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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

24 September 1970

## MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Prospects for Hussein and Jordan in the Present Crisis

1. The fighting in Jordan has ruptured that country's fragile political and social fabric, already strained by the June 1967 war and subsequent developments -- especially the rise of the fedayeen movement. The size of the Palestinian segment of Jordan's population (about two-thirds), the numbers and the determination of the fedayeen themselves, and the support rendered them from Syria and Iraq make it virtually impossible for Hussein to beat them into permanent submission. These factors alone bring us to judge that Hussein cannot continue to rule in Jordan in the manner that he did, say during the years 1957-1967. Jordan itself and its role in the area will be very different from what they have been. The following paragraphs explore some of the possibilities and their implications.

GROUP 1 Excluded from automatic downgrading and declassification
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~~SECRET~~Deterioration of the Jordanian State

2. Over the past two years or so, Hussein's authority has progressively eroded, while the Palestinian guerrillas have won increasing freedom of action. Invoking patriotism and the sacred cause of liberating Palestine, the several guerrilla organizations have imported and borne arms, established secure areas, virtually governed major refugee camps, and moved about within Jordan pretty much as they pleased. Most Palestinians have little use for the Hashemite monarchy, regarding Hussein and his grandfather as having been all too willing to deal with Israel. Some of the Palestinian guerrilla organizations -- notably the Syrian-backed Sa'iqah, the Iraqi-backed Arab Liberation Front, and George Habbash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) -- consider Hussein as at least as great an enemy as Israel and, in practice, have devoted more effort to fighting the monarchy than the Israelis. Other fedayeen leaders and organizations, in particular Yasir Arafat and his associates who control Al-Fatah, the largest guerrilla group, saw certain benefits in "sharing" power with Hussein, since they derived advantages from this position without the responsibilities of government. They did not seek a showdown with the King, but feared not to side with more extreme fedayeen when the crisis broke.

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3. In the past year, the King has made several attempts to achieve an accommodation with the fedayeen, who had become virtually a law unto themselves in Jordan's capital. Each agreement, negotiated with a committee purportedly representing the important commando organizations, has broken down; each agreement has lasted a shorter time than the previous one; each breakdown has resulted in shooting incidents between guerrillas and army -- several of them very serious. The fedayeen organizations which were willing to accept some restrictions on their activities have been unable to control all their own followers; the PFLP has refused to honor any agreements. East Bank (original Jordanians) elements, including much of the army command and some of Hussein's own relatives, urged him on several occasions over the past two years to employ his army to restore his dwindling authority. Despite mounting provocations, the King backed off repeatedly from a full scale showdown. Although it appeared the Jordanian army was stronger than the fedayeen, the King evidently feared that his own position could be seriously endangered and the country torn apart by the animosities ensuing from the use of force on a scale required to subdue the guerrillas and reestablish his authority.

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~~SECRET~~Possible Outcomes of the Civil War

4. It is premature to predict the final outcome of the present fighting in Jordan. It may go on until one side gains clear advantage over the other. It may be brought to halt by a truce or cease-fire; other Arab leaders will certainly press for this solution, in part to arrange things so that organizations dedicated to liberating Palestine can continue to operate in Jordan. The Jordanian army and its opponents as well may find that their respective logistic deficiencies will compel a slowdown in military operations. But, no matter how it ends, the Jordan that emerges from the fighting will be substantially different from that of the past. The possibilities include geographic partition, Hussein's sharing power with military commanders concerned to suppress the fedayeen, a nominally unitary government which in effect cedes substantial authority to the fedayeen, and a chaotic situation with no clear functioning authority.

5. Even if Hussein wins the military contest without outside help, the resort to massive force -- although the real extent of damage and casualties remains unclear -- is sufficient to drive a deep wedge between Hussein and his supporters on the one hand and the Palestinians on the other. This is so despite the fact that many of the latter have little use for the fedayeen. The

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government in Amman would face a massive job of restoring government services, reestablishing public order, and somehow building a degree of public support. Unless it conveys the impression of doing passably well at these tasks, even those elements basically well-disposed toward Hussein would be hesitant to risk association with it, especially since it would be beset with enemies, both domestic and foreign.

