



SUBJECT: JORDAN-US: King Hussein's Visit

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Central Intelligence Agency

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Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

6 June 1986

JORDAN-US: King Hussein's Visit

Summary

During his meetings with US officials, King Hussein is likely to focus on his current diplomatic efforts to mediate a Syrian-Iraqi reconciliation, which he hopes will lead eventually to a coordinated Arab strategy on the peace process. The King probably will not explore in depth the possibility of future US arms sales to Jordan because he is embittered over US Congressional opposition and believes it rules out a major arms agreement for the foreseeable future. [Redacted]

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The end of the dialogue with PLO Chairman Arafat, Hussein's failure to attract a loyal West Bank constituency, and the assassination of a leading moderate West Bank mayor have convinced the King that the window has closed on moving forward on the Palestinian issue in the near term. Hussein's failure to attract an independent West Bank leadership willing to join him in peace talks, after Arafat refused to accept UN resolutions 242 and 338 in February, was due partly to Jordanian negligence in addressing West Bank political and economic concerns. In an effort to cultivate greater support, Jordanian officials recently have taken a "carrot-and-stick" approach in dealing with West Bankers--harrassing pro-Arafat travellers seeking to cross the Jordan River, for instance, while increasing financial support to some pro-Jordanian West Bank institutions. [Redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by [Redacted] the Israel-Jordan-PLO Branch, Arab-Israeli Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Information as of 5 June 1986 was used in its preparation. Questions and comments should be addressed to Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, [Redacted]

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[redacted]

The King's ability to repair his damaged image in the West Bank by pouring in money, however, is severely limited by Jordan's economic problems stemming from reduced Arab financial aid. In his discussions in Washington, he probably will ask the US to encourage Israel to follow through on West Bank quality of life programs and to funnel increased US assistance for the West Bank through Jordan. [redacted]

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Hussein's Arab Strategy

The King recently has undertaken a longterm strategy designed to build a moderate Arab consensus isolating Arafat. He hopes his efforts to broker a Syrian-Iraqi reconciliation, during meetings with Presidents Assad and Saddam Husayn in May, will pave the way for an early Arab summit. The King sorely needs a foreign policy success and hopes some form of Syrian-Iraqi reconciliation will boost his support among moderate Arabs, encourage Arab financial aid to Jordan and spur a coordinated Arab strategy toward future talks with Israel. [redacted]

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Hussein apparently aims by facilitating a Syrian-Iraqi reconciliation to strengthen his ties to President Assad and over time to work with him to rein in Arafat, thereby giving the PLO only a secondary role in any future peace talks. The King would prefer to work with the PLO to ensure credible Palestinian backing for his efforts to negotiate with Israel, and he probably hopes that closer ties with Assad will put additional pressure on Arafat to be more flexible. For his part, Assad believes the rift between Jordan and the PLO offers him the best opportunity yet to prevent a settlement of the Palestinian issue that ignores Syrian interests. [redacted]

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Hussein's limited support for former chief of Fatah Military Intelligence Abu Zaim [redacted] may also be designed to lay the groundwork for cultivating a new Palestinian leadership in conjunction with Syria if Arafat remains recalcitrant. The King presumably doubts that Abu Zaim's small, financially strapped dissident movement will successfully challenge Arafat, but apparently hopes if necessary to undermine his leadership and to encourage alternatives to the PLO. [redacted]

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The King apparently has not secured any commitments from Assad and Saddam, but some progress is evident. US Embassy sources in Damascus say Syria has dropped some demands and is willing to participate in secret contacts with Iraq under Jordanian sponsorship. The King hopes to arrange a bilateral summit in Amman between Assad and Saddam Husayn, but a preliminary meeting of senior officials, as early as mid-June, is more likely. [redacted]

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Assad probably hopes his cooperation with Hussein will encourage moderate Arabs to continue economic aid to Syria. Damascus may also hope that Iranian nervousness over Hussein's shuttle diplomacy will prompt Tehran to give Syria

