

INFORMATION

22057

TOP SECRET/NODIS

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Options in Jordan

As you continue to think about the decisions we may face in Jordan, you may wish to consider some of the broader issues raised.

The Broader Situation and U. S. Interests

Two issues are now being contested in Jordan: (1) Who is to control the Palestinian movement? (2) What balance of political forces is to control Jordan?

The two are related. Whereas the less ideological groups focus on Israel and could make common cause with the government, the radicals are at least as dedicated to the overthrow of traditional regimes as to the destruction of the Zionist state. Although it is difficult to know exactly what the balance within the collection of fedayeen movements is, it seems relatively clear that the most active challenge to Hussein's regime comes from the radical fringe--the elements, for instance, responsible for the hijacking.

The outcome will determine whether there is a stable base for peace negotiations. The future political nature of Jordan will determine whether a Palestine settlement is possible or continuing war is inevitable. There seem to be several ways in which Jordan's political base could evolve:

--Hussein and the army could suppress the fedayeen and bring the non-fedayeen Palestinians into a settlement. This would ideally provide the most solid base, but it is doubtful whether there will be an outcome this decisive.

--Elements of the army, the King and the less militant Palestinians could make common cause. This would make for a less orderly negotiation but might make for a more enforceable peace if there is one.

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, as amended, Sect 3.5

TOP SECRET/NODIS

By PH NARA, Date 10-19-2009
NLN03/82-B: Perlt 8-21-2008
[P. 1066]

- Some combination of fedayeen elements could demonstrate the King's impotence and force on him a weak civilian government that would do its bidding. Negotiations would be out of the question.

It is the last outcome which seems most immediately at stake in the current crisis. Either of the first two could conceivably produce stability. The consequences of the third could include the following:

- Prospects for a Palestine settlement soon on terms Israel could consider would drop to almost zero. Attacks across Israel's eastern border would increase.
- Chances that Israel would at some point feel compelled to seize more territory in Jordan would increase sharply.
- Nasser's ability to negotiate a settlement with Israel and Soviet ability to support a negotiated settlement would be diminished sharply.
- There would be one more radical state in the Middle East where the U. S. is barred. A radical fedayeen base there would strengthen the movement against Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the Persian Gulf states.

In short, while it is not clear how the main political elements in Jordan will sort themselves out, it does not seem in the U. S. interest that a fedayeen movement urged on by radicals be permitted to impose its will on the government. It could not produce the stability that is necessary for peace.

The Three Principal Contingencies

A situation now exists in Jordan which may cause King Hussein to seek U. S. or other assistance in an all-out showdown with the fedayeen. These seem to be the main contingencies that will be faced:

1. The King and army vs. the fedayeen alone.

It seems generally agreed in the intelligence community and in the U. S. Embassy in Amman that the Jordanian army can manage the situation as long as only the fedayeen--and not outside troops--are ranged against the regime. It is possible in this situation that Jordanian forces might need some materiel support. It has been our assumption that there would be no strong argument against supplying any reasonable support. Such assistance could be airlifted both as a demonstration and for prompt delivery.

The main issue to be considered in connection with this contingency is: If the regime unexpectedly turns out to be too weak to win this battle with its own forces, should there be intervention to support it?

A key judgment to be made is how much difference outside intervention might make in such a situation.

The principal arguments for such intervention are: It would prevent-- at least as long as U. S. troops are present-- dominance by a group that would offer almost no hope of a Palestine settlement. It might still be possible that stability could be rescued with the help of the army. It is also important for the U. S. to demonstrate its support for responsible regimes. In short, a risky intervention would be preferable to the certainty of radical control over the situation.

The argument against such intervention is that if Hussein is too weak to stand up against domestic opposition, outside intervention can only save his regime for a limited period of time. Attempting to bolster it in the absence of sufficient internal strength could put whoever intervenes into a position of supporting a minority cause against effective majority guerrilla opposition in a country without access to the Mediterranean where the U. S. would have a difficult time supporting sustained military operations. Intervention could cause a fedayeen reaction against U. S. installations elsewhere in the Mid-East.

In any case, there may not be much of a real choice since if the King appears about to fall, the Israelis may very well intervene on their own or at least seize the heights from which the fedayeen have been shelling Israeli settlements.

