent talking about the Tunisian president, then you probably have Tunisia. Identification Itha'at Al-jumhuriya A-tunisiya Frequencies 15450khz-1300UTC, 7245khz-2200UTC, 12005-0430UTC(sign on)

●UNITED ARAB EMIRATES While there are seven states that make up the UAE, the states of Abu Dhabi and Dubai are perhaps the best known. Both of these states boast a shortwave transmitter complex. Dubai is home to five shortwave transmitters: three 300KW and two 500KW. Up to four have been heard simultaneously. A General Arabic program goes out on a number of frequencies and times to different regions. Those familiar with Dubai's English service will have an idea what their Arabic service is like. The newscasts usually have a weather forecast. There are many Arab history programs and I fancy this station as sort of the "PBS" of the Arab world. Reception is generally possible any time the station is on the air, between 0230 and 2050UTC. Identification Itha'at Al-imirat Al-arabiya Al-muttahida min Dubay Frequencies 11940,9640khz-0230UTC 15435,17865khz-1430UTC 15300khz-2000UTC



MAJOR SWBC TRANSMITTER SITES IN THE ARAB MIDDLE EAST

BRYANT, JOHNSON, 1989