6. The likelihood of external intervention against the fedayeen appears to have waned, although the possibility might arise again. If Hussein should come to reestablish control over Jordan as a consequence of intervention by non-Arab forces, he might hang on as ruler of Jordan for a time. Over an extended period, however, the political and psychological burden of owing his survival to non-Arab forces, which had defeated Palestinian patriots and heroes, would become insupportable. He would be subject to heavy political pressures from outside Jordan and bitter hatred from within. The chances of assassination would go up; even some of his military establishment would probably turn against him. While Hussein has been written off many times in the last dozen years and still survived, he has never faced a challenge of this magnitude, nor has he found it necessary for foreign troops to fight his battles. It is our best judgment that, if Israel were to intervene to "save" Hussein, he would be out of power -- and very likely dead -- in a matter of months.

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7. But, barring such a drastic contingency, developments in Jordan over the coming months will be heavily influenced by a variety of factors. Domestically, these include the military strength remaining to the contestants. The Jordanian army, on the whole, is likely to have increased confidence in itself and to want to continue a prominent role in the country. The fedayeen forces have lost heavily in men and materiel; yet they put up a very stiff fight. Their leadership is in obvious disarray, but many among them are more determined than ever to topple Hussein, and sympathy for them among Palestinians has probably increased. Whether they attract the mass of Palestinians to support them in a serious effort to overthrow Hussein is still unclear, but it is certain that much of the Palestinian element of Jordan will nurse extreme hatred of the King and the army for real or fictitious atrocities.

8. External factors will also play a part. Syria and Iraq -- long hostile to Hussein -- will be disposed to meddle in Jordan's troubled internal situation. The Jordanian government since 1967 has received sizable subsidies from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya. The latter two have suspended their payments; Libya will almost certainly not resume its subventions, and Kuwait is unlikely to do so. Nasser has suffered a setback,

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however things develop in Jordan. He would be apprehensive about possible Israeli military moves in the event of a clear fedayeen victory in Jordan. Yet, he could not approve of a military regime in Amman which had crushed the guerrillas. While his ability to affect Jordanian affairs is now limited, depending on the course of events, he may at some point intervene to throw his weight on one side or the other, or try to broker an accommodation.

### Partition

9. Apart from the formidable domestic obstacles in the way of putting Jordan back together, Hussein could count on few outside friends to help. His immediate neighbors are rapacious. Although the Syrian intervention has aborted, Damascus will continue to support the fedayeen in the north. Iraqi forces will probably continue to operate virtually autonomously in a small region along Jordan's main east-west road. Each desires the ousting of Hussein and the expansion of its version of Baathism. To this end, each would be prepared to carve a chunk of Jordanian territory for itself, and to sponsor a Palestinian government -- composed chiefly of its own tame fedayeen -- for the area it might control. Some kind of Palestinian entity might conceivably be set up in these areas, but it would have difficulty in establishing its independence, given Syrian and Iraqi determination to control it. Arafat and his associates in Al-Fatah would be unhappy at Syrian-Iraqi

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annexing of Jordanian territory, but they probably would have little choice but to go along. Arafat would probably find Syria a more acceptable sponsor than Iraq. If Jordan were partitioned in some such fashion as this, Hussein might hold on to the remaining two-thirds of the country, although the city of Amman would probably be almost constantly in turmoil, thanks to the large Palestinian element among its half million people.

#### Military Predominance

10. The Jordanian regime's action against the fedayeen appears to have been forced on Hussein by the weight of opinion among the military commanders. They and/or their successors will continue to demand and almost certainly get an increased role in the government of Jordan, whether the outcome of the present crisis finds Jordan partitioned or intact. We think that this military participation in government will be substantial and that Hussein's days as sole ruler, able to change cabinets and dictate policy, are over. Depending on the course of events, Hussein's position could vary from that of being compelled to listen to and, on important matters, heed a council of advisors to that of being a front for a cabal of military officers. His temperament would not tolerate the former easily, and he would probably abdicate rather than continue long in the latter role.

