



Jordan: Background and U.S. Relations

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Summary

This report provides an overview of Jordanian politics and current issues in U.S.-Jordanian relations. It provides a brief discussion of Jordan's government and economy and of its cooperation in promoting Arab-Israeli peace and other U.S. policy objectives in the Middle East.

Several issues in U.S.-Jordanian relations are likely to figure in decisions by Congress and the Administration on future aid to and cooperation with Jordan. These include the stability of the Jordanian regime (particularly in light of ongoing political change and/or unrest in several other countries in the region), the role of Jordan in the Arab-Israeli peace process, the civil war in neighboring Syria, and U.S.-Jordanian military and intelligence cooperation.

Although the United States and Jordan have never been linked by a formal treaty, they have cooperated on a number of regional and international issues over the years. The country's small size and lack of major economic resources have made it dependent on aid from Western and friendly Arab sources. U.S. support, in particular, has helped Jordan address serious vulnerabilities, both internal and external. Jordan's geographic position, wedged between Israel, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, has made it vulnerable to the strategic designs of its more powerful neighbors, but has also given Jordan an important role as a buffer between these potential adversaries.

The United States has provided economic and military aid, respectively, to Jordan since 1951 and 1957. Total U.S. aid to Jordan through FY2012 amounted to approximately \$13.1 billion. Levels of aid have fluctuated, increasing in response to threats faced by Jordan and decreasing during periods of political differences or worldwide curbs on aid funding. On September 22, 2008, the U.S. and Jordanian governments reached an agreement whereby the United States agreed to provide a total of \$660 million in annual foreign assistance to Jordan over a five-year period. The President's FY2013 request includes \$360 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF), \$300 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and \$3.7 million in International Military Education and Training (IMET).

During his visit to Jordan in March 2013, President Obama pledged to work with Congress to deliver an additional \$200 million in direct budget support to Jordan to help it cope with the influx of Syrian refugees. P.L. 113-6, the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2013 included a provision authorizing U.S. loan guarantees for Jordan. Section 1706 (j) also appropriated \$30 million (from FY2011) for the cost of sovereign loan guarantees, which are expected to enable Jordan to raise several hundred million dollars on the international bond market. Recent U.S. humanitarian aid for Syria (\$385 million total) includes funds to be spent inside Jordan on Syrian refugees. To date, \$57 million in Syrian humanitarian aid has been spent in Jordan, including \$25 million from a recent U.S. pledge of \$155 million at a Kuwait Donors' Conference. Funds spent in Jordan are for supplies and services for refugee camps there. In addition, USAID funding is helping northern Jordanian communities address water shortages as a result of the influx of Syrian refugees by upgrading and repairing water delivery networks and encouraging conservation.

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Overview

Despite the growing instability in neighboring states Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, Jordan has not experienced mass unrest and its government remains arguably the most reliable partner for the United States in the Arab world. Though youth-led protests have become a constant in downtown Amman and, more surprisingly, in tribal areas that have historically provided the kingdom's base of support, opposition to the monarchy has been restrained overall, perhaps owing to fear of the type of instability on display in other Arab countries.

Though King Abdullah II has maintained his image in the international community as a modernizer and tends to be more open to reform than most Jordanian politicians, his rhetoric is often not matched by concrete actions. Very few substantive political reforms, serious anti-corruption measures, or economic restructuring steps have taken place under his watch.

Overall, popular economic grievances have spurred the most vociferous protests in Jordan. Jordan's lack of domestic energy and water resources places a constant strain on the government budget, with fuel imports and subsidies driving deficit spending and borrowing in recent years. When the government announced a reduction in fuel subsidies in November 2012 in line with commitments made to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), widespread street unrest ensued. The Jordanian government is trying to balance the need to stave off unrest by keeping the cost of living lower for many poorer Jordanians with financing the growing budget deficit that comes as a result of social spending. Since it cannot do this alone, the government has turned to the IMF (\$2.38 billion loan), the United States (\$660 million a year in bilateral aid), Europe, and the Gulf States (\$5 billion multi-year aid package) to keep it afloat until the overall political and economic situation improves. The IMF's outlook for Jordan is somewhat positive, noting that "Looking into 2013, the outlook is good. Real GDP growth is expected to accelerate to above three percent reflecting an increase in government capital spending, higher domestic consumption, and a recovery in exports."¹

Despite the prospect of somewhat easier economic times ahead, many observers argue that the kingdom clearly needs to take steps sooner rather than later to address the needs of its youth, who seek more gainful employment, justice, and broader political participation. Providing better economic opportunities for younger Jordanians is a major challenge outside of Amman. Large-scale agriculture is not sustainable, so officials are left to provide young workers with low-wage, unproductive civil service jobs. Attempts to boost the information technology sector have been modestly successful in the capital, but commentators maintain that if Jordan is to address the demands of tribal youth protestors, economic growth must be more widely distributed.

¹ "IMF Mission Reaches Staff-Level Agreement on the Completion of the First Review Under the Stand-By Arrangement with Jordan," *International Monetary Fund*, Press Release No. 13/70, March 11, 2013.

