

Middle East

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FROM AMMAN 081600Z NOV 83
TO ROUTINE FCO
TELNO 503^{SIC} OF 08 NOV 83

AND TO INFO ROUTINE MIDDLE EAST POSTS ,MOSCOW,PARIS,UKMIS NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON

MY TELNOS 497 ND 498: JORDAN/MIDDLE EAST.

1. KING HUSSEIN 'S REVELATION IN HIS INTERVIEW WITH A KUWAITI NEWSPAPER THAT HE IS THINKING OF RECALLING THE JORDANIAN PARLIAMENT SHORTLY HAS COME OUT OF THE BLUE TO JORDANIANS AND PALESTINIANS HERE, ALTHOUGH WE AND THE AMERICANS HAVE KNOWN FOR SOME TIME THAT THE KING WAS CONTEMPLATING SUCH A MOVE. NO DOUBT ONE OF HIS OBJECTIVES WAS TO TEST PUBLIC REACTIONS.

2. THE KING'S REMARKS ARE BOUND TO STIMULATE RENEWED SPECULATION ABOUT A POSSIBLE JORDANIAN INITIATIVE TO BREAK THE DEADLOCK IN THE PEACE PROCESS: THE RECALL OF PARLIAMENT WOULD INEVITABLY RAISE THE QUESTION OF A REAPPRAISAL OF THE ARAB ATTITUDE TOWARDS PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION IN ANY PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. WHETHER WEST BANK MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WERE APPOINTED BY DEPUTIES ELECTED FOR THE EAST BANK (THE PREFERRED SOLUTION OF SUCH LEADING JORDANIAN POLITICAL FIGURES AS DR JAMAL SHA'ER), OR WERE NOMINATED DIRECTLY BY THE KING, THESE PALESTINIANS WOULD SEEM BOUND TO CLAIM THAT THEY SPOKE FOR THE WEST BANK AND WOULD THEREBY BE CHALLENGING THE PLO'S POSITION AS THE SOLE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIANS.

3. THE MESSAGE OF THE KING'S INTERVIEW IS CLEAR. IF THE SYRIANS DESTROY THE PRESENT PLO LEADERSHIP AND SUBJUGATE THE PLO TO THEIR WILL, THEY WILL HAVE VIOLATED THE TERMS OF THE RABAT SUMMIT RESOLUTION AND IN PARTICULAR PARAGRAPH 5 WHICH 'AFFIRMS THE OBLIGATION OF ALL ARAB STATES TO PRESERVE PALESTINIAN UNITY AND NOT TO INTERFERE IN PALESTINIAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS'. THE JORDANIANS WOULD THEN NO LONGER CONSIDER THEMSELVES BOUND BY RABAT.

2. THEY WOULD FEEL JUSTIFIED IN DISREGARDING THE SYRIAN-CONTROLLED FACTION OF THE PLO AND LOOKING INSTEAD TOWARDS THEIR FRIENDS ON THE WEST BANK AND OTHER MODERATE PALESTINIANS AS PARTNERS WITH WHOM THEY MIGHT NEGOTIATE THE RETURN OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES TO ARAB SOVEREIGNTY.

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1 #. MEANWHILE

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4. MEANWHILE KING HUSSEIN CONTINUES TO GIVE SUPPORT TO ARAB EFFORTS TO SAVE THE PRESENT PLO LEADERSHIP. IN RESPONSE TO A CALL FROM ARAFAT, THE KING APPEALED TO ARAB LEADERS ON 3 NOVEMBER TO INTERVENE IN THE FIGHTING NEAR TRIPOLI. ON 5 NOVEMBER HE RECEIVED QDNI AL -HASSAN, WHO APPARENTLY REMAINS IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH ARAFAT AND HAD JUST RETURNED FROM A FATAH MEETING IN TUNIS. AL -HASSAN TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE GREATLY APPRECIATED THE KING'S EFFORTS ON THE PLO'S BEHALF. THE SAME DAY KING HUSSEIN RECEIVED GROUPS OF LOCAL PALESTINIAN REFUGEE LEADERS AND REAFFIRMED HIS SUPPORT FOR THE PLO LEADERSHIP. HE HAS SINCE TELEPHONED KING FAHD, SENT A MESSAGE TO THE YAR PRESIDENT AND HAS BEEN IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH PRESIDENT MUBARAK (SEE PARA 6 OF MY TELNO 498).

5. KING HUSSEIN WOULD PROBABLY PREFER ARAFAT'S SURVIVAL TO A SYRIAN TAKE -OVER OF THE PLO. IF ARAFAT DOES NOT SURVIVE, THE KING WILL WISH TO HAVE BEEN SEEN BY THE PALESTINIANS HERE AND ON THE WEST BANK TO HAVE DONE EVERYTHING IN HIS POWER TO HELP HIM IN HIS HOUR OF NEED. FEW TEARS WILL BE SHED BY THE KING'S PRINCIPAL ADVISERS IF ARAFAT FAILS TO PULL THROUGH. BUT IT WILL BE VITAL FOR THE JORDANIANS, IN SEEKING TO RALLY SUPPORT FOR A NEW PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP NOT UNDER SYRIAN CONTROL AND ALSO FOR ANY FUTURE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, TO RETAIN THE SYMPATHY OF MODERATE PALESTINIANS.

6. WITH PROSPECTS FOR AN ARAB SUMMIT MEETING LATER THIS MONTH RECEDING, THE KING'S INSISTENCE ON THE NEED TO ABANDON THE REQUIREMENT FOR UNANIMITY IN ARAB DECISION MAKING AND ITS REPLACEMENT MAJORITY VOTING TAKES ON A SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE. IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT THERE COULD BE A UNANIMOUS ARAB SUMMIT DECISION TO RESCIND THE PLO'S MANDATE AS THE SOLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIANS. BUT IF THE KING COULD MUSTER MAJORITY ARAB SUPPORT FOR A GROUPING OF MODERATE PALESTINIANS INCLUDING NOMINATED WEST BANK REPRESENTATIVES IN THE JORDANIAN PARLIAMENT, WHO COULD JOIN WITH THE JORDANIANS IN ANY NEGOTIATION, THEN HE MIGHT FEEL ABLE TO DISPENSE WITH FORMAL CONSENT BY AN ARAB SUMMIT. EVERYTHING WOULD, HOWEVER, DEPEND ON HOW MUCH BACKING HE COULD OBTAIN FROM MODERATE

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ARAB STATES AND HOW CONFIDENT HE FELT THAT THE AMERICANS WERE COMMITTED TO SECURING ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (A MAIN THEME IN THE KING'S RECENT TALKS WITH MR LUCE:SEE PARA 4 OF MY TELNO 498). THE KING WOULD EXPECT STRONG OPPOSITION FROM SYRIA AND OTHER RADICAL ARAB STATES AND ALSO FROM THE SYRIAN-DOMINATED WING OF THE PLO. IN HIS PRESS INTERVIEW THE KING SPOKE MORE IN SORROW THAN IN ANGER ABOUT SYRIAN BEHAVIOUR ,BUT SAID NOTHING TO SUGGEST THAT AN UNDERSTANDING WITH SYRIA COULD BE REACHED. IT IS ALSO GENERALLY ACCEPTED HERE THAT THE PALESTINIAN EXTREMISTS WOULD, IN THIS NEW SITUATION, STEP UP TERRORIST ATTACKS. RECENT ATTEMPTS ON THE LIVES OF JORDANIAN AMBASSADORS ARE THEREFORE SEEN AS AN OMINOUS PORTENT OF THINGS TO COME.

URWICK

MIDDLE EAST

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