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CDA 73/1

SUBJECT: Comments of King Husayn on his Perception
Of U.S. Pressure on Jordan to Join the
Middle East Peace Negotiations and on his
Recent Discussions with Saudi and Gulf Leaders

1. In King Husayn's contacts with the United States, and in particular in three letters and one telephone call he has received from President Carter, Husayn has discerned the following theme: entering the negotiations is a difficult and risky course, but the King has taken risks in the past; furthermore, not getting involved holds far more risks. These and other messages-- indicating that if Jordan "falls into line" its military and economic needs will be satisfied-- add up in the King's mind to an implied threat. (Comment: In a separate conversation, Jordan Armed Forces Commander in Chief Lt. Gen. Bin Shakir stated that during his June 1978 visit to the U.S. he was told by a U.S. Presidential Advisor that Jordan had been too "passive" about getting into the peace process.) At one point, Husayn noted that he will never reach the level of importance that Israel has in U.S. eyes, and that he can never turn to the Soviets. He said, "I may go down."

2. Very evident throughout the conversation was Husayn's frustration with the Saudis. He described Crown Prince Fahd as indecisive and ineffective while having all the power in the world at his disposal. He urged Fahd that they set up a committee of two to discuss "alternatives", as time was running out. Fahd agreed in principle; when Husayn asked when they could meet for a follow-up, Fahd said he would have to check first with King Khalid. This apparently exasperated King Husayn, who figured that getting Khalid's clearance could take weeks. In Saudi Arabia, Husayn observed, nothing gets done right and nothing gets done on time. (Comment: Though Husayn did not mention Saudi aid to Jordan, we can probably safely assume that he got no definitive answer from Fahd on this score either.)

3. Husayn's overall prediction is that the Saudi regime is going to go under. "I think people are underestimating the capacity for madness in this part of the world", he observed. Husayn observed that some of the younger princes of Saudi Arabia do not care for the traditional ways of the people at the top; and furthermore, it was one of these princes who killed the late King Faysal. Husayn then recalled how King Faysal with one masterful stroke (i.e., the oil embargo) completely restored Saudi Arabia's credibility. Husayn felt certain that if Faysal were alive today, the Saudi reaction to Camp David would have been decisive and different.

4. This led Husayn off on one of his conspiracy theory of history tangents, as he mused aloud why Faysal had been killed and whether this was part of a larger plan. He then went on to describe the pattern of events in which Jordan has been systematically squeezed for the past several years. He sees Egyptian President Anwar Al-Sadat as the leading figure behind this, but implicit in what Husayn said was that there was U.S. backing throughout as well. "Sometimes I think I was born in the wrong century", said Husayn, who added that it is no longer a question of principles but rather a situation in which computers take over and one's position and role are war-gamed by somebody from afar. (Comment: Read Washington).

5. Also during the conversation, Husayn touched on his visits to the individual Gulf countries, which he found to be completely under the influence of Saudi Arabia. He has a special feeling for the Bahrainis as wiser and more genuine than the rest. He found the Qataris worried about pressure from Iraq. In Kuwait, he was told by the leadership that the Iraqis are worried as to what would happen were the Shah of Iran to be overthrown. (Comment: Overall, Husayn reads the Iraqis as disposed to be more moderate.) In Oman, Husayn found the Sultan to have the tribes under much better control than previously, as Qabus has appointed new chiefs and received new pledges of loyalty. Everywhere Husayn went in the Gulf he found anger with Sadat, not so much for having placed Egypt first, but for his tactics and methods.

6. Husayn plans shortly to write a letter ⁴to President Carter in which he will explain fully his position on the peace process and the Camp David accords. He is still planning to visit the U.S. soon after the first of the year and feels more than ever that to visit now would be very bad timing.

CDA 73/3

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