Breaking Taboos: Public Criticism of the Royal Family

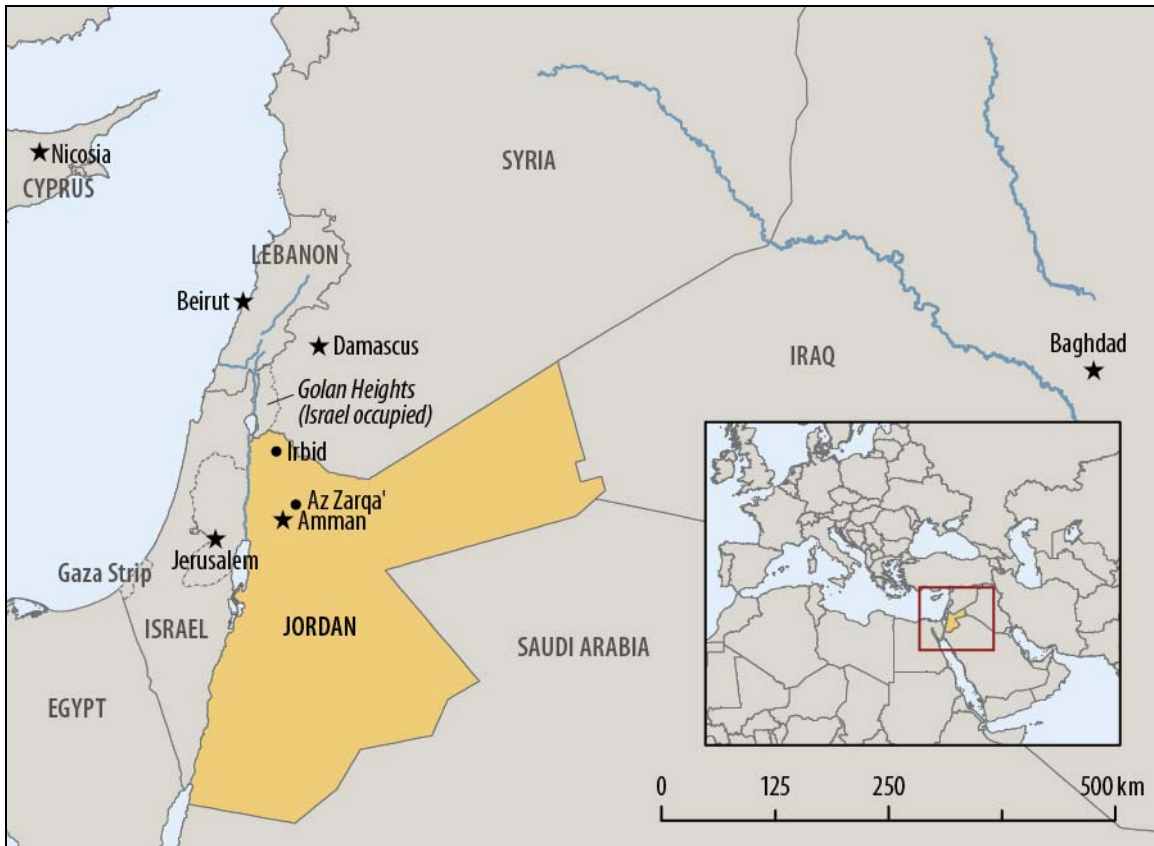
Since the so-called Arab Spring began over two years ago, emboldened protestors have more openly criticized the Hashemite royal family directly. Though most protestors do not call for regime change, observers have chronicled a certain loss of trust in the monarchy among some segments of the population. Public criticism of King Abdullah II, Queen Rania, and even the institution of the monarchy has been persistent and has come from members of the kingdom's foundational support base—the tribal/military elite with roots around the East Bank of the Jordan River. Some tribal elites have directly accused Queen Rania—who is of Palestinian origin—of enriching her family and interfering in politics by promoting Palestinian allies. Tribal youth protestors have chanted denunciations of the royal family, referring to the king and his coterie as “Ali Baba the Second and his 40 thieves.” Walid al Kurdi, the husband of King Abdullah II's aunt, Princess Basma, has fled Jordan to London after prosecutors launched a corruption case against him, alleging that he illegally profited millions of dollars from the privatization of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC). King Abdullah II acknowledged Jordanians' frustration, probably at least partly in order to deflect public antipathy. He remarked that “Members of my family don't get it. They're not involved day-to-day. The further away you're removed from this chair, the more of a prince or a princess you are. That happens in all royal families, I think. The further you are from this chair, the more you believe in absolute monarchy. That's the best way of describing it. And that just doesn't work.”²

Country Background

Although the United States and Jordan have never been linked by a formal treaty, they have cooperated on a number of regional and international issues for decades. The country's small size and lack of major economic resources have made it dependent on aid from Western and friendly Arab sources. U.S. support, in particular, has helped Jordan deal with serious vulnerabilities, both internal and external. Jordan's geographic position, wedged between Israel, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, has made it vulnerable to the strategic designs of its powerful neighbors, but has also given Jordan an important role as a buffer between these potential adversaries. In 1990, Jordan's unwillingness to join the allied coalition against Iraq disrupted its relations with the United States and the Persian Gulf states; however, relations improved throughout the 1990s as Jordan played an increasing role in the Arab-Israeli peace process and distanced itself from the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein.

² “The Modern King in the Arab Spring,” *The Atlantic*, March 18, 2013.

Figure 1. Jordan and Its Neighbors



Source: CRS Graphics.

Domestic Politics and the Economy

Jordan, created by colonial powers after World War I, initially consisted of desert or semi-desert territory east of the Jordan River, inhabited largely by people of Bedouin tribal background. The establishment of the state of Israel brought large numbers of Palestinian refugees to Jordan, which subsequently annexed a small Palestinian enclave west of the Jordan River known as the West Bank.³ The original “East Bank” Jordanians, though probably no longer a majority in Jordan, remain predominant in the country’s political and military establishments and form the bedrock of support for the Jordanian monarchy. Jordanians of Palestinian origin comprise an estimated 55% to 70% of the population and generally tend to gravitate toward the private sector due to their exclusion from certain public sector and military positions.⁴

³ Though there was very little international recognition of Jordan’s annexation of the West Bank, Jordan maintained control of it (including East Jerusalem) until Israel took military control of it during the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War, and maintained its claim to it until relinquishing the claim to the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1988.

⁴ Speculation over the ratio of East Bankers to Palestinians (those who arrived as refugees and immigrants since 1948) in Jordanian society tends to be a sensitive domestic issue. Jordan last conducted a national census in 2004 (the next census may take place in 2014), and it is unclear whether or not the government maintains such statistics. Over time, intermarriage has made it more difficult to discern distinct differences between the two communities, though divisions do persist.

The Hashemite Royal Family

Jordan is a hereditary constitutional monarchy under the prestigious Hashemite family, which claims descent from the Prophet Muhammad. King Abdullah II (age 51) has ruled the country since 1999, when he succeeded to the throne upon the death of his father, the late King Hussein, after a 47-year reign. Educated largely in Britain and the United States, King Abdullah II had earlier pursued a military career, ultimately serving as commander of Jordan's Special Operations Forces with the rank of Major General. The king's 18-year-old son Prince Hussein is the designated crown prince.⁵

The king appoints a prime minister to head the government and the Council of Ministers (cabinet).⁶ Typically, Jordanian governments last no more than 15 months before they are dissolved by royal decree. This is done in order to bolster the king's reform credentials and to dispense patronage to various elites. The king also appoints all judges and is commander of the armed forces.

