



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

White House 31

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To : The Secretary
From: INR - William G. Bowdler
NEA - Harold H. Saunders

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Analysis of Arab-Israeli Developments
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Hussein: Conflicting Pressures

The Camp David agreements and the criticism that they have aroused in the Arab world beyond Egyptian borders have subjected King Hussein to conflicting political pressures. Hussein seems inclined, for the moment at least, to lean in the direction of Damascus and Assad's hardline response while keeping his options open.

At the same time, the King has initiated an intensive round of activity to reposition Jordan in a way that can absorb the ripples emanating from the Camp David summit. He has:

- established a working group, composed of a relatively wide spectrum of Jordanians, to advise him on peace strategy;
- brought in a wide group of Jordanians for talks with you and Atherton, and used this group to frame his written questions;
- demonstrated sufficient flexibility to receive on Jordanian soil his long-time adversaries -- Qadhafi and Arafat -- both of whom are held in contempt by his East Bank constituency; and
- signalled his intention to send envoys to many countries to take soundings, in addition to his upcoming visits to key Arab states.

This activity, however, may disguise rather than reveal the processes by which Hussein will arrive at a decision. Few observers would deny the King a

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reasonable period of time in which to deal with the attempts to influence Jordanian options. But Hussein's confusion and indecisiveness, although understandable in these circumstances, seem to be reinforced by a host of apprehensions.

Sadat, for example, has already cited the dealings between King Hussein's grandfather, King Abdullah, and the Israelis as a precedent for Hussein to join the West Bank negotiations. To Hussein, however, this reference has disturbing implications because Abdullah was considered a traitor by many Arabs and was assassinated by a Palestinian in Jerusalem in 1951. Consequently, despite Sadat's assertion that the Camp David agreements will create new patterns in Arab-Israeli relations, the King probably is haunted by the fear that a positive response on his part will again make him a pariah and create the conditions for a new tragedy.

Troubled by doubts, the King will reach out in the weeks ahead for reassurance from his traditional allies, both tacit and avowed. It is unlikely, however, that this effort will be satisfactory to him:

- Pledges from the US are likely to be greeted with skepticism by the Hashemites; they cannot ignore their deeply held suspicion that the US, if forced by the logic of the peace process to choose between Hashemite concerns and its wider interests in the region, would jettison the Hashemites.
- The Saudis, who have long had doubts about Hussein's seriousness of purpose, have not indicated that they are prepared to support an abrupt Jordanian move into the peace process on the basis of the Camp David agreements.
- The Likud leadership has been reluctant to cultivate the cooperative relationship with Amman that characterized much of the long period of Labor's tenure.

On the other hand, King Hussein may be aware that the Camp David agreements afford Jordan an opportunity to exert significant influence over the course of events in the West Bank. Moreover, former confidants, such

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as Zaid Rifai, are urging the King to enter negotiations. As a result, he may feel obliged to reach a decision without obtaining the reassurance which he wants. As he listens to expressions of concern for Jordanian interests from outsiders, he cannot help but realize the fragility of his claim to sympathetic attention from key parties affiliated with the peace process.

In these circumstances, it is unlikely that the King has a clear view in his own mind even of the criteria on which he should base his decision. He would prefer to sit on the fence for the time being and wait for the Israeli-Egyptian negotiations to unfold, hoping in the process that the US, his Arab friends, and the Israelis somehow will come to his rescue. He will also hope that the US written answers to the questions will assist him in making the hard choice.