

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

The U.S. Administration's proposed sale of 300 advanced military tanks to Jordan is more than a financial transaction. Permission for this sale is a *political* transaction. The fundamental question is raised again: In return for this political act by the U.S., what political act does the U.S. expect from Jordan?

Here we have a country, Jordan, which is sabotaging American foreign policy and peace efforts in the Middle East. Jordan has been part of the rejectionist front against the Egypt-Israel peace. Jordan has refused to recognize Israel's existence, or to become part of any discussions about the future of the West Bank.

The conventional State Department wisdom is that we must curry Jordan's favor in order to keep it from turning to the Soviet Union. But that is a little like bribing the chicken not to turn itself over to the fox. No intelligent chicken -- and Hussein is certainly that -- would need much bribing. Hussein needs us at least as much as we need him.

Perhaps it is necessary not just to oppose the sale of these arms to Jordan, but to insist that the sale should be conditional on a hard commitment from Jordan to recognize Israel and soften its stand on the Egypt-Israel peace.

We tried the abstract argument against advanced arms sales to Saudi, and we lost. At that time, many Congressmen said that *after* the sale to Saudi, they would try to convert Saudi's friendship into a softer stand on the Egypt-Israel peace. They failed. It therefore makes sense for them to try to get the *quid pro quo* from Jordan *before* the sale this time.

And yet again we hear that the State Department's Hodding Carter "held out hope that Jordan might eventually reconsider its attitude towards the peace process."

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Shades of the Saudi sale. Who was it that said that those who ignore history are doomed to relive it? Presumably not Hodding Carter III. How many times can we buy the Brooklyn Bridge before getting suspicious?

Israel cannot help but be threatened by this arms sale in any case. It is being said that the sale of America's most advanced tank, the M-60A3, will only serve to "replace" Jordan's older M-48 tanks. There is certainly no guarantee that Jordan will retire its M-48 tanks. But even so, the "replacement" is formidable enough. These M-60A3s have engines one fifth more powerful than earlier models, a range of 310 miles, and such niceties as a computer which automatically adjusts the targeting for cross-wind, vehicle imbalance and gun wear.

Jordan is also getting Chieftain tanks from Britain. Jordan currently has between 600 and 700 tanks. With an additional 300 American tanks, and 250 British Chieftains, the Jordanian total would nearly double. With its large number of armored personnel carriers and self-propelled howitzers, Jordan's army is already fully mechanized. All this further threatens the military balance which is so crucial for peace in the Middle East.

This danger to military balance should certainly be pointed out to Congressmen, as it was in the case of the arms sales to Saudi. But the main saleable point, this time, may be *quid pro quo*. What are we getting in exchange, and shouldn't we get it first?

West European spokesmen have recently been raising questions about the strength and quality of America's leadership on the world scene. They depend on that leadership, which has been dwindling precisely because the U.S. has not forcefully pursued its own self-interest. Jordan is a prime case in point.

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Congress can block the sale by passing resolutions of disapproval in both House and Senate. Congressmen and Senators are being asked to pass such a resolution -- at least, unless Jordan takes some positive action with respect to peace in the Middle East.

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