Jordan in Brief

Population:	6,482,081 (July 2013 est.)
Area:	89,213 sq. km. (34,445 sq. mi., slightly smaller than Indiana)
Ethnic Groups:	Arabs 98%; Circassians 1%; Armenians 1%
Religion:	Sunni Muslim 92%; Christian 6%; small Muslim sects 2%
Literacy:	92.6% (male 95%, female 89.2%)
GDP:	Per Capita \$6,000 (2012 est.), country comparison to the world: 144
Foreign Exchange Reserves:	\$10.7 billion (est. 2012)
Youth Unemployment (ages 15-24):	27%, country comparison to the world: 21
External Debt:	\$8.34 billion (December 2012 est.)
Sources:	CIA World Factbook

Constitution, Parliament, Political Parties, and Judiciary

The Jordanian constitution (promulgated in 1952 and last amended in 2011) empowers the king with broad executive powers. According to Article 35, "The King appoints the Prime Minister and may dismiss him or accept his resignation. He appoints the Ministers; he also dismisses them or accepts their resignation, upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister." The constitution also enables the king to dissolve both houses of parliament and postpone lower house elections for two years.⁷ The king also can circumvent parliament through a constitutional mechanism that allows provisional legislation to be issued by the cabinet when parliament is not sitting or has been dissolved.⁸ The king also can issue royal decrees, which are not subject to parliamentary

⁵ In July 2009, King Abdullah II named his then 15-year-old son, Prince Hussein Bin Abdullah, as crown prince. The position had been vacant since 2004, when King Abdullah II removed the title from his half-brother, Prince Hamzah.

⁶ In March 2013, King Abdullah II consulted with members of the 17th parliament before choosing a prime minister. Although the King retains the constitutional authority to appoint and dismiss the prime minister, he has pledged to reach a consensus with lawmakers before choosing a premier. The Muslim Brotherhood, which boycotted the election leading to the formation of the current parliament, seeks a parliamentary system of government in which the prime minister would be chosen by the largest block in parliament.

⁷ The king also may declare martial law. According to Article 125, "In the event of an emergency of such a serious nature that action under the preceding Article of the present Constitution will be considered insufficient for the defense of the Kingdom, the King may by a Royal Decree, based on a decision of the Council of Ministers, declare martial law in the whole or any part of the Kingdom."

⁸ New amendments to Article 94 in 2011 have put some restrictions on when the executive is allowed to issue (continued...)

scrutiny. The king commands the armed forces, declares war, and ratifies treaties. Finally, Article 195 of the Jordanian Penal Code prohibits insulting the dignity of the king (*lese-majeste*) with criminal penalties of one to three years in prison.

Political parties in Jordan are extremely weak, as the moderately fundamentalist Islamic Action Front (IAF) is the only well-organized movement. Most parties represent narrow parochial interests and are composed of prominent individuals representing a particular family or tribe.

January 2013 Parliamentary Elections

Parliamentary elections on January 23 produced another overwhelmingly pro-palace parliament. The Muslim Brotherhood's Islamic Action Front party (IAF) boycotted the vote in protest of the lack of seats allocated for the party list vote system (27 out of 150 total seats). The IAF sought to delegitimize the election through its boycott and tarnish the palace's image in the eyes of Western governments. Turnout figures for the election are somewhat disputed. The government claims that 56.6% of registered voters participated, while others assert that the turnout calculation should be based on the total number of eligible voters (both registered and unregistered), which, if taken into account, would have equated to an estimated 40% turnout. King Abdullah II has already called for parliament to amend the election law, which is widely considered to favor rural, traditionally pro-monarchy Bedouin constituencies. For example, Amman is allotted 25 seats for 2.4 million residents, while rural Tafileh has four seats for 88,000 residents. In its preliminary assessment of the election, the National Democratic Institute concluded that "systemic distortions remain. The unequal size of districts and an electoral system that amplifies family, tribal and national cleavages limit the development of a truly national legislative body and challenge King Abdullah's stated aim of encouraging full parliamentary government." Nevertheless, Secretary of State John Kerry praised the electoral process, saying that "The turnout is higher than any time previously, which shows a full and robust participation by the Jordanian people in the election process."

Jordan's constitution provides for an independent judiciary. According to Article 97, "Judges are independent, and in the exercise of their judicial functions they are subject to no authority other than that of the law." Jordan has three main types of courts: Civil courts, special courts (some of which are the military/state security courts), and religious courts. In Jordan, state security courts administered by military (and civilian) judges handle criminal cases involving espionage, bribery of public officials, trafficking in narcotics or weapons, black marketing, and "security offenses." Overall, the king may appoint and dismiss judges by decree, though in practice a palace-appointed Higher Judicial Council manages court appointments, promotions, transfers, and retirements.

Foreign Relations

Jordan and the Syrian Civil War

Although fighting in Syria has not yet posed an existential threat to the monarchy, Syrian humanitarian suffering and concomitant refugee flows into Jordan are placing tremendous strains on the government. As of late March 2013, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are 366,212 registered (and waiting to be registered) Syrian refugees in Jordan. The government of Jordan estimates that there are 420,000 Syrians in the country. An

(...continued)
temporary laws.

estimated 2,500 to 4,000 refugees are being registered each day. The government of Jordan estimates that another 500-700 Syrians cross the border illegally on a daily basis. In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Anne Richard, Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration, said that “We should note that we are concerned by reports that some Palestinian and Iraqi refugees have been turned around at the border and we have asked the Government of Jordan to let them cross.”⁹

Za’atri refugee camp, which is in northern Jordan east of the town of Mafraq, opened in July 2012. By some estimates, the camp is now the fourth largest urban area in Jordan with a population near 80,000.¹⁰ Some residents of the camp have demonstrated against poor living conditions and occasionally have violently lashed out at aid workers stationed there. Jordanian police have used tear gas in some cases to restore order, and lack of sufficient community policing remains a concern inside Za’atri camp. Recently, the kingdom announced it would deploy its desert patrol force to establish and seal a security cordon around the camp.

From a security standpoint, the fighting in Syria poses a number of risks for Jordan. Border guards have exchanged fire with both Syrian government forces and radical groups. Numerous reports indicate that Jordanians with Salafi-Jihadi beliefs are crossing into Syria to join extremist rebel factions.¹¹ In October 2012, Corporal Mohamad Abdulla Manaseer Abbadi became the first recorded Jordanian casualty of the Syrian civil war when he was killed by militants trying to cross into Syria. Fear of terrorist “blowback” into Jordan from Syria is a concern among security authorities. Nearly a decade ago, Jordanian radicals who fought coalition forces in Iraq turned their focus to conducting attacks inside Jordan, such as the November 9, 2005, hotel bombings in Amman, which killed 60 people. In October 2012, the government arrested 11 Jordanians found with explosives from Syria that they reportedly intended to use against various targets, including the U.S. Embassy in Amman.

