Sikhism and the Kirpan

Sikhism is a religion that originated in South Asia during the 15th Century and is distinct from both Hinduism and Islam. The Kirpan, a religious sword, is a Sikh article of faith (see photos A-C).

The Kirpan typically has a wooden or steel handle with a blade that may be blunt. Since there is no prescribed length for the blade, the size of the Kirpan varies by personal choice. A small Kirpan, resembling or appearing like a knife, has a blade that is commonly 3-6 inches in length, though some Sikhs prefer a Kirpan with a larger blade; while others will wear a smaller blade of 2 inches or less.

The Kirpan is often worn by Sikhs of both genders underneath their clothing with a shoulder sash called a Gatra (see photo D); however, some Sikhs wear the Kirpan over their clothing in public view (see photo E) or around their neck (see photo F).

Inspections

Points to consider when searching a Sikh:

- Show respect to all variations of faith during inspections.
- Respectfully ask if a Sikh is carrying a Kirpan. If so, request to inspect the Kirpan.
- Searches should be conducted as discreetly as possible.
- If the Kirpan must be confiscated, explain the reason(s) why and handle the Kirpan with respect and care.
- Review policies and procedures for more information regarding the Kirpan.

Title 18 U.S.C. Section 930 generally prohibits the possession of knives, including Kirpans, with blades longer than 2.5 inches, in federal facilities, unless otherwise authorized. Please refer to post orders, standard operating procedures or an FPS representative for further guidance.