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CONTINGENCIES IN JORDAN

As we work to bring King Hussein into compliance with sanctions against Iraq, there are a number of contingencies we and the King may face that could affect his resolve and our ability to enforce sanctions. The following are illustrative:

A. Domestic Unrest: Both Jordanians and Palestinians in Jordan have demonstrated in support of the Iraqi invasion. Saddam's action is popular in Jordan, and if the King gets tough on sanctions, we can expect that the Iraqis will work to inflame these sentiments. In addition, the King's political opposition, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, may join in any agitation in support of their own agenda. The Palestinians will attack the King's enforcement of sanctions as showing a Western "double standard," in contrast to the absence of sanctions in the case of Israeli occupation.

-- U.S. Options: The King must demonstrate that the Jordanian economy is not suffering because of sanctions. Much of Saddam's popular support in Jordan flows from perceptions of the Iraqi invasion as a victory of the have-nots over the haves, and the King must show that he has other friends who will come to Jordan's economic aid. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait's leadership will have to be persuaded to overcome their resentments and treat Jordan generously. On the Israeli/Palestinian question, Hussein will need a public affirmation that the United States remains committed to advancing the Peace Process. Statements by the Saudis, Mubarak and especially Arafat that the Palestinian cause is not advanced by a war of Arabs against Arabs will be important.

B. Iraqi Pressures to Enter Jordan: We have seen indications of Iraqi interest in moving military forces into Jordan and heard from the Israelis that the two countries plan to unify (the Jordanians were incredulous and strongly denied this). Saddam may keep up this pressure as a means of recasting the crisis into Arab-Israeli terms.

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-- U.S. Options: The Israelis have made it clear that they could not tolerate a move by Iraqi forces into Jordan. The King no doubt takes this seriously. He may fear, however, that if he strictly observes sanctions, the Iraqis may try to punish Jordan militarily. Hussein's ability to convince Saddam the Israelis mean it and Saddam's presumed interest in avoiding Armageddon are probably the best antidote to precipitous Iraqi action.

C. Terrorism

There are signs that the Iraqis (who can already count on Abu Abbas) are doing more with Abu Nidal. The Jordanians would be vulnerable to Iraqi-sponsored terrorism if they pursue sanctions seriously -- a more likely punishment than military action.

-- U.S. Options: Besides continued intelligence exchanges, there is little we can do directly to counter Iraqi-backed terrorism against the Jordanians. Jordan's own security service will be the most important bulwark. Jordan might ask for technical assistance in coping with infiltration. Arafat's loathing for Abu Nidal may drive him to cooperate with the Jordanians.

D. Jordanian Non-Compliance

Finally, it is possible that despite our best efforts, the King may decide that he can not or will not deny Iraqi access to Aqaba.

-- U.S. Options: If the King tells us that he cannot enforce sanctions because of some combination of domestic and Iraqi pressures outlined above, we should consult closely and quietly with him on a second line of interdiction, perhaps in the Strait of Tiran. If the King is acting out of duress rather than political volition, it may still be possible to deny the Iraqis the benefits of Aqaba and also prevent them from achieving a political victory by splitting Jordan off from the other Arabs.

The most critical element in getting the King on board for sanctions will be our ability to assure him that economic losses to Jordan will be offset. If the King can be confident that his fragile economy will be sustained, there is a good chance that he will have the political will to withstand the inevitable pressures the Iraqis will bring to bear.

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