Just as the violence in Syria is affecting Jordan, the Jordanian government also may be indirectly aiding certain parties to the conflict. Several European press reports allege that Jordan is serving as a conduit for weapons purchased by the Gulf countries from Croatia to rebel factions that are loosely associated with the Free Syrian Army/Supreme Military Council.¹² The government of Jordan denies any covert involvement either in the supplying of armaments or the training of rebel forces. Some media reports suggest, however, that rebel fighters are receiving training (possibly including for the potential securing of Syrian chemical weapons facilities) at Jordanian military installations with supervision from American instructors.¹³ One article suggests that Syrian rebels receiving training in Jordan hail from Sunnis and tribal Bedouins who formerly served as members of the Syrian army and are not from the Free Syrian Army.¹⁴ In 2012, the *New York Times* reported that the United States military sent a task force of “planners and other

⁹ Testimony, Anne C. Richard, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Committee on Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs, United States Senate, Washington, DC, March 19, 2013.

¹⁰ According to the *New York Times*, the number of tents has grown from 2,400 in September 2012 to 11,966 by January 2013. See, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/01/27/world/middleeast/growth-of-the-zaatari-refugee-camp.html>

¹¹ Open Source Center, “Jordan: Salafi Jihadist Killed in Syria; Number of Killed Salafis Rises to 30,” GMP20130307625002 *Amman Net* (in Arabic), March 7, 2013.

¹² “New Route for Civil War Arms,” *The Times* (UK), February 27, 2013.

¹³ “US and Allies are Training Rebels in Fight against Assad,” *The Times* (UK), March 1, 2013.

¹⁴ “Officials: U.S. Training Syrian Forces in Jordan,” *Associated Press*, March 25, 2013.

specialists” to Jordan.¹⁵ Israel may also be assisting Jordan in containing spillover from the Syria conflict. One report suggests that Israeli drones are monitoring the Jordan-Syria border on Jordan’s behalf.¹⁶

Jordan’s Relationship with Israel

Finding a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the utmost priority of the Jordanian government. Although Jordan joined other neighboring Arab states in a series of military conflicts against Israel between 1948 and 1973, the late King Hussein (ruled 1952-1999) ultimately concluded that peace with Israel was in Jordan’s strategic interests due to Israel’s conventional military superiority, the development of an independent Palestinian national movement that threatened both Jordanian and Israeli security, and Jordan’s support for Saddam Hussein in the first Gulf War, which isolated it from the West.¹⁷ Consequently, in 1994 Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty,¹⁸ and King Abdullah II has used his country’s semi-cordial official relationship with Israel to improve Jordan’s standing with Western governments and international financial institutions, on which it relies heavily for external support and aid.

Nevertheless, the continuation of conflict continues to be a major obstacle to Jordan’s development. The issue of Palestinian rights resonates with much of the population, as more than half of all Jordanian citizens originate from either the West Bank or the area now comprising the state of Israel. There are an estimated 1.9 million United Nations-registered Palestinian refugees in Jordan, and, while many no longer regard their stay in Jordan as temporary, they have retained their refugee status both as a symbolic sign of support for Palestinians living under Israeli occupation and in hope of being included in any future settlement.¹⁹ Furthermore, for King Abdullah II and the royal Hashemite family, who are of Arab Bedouin descent and rely politically on the support of East Bank tribal families, finding a solution to the conflict is considered a matter of political survival since the government cannot afford to ignore an issue of critical importance to a majority of its citizens. The royal family and their tribal constituents vehemently reject periodic Israeli calls for the reunification of the West Bank with Jordan proper (dubbed the “Jordanian Option”), a maneuver that could inevitably alter the political status quo in Jordan. Like his father before him, King Abdullah II has repeated the mantra that “Jordan is Jordan and Palestine is Palestine.”

¹⁵ “U.S. Military Sent to Jordan on Syria Crisis,” *New York Times*, October 10, 2012.

¹⁶ “Israel Asked Jordan for Approval to Bomb Syrian WMD Sites,” *The Atlantic*, December 3, 2012.

¹⁷ In 1991, Congress suspended the delivery of U.S. economic and military aid to Jordan. See Section 502 of P.L. 102-27, the Dire Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Consequences of Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Food Stamps, Unemployment Compensation Administration, Veterans Compensation and Pensions, and Urgent Needs for the Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 1991 and For Other Purposes.

¹⁸ Jordan and Israel signed the peace treaty on October 26, 1994. Later, the two countries exchanged ambassadors; Israel returned approximately 131 square miles of territory near the Rift Valley to Jordan; the parliament repealed laws banning contacts with Israel; and the two countries signed a number of bilateral agreements between 1994 and 1996 to normalize economic and cultural links. Water sharing, a recurring problem, was partially resolved in May 1997 when the two countries reached an interim arrangement under which Israel began pumping 72,000 cubic meters of water from Lake Tiberias (the Sea of Galilee) to Jordan per day (equivalent to 26.3 million cubic meters per year—a little over half the target amount envisioned in an annex to the peace treaty).

¹⁹ The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) maintains a large presence in Jordan. UNRWA has 7,000 staff in Jordan, comprising mostly teachers, doctors, and engineers. It operates 172 schools in Jordan (providing education through 10th grade, then the remainder provided by government). According to UNRWA officials, their budget is \$104 million a year. At this point, 83% of all U.N.-registered refugees live outside of UNRWA camps.

The King's Statements on Israel and Peace Process

For over a decade, King Abdullah II has attempted to convince U.S. policy makers and Congress to become more actively involved in mediating between Israelis and Palestinians. For the past two years, amid a stalled peace process and now regional political upheaval, King Abdullah II has reiterated his support for his country's peaceful relationship with Israel while chiding the Israeli government for not only failing to restart negotiations but also for obstructing the peace process by continuing to build settlements. He has called both publicly and privately for the United States to pressure Israel into returning to the negotiating table. The king has used the Western and U.S. media as a platform not only to advocate for peace but to warn of the dire regional consequences if war breaks out. He also has repeatedly cautioned that the lack of a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict undermines U.S. credibility in the Arab world and only increases Israel's isolation. Recent statements include

