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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

13 December 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: The Jordan Regime: Its Prospects and the Consequences
of its Demise *

I. THE CURRENT SITUATION

1. King Hussain has stayed on his throne in Jordan despite slender domestic political support, military weakness relative to his enemies, and the hostility of radical Arabs who regard him as a Western puppet. His survival has been due in part to his own courage and resourcefulness and to US support. But it has been

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[REDACTED] the Arab radicals generally tolerated Hussain's rule as an alternative to conflict with Israel for which they knew they were unprepared. As a consequence Jordan served as a kind of political buffer between irreconcilable opponents and to an important degree kept the unstable elements in the area in equilibrium.

* This memorandum has been produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of National Estimates and coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence and the Clandestine Services.

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2. During the past few months, a series of events has put the future of Jordan in question and has thereby threatened this precarious modus vivendi. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO),* led by Ahmed Shuqairi, became more violent in its criticism of Hussain for his refusal to admit its military forces to Jordan and to station them on the Israeli frontier. A clandestine terrorist organization, Fatah, stepped up its sabotage raids into Israel, mostly through Jordan, which tried to prevent them. The increasingly radical Syrian government was the prime backer of Fatah and announced open support for it. As terrorist raids continued, Tel Aviv, on November 13, made an unprecedentedly large reprisal strike, directing this strike, not against Syria, the source of the trouble, but against Jordan.

* The PLO is a radical organization, established by agreement of the Arab rulers during the recently ended period of Arab harmony. It functions as a kind of government-in-exile for the whole of Palestine, not only Israel but that part which fell to Jordan, commonly known as the West Bank. The PLO has trained a "liberation army" of Palestinians in Egypt and sponsored terrorist activities in Israel. There are other terrorist organizations, however, which are independent of the PLO. The most active of these is called the Fatah.

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3. The Israeli raid has badly shaken King Hussain and his government and humiliated the Jordan army. Palestinians in Jordan have always disliked Hashemite rule anyway and consider Hussain a US stooge who is "soft" on Israel. But they assumed that his amenability to US influence at least brought tranquility -- since they believe that Israel is in Washington's pocket also. In the aftermath of the 13 November raid, Hussain appeared to his subjects, to his neighbors, and perhaps even to himself to have been badly let down by the US. The Palestinians have agitated and demonstrated against him and his government for over three weeks. They have been enthusiastically egged on by the Syrian government and by UAR-based PLO propaganda campaigns. Disaffection in the Jordanian armed forces -- the mainstay of the king's position -- has grown greatly. Hussain is aware of his weakened position at home. He probably believes that the threat from Israel is greater than he had calculated, and has probably lost faith in the modus vivendi. He is also deeply concerned lest the US fail to give him firm support.

4. Hence, his first priority is to demonstrate to the Jordanian army and citizenry that he continues to enjoy the full backing of the US. He has asked the US for a large

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additional supply of arms to help him allay dissatisfaction in the armed forces. Beyond this, he probably hopes that a show of heightened defense activity will keep pressures manageable. The Israelis are probably willing to cooperate by refraining from reprisal raids on Jordan in all but the most serious circumstances.

5. Meanwhile, Hussain was put under severe pressure at the Arab Defense Council meetings last week in Cairo, and he agreed to the stationing, within two months, of Saudi and Iraqi forces in Jordan. Implementation of this plan is likely to be slow, however, and Hussain is certainly averse to it. He probably hopes that if extensive US aid buttresses his army, the presence of other Arab troops will be unnecessary.

6. Hussain obviously fears that the US may not come through with military aid in the magnitude he wants, and that the stationing of Iraqi and Saudi forces may not suffice to keep matters under control in Jordan or to dampen down the criticism, agitation, and subversion coming from Damascus and Cairo. He is therefore examining the possibility of recommending to his brother Arab leaders that they collectively take over the

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defense of West Bank. This would amount to abandoning political control over the most populous part of Jordan and would at least foreshadow the emergence of a radical Arab state in Palestine. Hussain may be threatening this step in order to scare off his Arab critics. He would actually take it only as a move of desperation, designed either to save his throne in Jordan or in case he decided to abdicate.

II. OUTLOOK FOR THE REGIME

7. Steady agitation and pressure on Hussain by the UAR, Syria, and PLO could wear down the staying power of the regime over a period of time. Although demonstrations in the West Bank area have been brought under control for the present, Shuqairi senses that Hussain is in serious trouble and will keep all the pressure he can on him. The PLO's efforts will probably stimulate coup plotting against the monarchy. We know of at least two groups in the Jordanian armed forces working separately against the regime, one of Palestinians, one of East Bankers. There may be others.

