ABSTRACT

During the 1950s and 1960s, the British Government maintained a network of Desert intelligence Officers (DIOs) throughout the Trucial States to gather intelligence for the Trucial Oman Scouts — a British-led force of locally-recruited soldiers responsible for keeping the peace between the tribes. One of the most dangerous postings for any DIO was in the mountains of Ras al-Khaimah, where one had the difficult task of maintaining good relations with the xenophobic Shahuh and Habous tribes.

Of all the DIOs who served in Ras al-Khaimah over the years, the name of Captain Tim Ash of the TOS stands out in particular. Today, Tim Ash is regarded as an honorary tribesman among the Shahuh and Habous. Such was his standing that the Habous held a traditional tribal wedding ceremony for him when he married his wife, Miriam, in 1975.

This paper examines the reasons why Tim Ash was Ras al-Khaimah’s most successful DIO: his diplomatic skills, local knowledge, and empathy with the tribes.