- During President Obama's visit to Jordan in March 2013, King Abdullah II stated at a joint press conference that "Obviously, I reiterate Jordan's commitment to the peace process and the crucial importance of U.S. leadership in resuming the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations based on the two-state solution. There is simply no other formula, no other alternative. The two-state solution is the only way to go. And if you compare that also with the radicalization of Syria, together with the impasse in the peace process, this is going to be a serious threat to an already volatile region. I believe there is a window of opportunity to make a serious push for resuming negotiations on the final status issues. But the window, I believe, is fast closing—primarily due to increasing settlement activities. So there is no time to wait."
- In an April 2012 speech before the European Parliament, the king remarked that "We cannot afford one more generation in waiting for a Palestinian state.... The Arab Spring is rooted in a profound call for human respect. No affront is felt more deeply than the Israeli occupation.... The longer Palestinian suffering endures, the longer settlement-building continues, the greater the frustrations, dangers and unknowns."²⁰
- In September 2011, the king remarked that "Everything we've seen on the ground has been completely the opposite.... [There's] increasing frustration, because they're [Israeli officials] sticking their heads in the sand and pretending there isn't a problem."²¹
- In May 2011, the king stated that "It's always easy to find an excuse why not to do the right thing.... And if we continue along those lines, then we will never solve this problem. So we need leaders with courage to take the tough decisions and solve this once and for all."²²
- In April 2010, the king said that "I met Benjamin Netanyahu ... this time last year. I was extremely optimistic by the vision he had for peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians and the Israelis and the Arabs.... However, I have to say, that over the past 12 months, everything I've seen on the ground has made

²⁰ "No time to wait' for peace deal, says Jordan's king," *Agence France Presse*, April 18, 2012.

²¹ "Jordan's King Says Israel Blocks Peace," *Wall Street Journal*, September 20, 2011.

²² "King Abdullah II warns of fresh Mideast conflict," *Agence France Presse*, May 22, 2011.

me extremely skeptical.... And, I believe I'm one of the more optimistic people you'll find in this part of the world."²³

- In May 2009, the king said that "If we delay our peace negotiations, then there is going to be another conflict between Arabs or Muslims and Israel in the next 12-18 months.... Just because there is a right-wing [Israeli] government in Israel does not mean that we should chuck in the towel."²⁴

U.S. Aid, Trade, and Military Cooperation

With instability spreading throughout the Arab world, the Kingdom of Jordan may be the most dependable Arab partner for pursuing U.S. interests in the region. During President Obama's recent trip to Jordan in March 2013, he remarked:

The reason I'm here is simple. Jordan is an invaluable ally. It is a great friend. We've been working together since the early years of the Kingdom under His Majesty's great-grandfather, King Abdullah I, who gave his life in the name of peace. Today, our partnership in development, education, health, science, technology, improve the lives of our peoples. Our close security cooperation helps keep your citizens and ours safe from terrorism. Your military and police help train other security forces from the Palestinian Authority to Yemen.²⁵

U.S. Foreign Assistance to Jordan

The United States has provided economic and military aid, respectively, to Jordan since 1951 and 1957. Total U.S. aid to Jordan through FY2012 amounted to approximately \$13.10 billion.

The Five-Year Aid Deal

On September 22, 2008, the U.S. and Jordanian governments reached an agreement whereby the United States will provide a total of \$660 million in annual foreign assistance to Jordan over a five-year period (FY2010-FY2014). Under the terms of their non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), this first-of-its-kind deal commits the United States, subject to future congressional appropriation and availability of funds, to providing \$360 million per year in Economic Support Funds (ESF) and \$300 million per year in Foreign Military Financing (FMF).²⁶ According to the Jordanian government, the agreement "reaffirms the strategic partnership and cooperation between the two countries." Coming at a time when the overall budget for foreign aid was constrained by U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the deal was a testament to strong U.S.-Jordanian relations.

²³ "Jordan's king issues rebuke to Israel," *Wall Street Journal*, April 6, 2010.

²⁴ "King Abdullah warns of Mideast war if no deal," *Agence France Presse*, May 11, 2009.

²⁵ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by President Obama and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in Joint Press Conference," Al Hummar Offices, Amman, Jordan, March 22, 2013.

²⁶ Under the terms of the MOU, annual foreign aid (non-supplemental) to Jordan will rise by nearly 50%, from an estimated \$460 million per year to \$660 million.

Economic Assistance

The United States provides economic aid to Jordan as both a cash transfer and for USAID programs in Jordan. The Jordanian government uses cash transfers²⁷ to service its foreign debt.²⁸ Approximately 53% of Jordan's ESF allotment goes toward the cash transfer. USAID programs in Jordan focus on a variety of sectors including democracy assistance, water preservation, and education (particularly building and renovating public schools). In the democracy sector, U.S. assistance supports capacity building programs for the parliament's support offices, the Jordanian Judicial Council, Judicial Institute, and the Ministry of Justice. The International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute also receive U.S. grants to train, among other groups, some Jordanian political parties and members of parliament. In the water sector, the bulk of U.S. economic assistance is devoted to optimizing the management of scarce water resources, as Jordan is one of the most water-deprived countries in the world. USAID is currently subsidizing several waste treatment and water distribution projects in the Jordanian cities of Amman, Mafraq, Aqaba, and Irbid.

In order to address many of the economic grievances expressed by Arab protestors throughout the so-called Arab Spring of 2011, USAID has reprogrammed \$45 million in previously-appropriated ESF to the establishment of a small-to-medium enterprise (SME) loan guarantee financing facility. The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) plans to provide \$250 million in loan guarantees for new and expanding SMEs, and USAID funding will support administration of the fund.

Recent U.S. Assistance

- During his visit to Jordan in March 2013, President Obama pledged to work with Congress to deliver an additional **\$200 million** in direct budget support to Jordan to help it cope with the influx of Syrian refugees.
- P.L. 113-6, the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2013 included a provision authorizing U.S. loan guarantees for Jordan. Section 1706 (j) also appropriated **\$30 million** (from FY2011) for the cost of sovereign loan guarantees, which are expected to enable Jordan to raise several hundred million dollars on the international bond market.
- Recent U.S. humanitarian aid for Syria (\$385 million total) includes funds to be spent inside Jordan on Syrian refugees. **To date, \$57 million** in Syrian humanitarian aid has been spent in Jordan, including \$25 million from a recent U.S. pledge of \$155 million at a Kuwait Donors' Conference. Funds spent in

²⁷ In 2012, USAID issued a Congressional Notification permitting U.S. cash transfer to Jordan to be used or "sector related budget support," as there was not enough eligible, non-military debt coming due within an acceptable timeframe for repayment. See, CN#10, November 7, 2012.

