

# Sikh Americans and the Kirpan



## 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.

## Federal Protective Service



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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