2. The second contingency: King Hussein and the army vs. the fedayeen and Iraqi troops. Even if one judged that Hussein should not be supported if he cannot control the fedayeen alone, one might judge intervention quite justified if the 17,000 Iraqi troops in Jordan stepped in. Before considering the question of armed intervention, it would be prudent to look at the possibilities for non-military action that might precede armed intervention or perhaps even make it unnecessary. A request from Hussein for Soviet restraint on Iraq might help. Intelligence indicates that Nasser is prepared to give diplomatic and possibly military support

in the event of Iraqi intervention. The Shah might mount a show of force on Iraq's border. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait might threaten to cut off financial support for the fedayeen. Finally, the greatest political assist to Hussein might well be the capacity to demonstrate hope for progress in peace negotiations. .

If political actions fail, then a judgment must be made whether armed intervention seems in the U. S. interest.

The argument for is that--in addition to the basic objective of trying to save a regime that offers some hope of the stability necessary for peace-- the U. S. would be supporting a responsible government against a threat from foreign forces. Such a stand is a necessary part of the U. S. posture. It would be possible to justify this as an in-and-out operation.

The main arguments against are the operational difficulty of sustaining such an operation and the possibility of a general Arab reaction. This operation would have to be sustained entirely by air (unless we used an overland route across Israel). It would require dipping into the reserve of strategic forces in the U. S. --leaving us little for other contingencies. Sustaining such an operation by air would be extremely difficult without a staging base in the eastern Mediterranean, and there is good reason to doubt their availability under these circumstances.

If political actions fail and if armed intervention of some sort in support of Hussein seems desirable, then there are two related questions:

a. Would air attacks against Iraqi forces be sufficient?

Pro. Iraqi forces are 60 miles northeast of Amman and, to be militarily effective would have to travel on an open road and would be vulnerable to air attacks which could presumably prevent their arrival in Amman. Also, air strikes are not likely to produce the same reactions either by other Arabs or by the Soviets as a major ground action would. Even Israeli air strikes would avoid the connotation of invasion and takeover.

Con. Air strikes are not operationally useful against the fedayeen. They are dispersed among the population and their concentrations and the fighting around them will be in such small areas as to make air targeting very difficult. If intervention had to reach beyond the Iraqis, air strikes would probably be inadequate.

- b. Should the U.S. or Israel intervene? The minimal operational form which this question might take is: If the Israelis seem about to move, should the U.S. make a special effort to head them off by moving first? Or should they be encouraged?

In answering this question, a distinction must be made between the ground and air attacks. Air attacks are likely to provoke less reaction because they do not have the connotation of invasion.

The arguments for U.S., as contrasted to Israeli, intervention are: While Israeli air attacks could probably be brought off with a minimum of sustained Arab reaction, Israeli ground action in Jordan would be taken as an invasion of Jordan and would tend to reunify the Arabs. The U.S. would be held responsible anyway. An Israeli ground action would almost inescapably be seen as a concerted U.S. -Israeli effort to put Israel in control of Jordan. It might even serve to unify forces in Jordan so that army and fedayeen alike would feel that they had to turn together against Israeli troops. A Hussein who had been saved by an Israeli invasion would probably not last long in Jordan.

The arguments for Israeli intervention are: It may be difficult to stop. Some believe the King already has clandestinely reached a tacit understanding with the Israelis that if the Iraqis intervene Israel will attack. If the U.S. were to intervene, the USSR would almost have to react in some way, even if not definitively. The USSR has no incentive to defend Jordan against Israeli attack. The Israelis have a great logistical advantage over the U.S. If we intervened and then had to bring supplies across Israel, we could have the worst of two worlds. Introduction of U.S. forces would put the U.S. in the middle of an intra-Arab war and we would still be viewed as collaborating with Israel.

If Israel intervened in Jordan, the U.S. would have to consider two kinds of support:

- It would be necessary to assure that Israel has the munitions and other supplies required to sustain the attack. It is the judgment of the group that Israel's war reserves would be sufficient to carry their operations through a prolonged operation. U.S. resupply could be provided within ample time.

-- The more serious contingency would come about if the Soviets or Egyptians decided to take advantage of the situation by heating up the Suez front. The judgment was that their capability would be limited to re-opening artillery attacks, small harrassing raids across the Canal and some air attacks. Support for Israel in this contingency would be developed from the same kinds of packages that have been worked out in the event the ceasefire broke down.

3. The third contingency: armed intervention for evacuation.

If there is complete chaos in Amman and Jordanian forces lose control, it is probable that armed intervention could not with assurance save either the American community or the hijacking hostages.

If, however, the army remains in control of parts of the city and Americans can collect there, armed intervention could save them. Even in this situation, it seems unlikely that the hijacking hostages could be saved.

There is one other important aspect of this option: It is possible that an intervention primarily for evacuation could temporarily bolster Hussein's regime. It could, if well timed, amount to a U. S. show of force without the political onus of sustained intervention. It seems most likely that if intervention comes it would come this way.