²⁸ When providing cash transfer assistance, the United States, through USAID, requires the Jordanian government to meet certain mutually-agreed upon benchmarks. According to USAID, these benchmarks include, among others, the Government of Jordan approving an Insolvency and Bankruptcy draft law, streamlining the consultation process required for registering property, approving a Medical Liability draft law, approving the Anti-Money Laundering Unit (AMLU) By-Laws, amending the Judicial Independence Law to allow for the formation of a Judges Association, and allowing Iraqis returning home to exit the Kingdom without paying overstay fees or incurring a bar to reentry. CRS Correspondence with USAID, March 3, 2011.

Jordan are for supplies and services for refugee camps there. In addition, USAID funding is helping northern Jordanian communities address water shortages as a result of the influx of Syrian refugees by upgrading and repairing water delivery networks and encouraging conservation.

- In FY2012, in order to further support Jordanian macroeconomic stability, the Administration provided \$184 million in cash transfer aid (notified to Congress on September 13), part of its annual allotment of \$360 million in ESF that is divided between USAID programming in Jordan and direct budget support. In addition, Jordan received **a one-time \$100 million** allotment of budget aid (notified to Congress on July 6) from ESF designated as Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO).

Food Aid

Jordan periodically receives U.S. food aid administered by the Department of Agriculture (USDA) under Title I of the Food for Peace Act (P.L. 480), under the Section 416(b) program permanently authorized by the Agricultural Act of 1949, and under the Food for Progress Act of 1985 as a grant. Between FY1999 to FY2006, Jordan received approximately \$238.52 million in food aid to purchase wheat. Jordan received no food assistance between FY2007 to FY2010. In FY2011, the United States provided Jordan with \$19 million aid to purchase 50,000 metric tons of wheat. In September 2012, the United States agreed to provide Jordan with 50,000 metric tons of wheat valued at \$17 million.

Millennium Challenge Account (MCA)

In FY2006, Jordan was listed by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) as a Threshold country in the lower middle-income bracket. On September 12, 2006, the MCC's board of directors approved up to \$25 million in Threshold Program assistance for Jordan. Even prior to the selection, the possible choice of Jordan had come under severe criticism. *Freedom House*, the organization whose annual Index of Freedom is drawn upon for two of the "Ruling Justly" indicators, urged the MCC board to bypass countries that had low scores on political rights and civil liberties. It argued that countries like Jordan that fall below 4 out of a possible 7 on its index should be automatically disqualified. Jordan, however, did well on 3 of the 6 other indicators in this category. Several development analysts further argued that Jordan should not be eligible, asserting that it is already one of the largest recipients of U.S. aid, has access to private sector capital, and is not a democracy. In selecting Jordan, the MCC board appears not to have been swayed by these arguments.

In September 2010, the Millennium Challenge Corporation approved a five-year, \$275.1 million compact with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to increase the supply of water available to households and businesses in the cities of Amman and Zarqa. The compact also will help improve the efficiency of water delivery, wastewater collection, and wastewater treatment. If estimates hold true, the clean drinking water generated as a result of the MCC compact may be enough to supply almost 1 million Jordanian citizens with freshwater.

Military Assistance

U.S.-Jordanian military cooperation is a key component in bilateral relations. In 1996, the United States granted Jordan Major non-NATO Ally (MNNA) status, a designation that, among other things, makes Jordan eligible to receive excess U.S. defense articles, training, and loans of equipment for cooperative research and development. Since 2009, Jordan has received excess U.S. defense equipment valued at approximately \$81.69 million.²⁹

U.S. military assistance is primarily directed toward enabling the Jordanian military to procure and maintain conventional weapons systems. Foreign Military Financing (FMF) grants to Jordan enable its Air Force to maintain a modest fleet of F-16 fighters and purchase Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM). FMF grants also provide financing for Jordan's purchase of U.S. Blackhawk helicopters in order to enhance Jordan's border monitoring and counter-terror capability. Jordan is currently the single largest provider of civilian police personnel and fifth-largest provider of military personnel to U.N. peacekeeping operations worldwide. In addition to large-scale military aid grants for conventional weapons purchases, Jordan also receives grants of U.S. antiterrorism assistance from the Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs account (NADR). Jordan received \$24.6 million in NADR funds in FY2010 and \$12.5 million in FY2011 to support local authorities in customs inspection and border patrol. Jordan also receives small sums of International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INLCE) aid to support police training in forensic criminal investigation procedures to combat gender-based violence, anti-money laundering, and enforcement of intellectual property rights laws (approximately \$1.5 million in FY2010 and \$250,000 in FY2011).

Trade

Jordan ranked 74th among U.S. trading partners in volume of trade with the United States in 2012. According to the United States Trade Commission, in 2012 Jordan exported over a billion dollars in goods and services to the United States, a large percentage of which consisted of apparel and clothing accessories. In 2012, Jordanian imports from the United States reached \$1.6 billion. Principal U.S. commodities imported by Jordan consisted of aircraft parts, machinery and appliances, vehicles, and cereals. Two measures, in particular—the Free Trade Agreement and Qualifying Industrial Zones—have helped expand U.S.-Jordanian trade ties and could create more opportunities for U.S. investment in Jordan.

Free Trade Agreement

On October 24, 2000, then-President Clinton and King Abdullah II witnessed the signing of a U.S.-Jordanian Free Trade Agreement, which eliminated duties and commercial barriers to bilateral trade in goods and services originating in the two countries. Earlier, in a report released on September 26, 2000, the U.S. International Trade Commission concluded that a U.S.-Jordan Free Trade Agreement would have no measurable impact on total U.S. imports or exports, U.S. production, or U.S. employment. Under the agreement, the two countries agreed to enforce existing laws concerning worker rights and environmental protection. On January 6, 2001, then-President Clinton transmitted to the 107th Congress a proposal to implement the Free Trade Agreement. On July 23, then-U.S. Trade Representative Zoellick and then-Jordanian Ambassador

²⁹ Defense Security Cooperation Agency, Country Information Paper, Jordan.

Marwan Muasher exchanged letters pledging that the two sides would “make every effort” to resolve disputes without recourse to sanctions and other formal procedures. These letters were designed to allay concerns on the part of some Members over the possible use of sanctions to enforce labor and environmental provisions of the treaty. President Bush signed H.R. 2603, which implemented the FTA as P.L. 107-43 on September 28, 2001, during King Abdullah’s visit to Washington, DC, following the September 11, 2001, attacks. For additional information, see CRS Report RL30652, *U.S.-Jordan Free Trade Agreement*, by Mary Jane Bolle.