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additional economic and political concessions. Syria's public accusation that Iraq was behind the bombings throughout Syria in March and April illustrates Assad's entrenched enmity for the Saddam regime and suggests that reconciliation is unlikely soon. The absence of a Syrian accusation after a recent explosion in Damascus, however, may indicate that Assad may be willing to give Hussein some cooperation in his reconciliation efforts. [redacted]

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The Iraqis are eager to halt Syrian support for Iran and Iraqi dissidents and almost certainly are willing to make significant concessions, possibly including a reduction in their support for PLO Chief Arafat. Baghdad's doubts over Assad's sincerity, however, will lead it to demand early evidence of a change in Syrian policy. [redacted]

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Hussein's Military Agenda

King Hussein was frustrated and angered by US Congressional opposition to the Jordan arms package earlier this year and is unlikely to resurface the arms issue for in-depth discussions during this trip. Instead, he probably will raise mutual regional security concerns, particularly developments in the Iran-Iraq war and the recent tension between Israel and Syria. [redacted]

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Hussein wants to preserve the US-Jordanian military relationship and continues to value his strategic ties to Washington, but he sees no alternative to finding other arms suppliers. After the arms package failed, Hussein said he would look elsewhere for arms and is proceeding to do so. Although Hussein has proven his willingness to seek non-US suppliers, any large deal--particularly for aircraft--requires financing from the Saudis, who have alternatively agreed to and backed off on funding commitments. [redacted]

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Jordan's Air Force is examining the French Mirage 2000 and British Tornado fighter aircraft as alternatives to the requested US F-16s and F-20s. [redacted] France and Britain are pressuring Jordan to decide which aircraft it will purchase. Hussein, however, is likely to continue delaying a commitment for either aircraft for the near term, since neither adequately satisfies Jordan's air defense needs. Jordanian air force pilots prefer US fighters, and Hussein may try to mollify them by biding his time, with the hope that the climate in the US becomes more conducive next year to major Jordanian arms purchases. [redacted]

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Jordan has turned to the Soviet Union to augment 1981 and 1984 purchases of SA-8 and SA-13 surface-to-air missiles and ZSU-23 anti-aircraft guns. [redacted] Jordan signed a new deal with the Soviets last month for additional air defense equipment, possibly modified SA-8s and SA-13s and additional ZSUs. The new contract also may have included fifteen BMP-1 reconnaissance vehicles--the King's US request included 32 Bradley reconnaissance vehicles. This new deal does not portend significantly expanded Jordanian/USSR

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military ties--in fact most senior Jordanian officers regret having to conclude a third deal with Moscow--but does underscore the King's priority for force modernization. Hussein deeply mistrusts Soviet intentions, and does not now seem inclined to include major arms--such as the MIG-29--in contracts with Moscow to avoid the development over a time of a major Soviet presence in Jordan. [REDACTED]

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Other Issues

Regional Development Plan. King Hussein has expressed some interest in Prime Minister Peres's idea of a regional development fund to provide financial aid to key Arab states and has asked to be kept informed on related developments. He has cautioned, however, that hopes about prospects for the fund should not be raised prematurely. In addition, Jordan's Prime Minister has made clear the Jordanian desire that any funds destined for the West Bank be channeled through Jordan. [REDACTED]

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"Gaza First." Hussein does not support Peres's offer of greater self-rule for the Gaza Strip. He fears that progress toward a settlement in Gaza alone would reduce Tel Aviv's incentive to reach a comprehensive peace accord that would include the West Bank. [REDACTED]

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Prospects

Hussein's hopes for early progress in his Arab reconciliation efforts may be unrealistic. Assad probably would not forgo an opportunity to assume a leading role among his Arab colleagues, but does not appear ready to embrace Saddam Husayn or to withdraw support for Iran. For his part, Saddam appears skeptical of Syrian intentions, but probably will proceed nonetheless. [REDACTED]

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Even if the King succeeds in arranging an Arab summit, he is unlikely to convince his Arab colleagues to withdraw their support for Arafat's leadership of the PLO. Jordan's financial benefactors, particularly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, continue to back Arafat and want Hussein to settle his differences with the PLO leader. [REDACTED]

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