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~~SECRET~~A New Attempt at Compromise

11. Much less likely than the two situations just discussed, though not to be excluded, would be a sharing of the government of Jordan between Hussein and the fedayeen. Given the latter's losses and present disarray, some of their leaders might be willing to try and patch up an accommodation with Hussein once again. The King would now be skeptical of this, but external pressure, withholding of subsidies, and domestic weakness could compel him to try this sort of solution, perhaps not immediately, but over a period of time. Such an accommodation would be couched in terms of support for the Palestine cause, but the fedayeen would seek to free themselves as much as possible from government control. Hussein and the military would resist such a trend, and in time a new crisis would almost certainly develop.

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12. The above scenarios are illustrative, rather than exhaustive. The course of developments in the next days and weeks will have much to do with the shape of the future in Jordan. At best the political situation there is likely to be fragile and subject to sudden change. At worst, the country could slide into chaos, without a government able to maintain order or to provide services for the population. It is not too far-fetched to suggest that Jordan,

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created in 1921 primarily to provide a position for a deserving wartime ally of Britain, may be reaching the end of its allotted lifespan.

Implications for the Arab-Israeli Issue

13. Developments in Jordan have clearly altered the picture with respect to any Arab-Israeli negotiations. Jordan is unlikely to have a government secure enough to try and reach an accommodation with Israel. Fedayeen resistance to negotiations will probably command broader support among Palestinians and perhaps in other Arab quarters as well. Without Jordanian participation, Egypt would feel more inhibited with regard to any moves toward a settlement. This does not, in the long run, necessarily rule out Egyptian participation in negotiation efforts, but it does present Nasser with a new and quite different set of problems.

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MEMORANDUM FOR: DDCI

For your information. This was prepared at the request of the DCI and he specified a limited outside distribution.

AES, etc.

Copies to: DDI  
DDP  
D/OCI

Attachment:

Memorandum, dated 24 Sept 70  
"Prospects for Hussein and Jordan  
in the Present Crisis"

24 Sept 70  
(DATE)

*(addit. dist-over)*

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101  
1 AUG 54 WHICH MAY BE USED.

(47)

MEMORANDUM FOR: Frank Hand

The Director would like to have the attached  
Memorandum passed to the Secretary.

ABBOT SMITH  
Director  
National Estimates

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"Prospects for Hussein and Jordan  
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24 September 1970  
(DATE)

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(47)

MEMORANDUM FOR: Tom Latimer

The DCI would like to have this memo given  
to Dr. Kissinger.

ABBOT SMITH  
Director  
National Estimates

Attachment:

Memorandum, dated 23 Sept 70  
"Prospects for Hussein and Jordan  
in the Present Crisis" 24 September 70  
(DATE)

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(47)

MEMORANDUM FOR: VAdm. Noel Gayler, USN

For your information.

ABBOT SMITH  
Director  
National Estimates

24 September 70  
(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101  
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(47)

MEMORANDUM FOR: USIB Members (except AEC&FBI)

The Director of Central Intelligence suggests that you pass the attached memorandum on to your principals.

AES

24 September 70  
(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101  
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(47)

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director

Attached are the two papers you discussed with Huizenga yesterday morning. We have gone more elaborately into the subject of Soviet reactions than you really asked for but felt that the paper might be more useful to you in this fuller form. It has been discussed and revised by the Board. The second paper has not had this full treatment, though the Board members approved generally. We thought it might be useful for you to have it at once in this form. If you have suggestions or questions about it we can proceed to perfect it on Thursday.

*Abbot Smith*  
ABBOT SMITH  
Director, National Estimates

23 September 1970  
(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101  
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