Qualifying Industrial Zones

One outgrowth of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty was the establishment of “Qualifying Industrial Zones” (QIZs), under which goods produced with specified levels of Jordanian and Israeli input can enter the United States duty free, under the provisions of P.L. 104-234. This act amended previous legislation so as to grant the President authority to extend the U.S.-Israel free trade area to cover products from QIZs between Israel and Jordan or between Israel and Egypt. QIZs were designed both to help the Jordanian economy and to serve as a vehicle for expanding commercial ties between Jordan and Israel. Although QIZs have succeeded in boosting U.S.-Jordanian trade, there has been only a modest increase in Jordanian-Israeli trade.

Currently there are 13 QIZs in Jordan employing approximately 43,000 people (working eight-hour days six days a week), 74% of whom are foreign workers from Southeast Asian nations including Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. In general, foreign laborers are viewed as more skilled and productive than local Jordanians. In addition, it is difficult for employers to recruit local Jordanians since workers typically live on site, and many are hesitant to separate from their families, though in some areas local Jordanians are provided with free transportation to the QIZs. According to one Jordanian labor leader, foreign workers are attractive to employers because “they are like slaves. They work them day and night.”³⁰ Labor rights activists also have complained that Jordanian workers in the QIZs are excluded from a new minimum wage law.

Military Cooperation

Military Sales

The United States is helping Jordan to modernize its armed forces, which have been the traditional mainstay of the regime. The Jordanian military forces, though well trained and disciplined, are outnumbered and outgunned by each of Jordan’s neighboring forces. In recent years, Jordan has used U.S. military assistance grants to purchase Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles, upgrades for its fleet of F-16 fighters (approximately 70-80), and Black Hawk helicopters. The United States also delivered three Patriot anti-missile batteries to Jordan in early 2003 prior to the start of U.S. military operations in Iraq.

³⁰ “Industrial Zones Create Little Work for Jordanians,” *Financial Times*, February 9, 2009.

Table I. Recent Foreign Military Sales to Jordan

Fiscal Year	Weapon System	\$ Value of Sale	Prime Contractor
FY2006	National Command & Control System	\$450 million	Northrop Grumman Corporation
FY2006	Black Hawk Helicopters	\$60 million	Sikorsky Co. and General Electric
FY2006	Armored Personnel Carriers	\$156 million	BAE Company
FY2008	Border Security System	\$390 million	DRS Technologies Corp
FY2009	AMRAAM Missiles	\$131 million	Raytheon
FY2009	Artillery Rocket Systems	\$220 million	Multiple Companies
FY2010	Repair of F-16 Engines	\$75 million	Pratt & Whitney
FY2010	JAVELIN Anti-Tank Guided Missiles	\$388 million	Javelin Joint Venture

Source: Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA).

Joint Exercises and Training

A U.S.-Jordanian Joint Military Commission has functioned since 1974. Nearly 300 Jordanian military personnel study in the United States each year. In recent years, Jordan is among the top three recipients of U.S. International Military Education and Training (IMET) funding. In FY2013, approximately 257 Jordanian officers will participate in this program.³¹ IMET also funds the equipping of English language labs in Jordan. Combined training exercises by U.S. and Jordanian military units continue to take place in Jordan (dubbed “Early Victor”), at least on an annual basis and sometimes more often. The above-mentioned courses conducted by Jordan for Iraqi military personnel are reportedly being funded by the United States under a program called the New Iraqi Army Training Project.³² In addition, the United States has supported the construction of the King Abdullah II Center for Special Operations Training (KASOTC). The center, which has been partially financed by the United States including with \$99 million in appropriations from the FY2005 Emergency Supplemental Act (P.L. 109-13), serves as a regional headquarters for counter-terrorism training.³³ In 2003, Jordan built a Special Operations Command and the Anti-Terrorism Center in order to boost counter-terrorism capabilities within the military.

Other Activities

Under the provisions of Section 517 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 as amended, then-President Clinton designated Jordan as a major non-NATO ally of the United States, effective on November 13, 1996. According to a State Department spokesman, this status “makes Jordan eligible for priority consideration for transfer of excess defense articles, the use of already

³¹ Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), Country Information Paper, Jordan.

³² Riad Kahwaji, “Forging a New Iraqi Army—in Jordan,” *Defense News*, February 9, 2004, p. 8.

³³ According to one description of the new U.S.-Jordanian facility, “If special forces have to conduct house-to-house searches, KASOTC provides that infrastructure in a training environment.... If they have to rescue hostages on an airplane, KASOTC provides the plane. If they have to rescue hostages from an embassy, KASOTC provides an embassy structure.” See, Joan Kibler, “KASOTC,” *Special Operations Technology Online Edition*, volume 6, issue 2, March 19, 2008.

appropriated military assistance funds for procurement through commercial leases, the stockpiling of U.S. military material, and the purchase of depleted uranium munitions.”

According to U.S. and Jordanian officials, Jordan has deployed two military hospitals to Afghanistan and Iraq, respectively, and has committed almost 600 health care professionals to the two facilities. Both facilities provide critical health care to numerous patients, including civilians. The hospital in Afghanistan cares for more than 650 patients a day, having treated more than 500,000 since it was first deployed in December 2001. In Iraq, Jordan helped train 50,000 policemen, helped the United States reach out to Sunni tribes and politicians in order to facilitate reconciliation, and still maintains a field hospital in Fallujah.

Jordan also regularly contributes peacekeeping forces to United Nations missions abroad.³⁴ In November 2006, a Jordanian United Nations peacekeeping patrol in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, was killed while on patrol. Jordan has about 1,500 troops in the Brazilian-led U.N. force, which includes more than 8,000 soldiers and police supported by some 1,000 civilian personnel. Two other Jordanian soldiers were killed in January 2006. In 2009, five more Jordanian peacekeepers were killed in a plane crash during a border surveillance mission while serving in Haiti. Three more Jordanian soldiers were killed during the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

Jordan’s Role in Afghanistan

Although the Jordanian government had publicly acknowledged a limited humanitarian presence in Afghanistan since major NATO operations began there in 2001, the December 30, 2009, terrorist attack against a CIA base in Khost, in which a Jordanian intelligence agent and royal family member was killed, shed light on Jordan’s deeper cooperation against Al Qaeda and their Taliban allies.³⁵ Officially, Jordan has not acknowledged its intelligence role in Afghanistan. Numerous reports of joint CIA-GID cooperation have illustrated Jordan’s long-standing, but unacknowledged cooperation with U.S. global counterterrorism. According to one unnamed U.S. source, “we have a close partnership with the Jordanians on counterterrorism matters.... Having suffered serious losses from terrorist attacks on their own soil, they are keenly aware of the significant threat posed by extremists.” Jordanian Prime Minister Samir al Rafa’i stated that “Being part of this world, we have to coordinate with other countries and exchange information about the location of terrorist groups.... We will be everywhere as long as this is necessary for our national security.”