8. The intention and tactics of Nasser and Syrians are among the most important variables in the situation. The

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Syrians can be expected to keep up harassment and subversive efforts against Hussain's regime in almost any circumstances. Nasser's role is not so easily predictable. He is personally and politically hostile to Hussain and everything the Hashemites stand for, and no words of sympathy for the Jordanian regime can be expected to emanate from Cairo. On the other hand, Nasser has, in the past, shown considerable awareness, in practice, of the comparative advantages of the modus vivendi, and the dangers and uncertainties involved in upsetting it -- including the risks of the UAR having to fight the Israelis. If Nasser chose, he could do something to suppress the activities of Shuqairi and to calm down the popular turbulence on the West Bank, though his control is far from complete. We believe that he might come to see the advantages of moving in this direction, though in Cairo's present mood this is far from certain. In any case, if he made such efforts, they would necessarily be quiet and discreet; public pronouncements by him on these questions pretty much have to be militant against both the Israelis and Hussain, especially in view of Syrian competition.

9. The US response to Hussain's request for aid will be an important factor in the situation. A military aid package,

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if it included prompt delivery of some showy items, would help the king greatly. A US refusal to extend aid, or to give only token amounts of it, would weaken his position and discourage him. Hussain himself already entertains some suspicion that the US and Israel are collaborating against him, and he would feel that these suspicions were confirmed. Although no amount of US aid could guarantee Hussain's tenure, prompt and substantial assistance could help him to maintain political control. It will not bring him increased support among the Palestinians. Over the long term, the mutual distrust he and they have for each other is certain to increase.

10. In sum, Hussain's chances of surviving this crisis depend on a number of variables, nearly all of them outside his control. It is clear that he is in deep trouble, and that there are significant dangers to him and to the modus vivendi, which has helped maintain an uneasy peace in the area. Nevertheless many of the forces or considerations which have heretofore helped keep him on the throne are probably still there; these include the loyalty of much of the army. Moreover, the awareness among some of his neighbors that the collapse of his regime would introduce great risks and uncertainties has probably not entirely disappeared.

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III. CONSEQUENCES OF HUSSAIN'S FALL

11. If Hussain's rule came to an end as a result of assassination or abdication, he might be succeeded by his brother, the 19-year old Crown Prince Hasan. The regime in that case would probably present about the same face to the world that it does at present -- seeking to keep its neighbors at bay and to maintain quiet along the Israeli border and looking to the US for money and arms.

If Hussain falls, however, it is far more likely to be)
12. Hussain is far more likely to fall in circumstances which would bring a radical regime to power in Jordan. In such a government, Palestinians would probably have an important role. Cairo and Damascus would compete for influence over it, with the Syrians taking a more radical, militant line. Nasser, while claiming credit for a great victory for the forces of Arab nationalism would face serious problems as well. A radical government in Amman, or even on the West Bank alone, would make appropriate Arab nationalist noises, but it would also be certain to badger Nasser for money and other forms of support. Moreover, it would probably not be totally under Cairo's control, and thus could embroil the Egyptian government in unwanted confrontations with Israel.

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13. A radical regime would almost certainly turn to the Soviets for economic and military aid. It would probably be faced with immediate problems of replacing the \$45 million annually in grants and loans it has been getting from the US. The USSR would probably provide considerable military aid and some economic assistance, though the Soviets usually do not provide budgetary support to nations they are assisting. Jordan's impressive economic progress of the last several years would almost certainly be halted, or at least slowed drastically.

14. The existence of a radical regime in Jordan might in itself be taken by the Israelis as enough of a threat to their security to require military action to deal with the situation. They would almost certainly take such action if the radical Jordanian regime stationed sizeable armed forces on the West Bank or mounted terrorist operations into Israel. Such an Israeli move would carry the risk that other Arab states might become embroiled. It would assuredly bring on a major international crisis, involving considerations of US prestige, the position of the USSR, the longevity of other states friendly to the West, and perhaps major Arab-Israeli hostilities.

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15. The US is clearly identified as the chief backer of the Jordanian regime and would stand to lose considerable political influence and prestige should that regime, into which it has put half a billion dollars in the past decade, be overthrown. The effects would be especially felt in the pro-Western states of the Middle East, which would tend to attribute Hussain's collapse to US failure to support him. There would be one less voice arguing the side of moderation and caution in Arab councils. The more pro-US states in the area would be alarmed and discouraged, seeing the event as tipping the whole balance in the Arab world in favor of radicalism supported by the USSR and the UAR. They might be disposed to adjust their policies to take some account of this development. However, we do not believe that Hussain's fall would be followed by the similar collapse of other conservative Arab states. At present all are relatively well entrenched; none face any serious radical threat at home. The appearance of a radical regime in Jordan would increase the degree of polarization between the US and the USSR in the Arab world, with the Soviets standing to gain from their consistent support of the winning radical forces. The

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polarization would also extend to the Arab-Israeli situation, as the US would become even more closely identified as the associate and protector of Israel.

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Chairman

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