

Strategic researcher talks about Jordan

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Jordan's role in the coalition against ISIS has refocused attention on the country's role in the region. Jordan emerged from a small Arab kingdom with arbitrary borders and no clear national identity to a confident and modernizing state, coping effectively with a variety of geopolitical challenges.

Feb. 6, 2015 -- The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is central to the geopolitics of the Middle East region and has substantial borders with Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the Palestinian West Bank. Although it has an important geographical position, Jordan is also a relatively small country (about the size of Indiana) with only around 8 million citizens. To the extent possible, Amman has sought to remain engaged with all of its neighbors and head off any potential problems before they can develop into a crisis. Jordan is one of two Arab countries that has a peace treaty with Israel and has been an ally of the United States since 1951. In 1996 Jordan was formally designated a Major Non-NATO ALLY (MNNA) of the United States by President Bill Clinton. Jordan is an important member of the international coalition waging war against the "Islamic State" and has intensified that commitment following the brutal murder of F-16 pilot, First Lieutenant (posthumously promoted to Captain) Moaz al-Kasasbeh by that organization.

Jordan is both a victim of terrorism and one of America's most committed allies in the struggle against al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. As with the United States, the Islamic State's predecessor al-Qaeda in Iraq has struck Jordanian targets without mercy. One of the first al-Qaeda targets in post-Saddam Iraq was the Jordanian Embassy which was attacked with a car bomb on August 7, 2003 leaving 18 dead and over 50 wounded. A few small scale al-Qaeda attacks within Jordan followed this strike, although most such efforts were foiled by Jordanian security forces. Then on November 9, 2005, al-Qaeda terrorists bombed three large Western hotels in Amman murdering 57 innocent people. In a gloating post-attack message, al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi took credit for the attacks and in a later audiotape announced that he planned to behead Jordanian leader King Abdullah.

The hotel strikes were Jordan's 9/11, and Amman struck back at the terrorists through its General Intelligence Directorate. These types of activities seldom come to light, but Jordanian King Abdullah has admitted that the GID had "a role" supporting the successful U.S. effort to find terrorist leader Abu Musab Zarqawi who subsequently died in U.S. air strike in Iraq. Jordan has also provided extensive

counterterrorism training to friendly troops throughout the region at the state of the art, King Abdullah Special Operations Training Center, which was constructed with U.S. funds. Moreover, in addition to waging physical war against the al-Qaeda and Islamic State terrorists, Jordan has also waged ideological war. In November 2004 Jordanian political and religious leaders ostentatiously issued the Amman Message, (<http://ammanmessage.com>), a strong denunciation of Islamic extremism and especially terrorism in the name of Islam. Since that time, the Amman Message has become a foreign policy fundamental for Jordan and is continuously quoted by the top leadership. The web site for the Message displays an impressive list of senior clerics in Jordan and throughout the Islamic World who have announced their support for its opposition to terrorism and calls for tolerance.

Jordanian politics and especially national security and counterterrorism issues are extensively discussed in Dr. W. Andrew Terrill's *Global Security Watch Jordan* which is published by Praeger Press (2010) and has a foreword written by Anthony H. Cordesman. Dr. Terrill has travelled to Jordan on numerous occasions and has met with a number of Jordanian civilian and military leaders. He has served as a Research Professor of National Security Affairs at the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College since 2002. His complete biography is available at <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/people.cfm?authorID=24>

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