In March 2010, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen officially requested that Jordan play a role in training the Afghan Army. In response, Jordan has sent an unspecified

³⁴ To date, the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) have contributed 57,000 troops to 18 different United Nations peacekeeping missions.

³⁵ On December 30, 2009, Humam Khalil Abu Mulal al Balawi, a Jordanian terrorist who had been serving as an informant for the Central Intelligence Agency and Jordan’s General Intelligence Directorate, detonated a suicide vest bomb killing eight people outside CIA Forward Operating Base Chapman in Khost, Afghanistan. His Jordanian handler, Captain Sharif Ali bin Zeid, a member of the royal family, was killed as well. Al Balawi, a physician, held virulent anti-American and anti-Israeli views expressed in various Jihadist online forums. Prior to his attack, he had managed to convince U.S. and Jordanian intelligence officials that he knew the whereabouts of Ayman Al Zawahiri, who is Al Qaeda’s second-in-command. In a video filmed before his death, Al Balawi swore revenge for the August 2009 killing of Pakistani Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud and appeared with Mehsud’s cousin and successor Hakimullah Mehsud. Months later, a second video emerged showing Al Balawi urging militants to target Jordan for terrorist attacks.

number of instructors from its armed forces and security service to Afghanistan. Reportedly, Jordan has already trained 2,500 members of the Afghan special forces at the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Centre.³⁶ Jordan also is helping to promote religious toleration by training Afghan imams.

In June 2011, a Jordanian Al Qaeda operative named Mahmoud Hamdan Nizal (aka Abu Dher al Urduni) was killed in a clash with U.S. troops in eastern Afghanistan. Nizal was from the city of Zarqa and was killed in a U.S. air or artillery strike.

Table 2. Annual U.S. Aid to Jordan Since the 1991 Gulf Crisis

(\$ in millions)

Fiscal Year (FY)	Economic Assistance				Military Assistance		Totals
	EconSpt	Food	Devel	PeaceCp	FMF	IMET	
1991	35.0 ^a	0	0	0	20.0 ^a	1.3	56.30
1992	30.0 ^b	20.0	0	0	20.0 ^b	.6	70.60
1993 ^c	5.0	30.0	0	0	9.0	.5	44.50
1994 ^d	9.0	15.0	4.0	0	9.0	.8	37.80
1995	7.2	15.0	6.7	0	7.3	1.0	37.20
1996	7.2	21.0	7.9	0	200.0 ^e	1.2	237.30
1997 ^f	112.2	2.6	4.5	1.1	30.0	1.7	152.10
1998 ^f	150.0	0	0	1.2	75.0 ^g	1.6	227.80
1999	150.0	0	0	1.4	70.0 ^g	1.6	223.00
1999 (Wye)	50.0	0	0	0	50.0	0	100.00
2000	150.0	0	0	1.7	75.0	1.6	228.30
2000 (Wye)	50.0	0	0	0	150.0	0	200.00 ^h
2001	150.0	0	0	1.7	75.0	1.7	228.40
2002	150.0	0	0	1.6	75.0	2.0	228.60
2002 (Suppl.)	100.0	0	0	0	25.0	0	125.00
2003	250.0	0	0	1.0	198.0	2.4	451.40
2003 (Suppl.)	700.0	0	0	0	406.0	0	1,106.00
2004	250.0	0	0	2.3	206.0	2.9	461.20
2004 (Suppl.)	100.0	0	0	0	0	0	100.00
2005	250.0	0	0	1.6	206.0	3.0	460.60
2005 (Suppl.)	100.0	0	0	0	100.0	0	200.00
2006	247.5	0	0	1.6	207.9	3.0	460.00
2006 (Suppl.)	50.0	0	0	0	0	0	50.00
2007	245.0	0	0	0	206.0	3.1	454.10

³⁶ "Jordan Trained 2,500 Afghan Special Forces: Minister," *Agence France Presse*, May 12, 2010.

Fiscal Year (FY)	Economic Assistance				Military Assistance		Totals
	EconSpt	Food	Devel	PeaceCp	FMF	IMET	
2007 (Suppl.)	10.3	0	0	0	45.0	0	55.30 ⁱ
2008	361.4	0	0	0	298.3	2.9	662.60
2008 (Suppl.)	200.0	0	0	0	50.0	0	250.00
2009	263.5	0	0	0	235.0	3.1	501.60
2009 (Suppl.)	150.0	0	0	0	(150.0 in FY2010 Advanced funding)	0	150.00
2010	363.0	0	0	0	300.0	3.8	666.8
2010 (Suppl.)	100.0	0	0	0	50.0	0	150.0
2011	362.0	0	0	0	299.4	3.7	665.1
FY2012 (Estimate)	460.0	0	0	0	300.0	3.7	763.7
FY2013 (Request)	360.0	0	0	0	300.0	3.8	663.8

Notes: These figures do not include debt relief subsidy appropriations, food aid between 1999-2006, or amounts for de-mining assistance and counter-terrorism assistance.

- a. Suspended in April 1991 under P.L. 102-27; released in early 1993.
- b. Released in late July 1993.
- c. Restrictions on FY1993 funds waived by Presidential Determination (PD) 93-39, Sept. 17, 1993.
- d. FY1994 funds released by PD 94-11, Jan. 13, 1994, waiving restrictions under P.L. 103-87.
- e. Three components: \$30 million (Administration's original request); \$70 million in additional FMF under FY1996 appropriation (P.L. 104-134) to cover balance of F-16 aircraft package; and \$100 million in special drawdown authority (P.L. 104-107).
- f. These figures include \$100 million in economic assistance under the President's Middle East Peace and Stability Fund (\$100 million in FY1997, \$116 million in FY1998).
- g. For each of these two years, FMF figure includes \$25 million in drawdown authority.
- h. Some of these funds were obligated in later years (FY2001 or FY2002).
- i. Total FY2007 supplemental aid to Jordan was \$85.3 million. The above chart does not include \$25 million in NADR funds.

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