

Testimony
Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
Jordan: A Key U.S. Partner
Statement of
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Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to discuss our relationship with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Let me also thank you for all of your support to Jordan over the years, as well as the warm reception you gave King Abdullah during his visit last month.

As you note in the title to this hearing, Jordan is a key partner for the United States. Our relationship with Jordan is deep, spanning decades. Jordan plays a vital role in addressing virtually all the highest priority challenges the U.S. faces in the Middle East, from countering the threat of Da'esh and supporting a peaceful political transition in Syria, to expanding prosperity across the region. As Secretary Kerry said almost a year ago on February 20, 2015: "We simply could not find a country that has been more willing to be a good stand up, get-the-job-done partner than the Kingdom of Jordan." President Obama looks forward to discussing this cooperation with King Abdullah when he visits Washington later this month.

Nowhere is this relationship more apparent than in our shared efforts against the threat of Da'esh and other extremists. Jordan is a committed leader in the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL and the regional campaign against Da'esh. Royal Jordanian Air Force pilots regularly fly missions as part of Operation Inherent Resolve and, indeed, lost one of their own a year ago when Captain Al-Kasasbeh was burned alive in an especially horrific display of barbarity by Da'esh. Jordan remains committed to the air campaign in Syria and Iraq and has shown no sign of decreasing its tempo.

As part of our broader Coalition efforts against Da'esh, King Abdullah has called upon the international community -- and in particular the Muslim world -- to challenge Da'esh's recruiting. U.S. diplomats are working hand-in-hand with their Jordanian counterparts to expose the false lure of Da'esh and other extremist groups, organizing events, for example, that catalyze government and civil society cooperation to tackle the complex challenge of countering extremist propaganda, recruiting foreign terrorist fighters, and depriving Da'esh of financial resources.

Jordan has been a key partner in international security efforts around the world. In 1996, the United States designated Jordan as a major non-NATO ally. Jordan is also a member of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and the Proliferation Security Initiative. Last month, during King Abdullah's visit, Secretary Kerry signed a joint action plan with Jordan to combat the smuggling of nuclear and radioactive materials, expressing the intent of our governments to

work together to prevent, detect, and respond to nuclear smuggling incidents. Jordan shares this administration's firm conviction that nuclear smuggling is a critical and ongoing global danger and it stands ready to join a coordinated, global response to contain that threat.

Another key area of cooperation between Jordan and the United States has been our efforts to seek a resolution to the war in Syria. Jordan has been an integral part of the political process spearheading efforts to reach a political transition in Syria through the International Syria Support Group. Indeed, Foreign Minister Judeh joined Secretary Kerry today in Munich during a meeting of this group as they deliberate on next steps to resolve the crisis in Syria and to address the immediate humanitarian needs of the Syrian people.

We are also deeply appreciative of Jordan's crucial role in international efforts to achieve a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Jordan continues to demonstrate determination and resolve in support of our shared goal of reaching a two-state solution to the conflict and bringing an end to the vicious cycles of violence. Since the signing of its peace treaty with Israel in 1994, Jordan's engagement on Israeli-Palestinian issues has been critical to our ongoing efforts to advance peace and stability in the region, including this past fall when Jordan worked closely with us to help defuse tensions in Jerusalem at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount compound.

Our partnership with Jordan goes beyond our two governments. Trade between our two countries has never been stronger. Starting with the Qualifying Industrial Zones and now the Free Trade Agreement, total bilateral trade reached 3.5 billion in 2014. As a result of the FTA, which in 2000 was the very first signed in the Arab world, you can find Petra Engineering's air conditioning solutions, Hikma's pharmaceutical products, as well as Jordanian cosmetics, jewelry, and camping gear in U.S. markets. Jordanians, meanwhile, have access to apples from Washington state, Boeing airplanes and countless other U.S. products and services that are recognized for their quality and trustworthiness.

On a people-to-people level, the United States and Jordan are also working closely together. Approximately 7,300 Jordanians have participated in the State Department's various exchange programs. Our alumni include government ministers, journalists, artists, and educators. As part of the Fulbright program, for example, 30 Jordanians are currently studying or teaching in the United States, and 33 Americans are doing the same in Jordan.

Robust Assistance

As part of our commitment to Jordan's security and stability during this critical time, we are providing Jordan with robust security and economic assistance. Last year, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Jordan stating our intent to provide the Kingdom with \$1 billion annually in security and economic assistance from FY 2015 to FY 2017, with Congress's generous support. Last fiscal year, as part of that MOU, \$615 million went into our Economic Support Fund programs that directly help the Jordanian people through USAID programming, which I know my colleague will further discuss.

Jordan also received \$385 million in Foreign Military Financing in FY 2015, making it the third-largest FMF recipient in the world, and we will continue our robust support this year. This security assistance helps Jordan secure its borders, participate in coalition activities, and build the core capacity of its armed forces. Additionally, Jordan has also been one of the largest recipients of counterterrorism assistance worldwide, receiving over \$50 million since FY 2010 in Non-Proliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining and Related Activities (NADR)/Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) training for law enforcement officials.

Over the last year we have expedited several security systems to Jordan and improved our coordination with the Jordanian military to ensure our assistance matches Jordan's most urgent needs. Since the King's visit last February, the United States funded and notified the lease of eight UH-60A helicopters for Jordan, five of which have been delivered. These will be used by Jordan's Rapid Reaction Force, a crisis response element of the Border Guard Force. To better equip the Jordan Armed Forces, we have also delivered thousands of Night Vision Devices, millions of rounds of ammunition and thousands of small arms, and hundreds of aerial munitions. The U.S. has also completed a \$93 million effort to expand the Jordan Border Security System that enables that country to monitor activity along the entirety of its borders with both the Syria and Iraq.

Refugees

Before I conclude, I would like to address one issue that was an urgent topic of discussion during King Abdullah's recent visit. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Jordan currently hosts more than 635,000 registered Syrian refugees. This rapid influx of refugees has strained Jordan's economy and infrastructure, especially its schools, which have had to move to double shifts in order to help accommodate some of the Syrian children. We are working closely

with the Jordanian government on solutions to alleviate the strain on the country, both in the short and long term, and in a humane way. During the King's visit, we discussed how to handle ongoing humanitarian challenges for the 22,000 refugees on the Syrian-Jordanian border.

To date, the United States is the largest single donor contributing to the Syria humanitarian response in support of refugees and vulnerable host community members in Jordan. We have provided more than \$730 million in humanitarian aid to organizations assisting Syrian refugees in Jordan since the start of the crisis, including more than \$62 million announced last week by Secretary Kerry at the Fourth Syrian Donor's Conference in London. These funds also benefit the Jordanian communities that graciously host Syrian refugees. Overall, donors pledged \$700 million in additional grants for Jordan for 2016 at the conference last week. In addition, the European Union announced it was working with Jordan on an initiative to facilitate access to the EU market as part of a broader "compact" in which Jordan will provide Syrian refugees with work permits and increased access to education. Implementation of this compact will also help create jobs for Jordanians. We will continue to discuss with the Jordanian government ways in which we can work together to improve the lives of these refugees and address the needs of the communities that graciously host them.

Conclusion

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, our partnership with Jordan remains strong, and our military coordination and assistance has never been closer. From their counter Da'esh activities to Jordan's active participation in a number of peacekeeping operations around the world, Jordan is a strong friend and an essential partner in our pursuit of regional peace and prosperity. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, I look forward to taking your questions.