

# CIA scandal a blow to peace hopes

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AMMAN — The intelligence scandal involving allegations that millions of dollars in CIA payoffs went to Jordan's King Hussein couldn't have come at a worse time for American efforts to promote a peaceful settlement in the Middle East.

The scandal broke only hours before Secretary of State Vance's arrival here. And it immensely complicates the remaining part of his mission to persuade leaders of Syria and Saudi Arabia to turn over to Hussein an increasing role in the peacemaking process.

State Department officials have worked for months to bolster Hussein's credibility as the most responsible leader of the Palestinian people so that he might eventually replace the extremist wing of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) at the Geneva peace talks.

One reason American policymakers privately advanced for suggesting a Geneva-type conference no earlier than this fall was to provide time for moderate Arab leaders to pressure the PLO into changing its anti-Israel stance and accepting the goal of a West Bank state.

Now the fate of the Geneva conference appears clouded because of probable damage to Hussein's prestige in the Arab world. That prestige was considered indispensable to his regaining leadership of the Palestinian movement.

Less than 24 hours before the revelations were made public, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat proposed a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation that also could have strengthened Hussein's hand against radical PLO adherents who reject any compromise.

The Egyptian proposal, it is believed here, could have led to formation of a joint Palestinian delegation with Jordan that would have forced the PLO to choose between moderating its anti-Israel stance or risk being isolated from the peace-seeking process.

There is a risk now that Palestinian extremists may gain the upper hand by charging that Hussein is little more than an American puppet and therefore can't be trusted to achieve the Palestinian people's national goals.

This in turn may affect the outcome of the internal PLO debate over whether its national council next month should amend its charter, which since 1968 has called for destruction of the state of Israel.

Vance disclosed Friday that he thought Egypt was trying to persuade the PLO to take action on its charter and formally accept Israel's right to exist as a Jewish nation within defensible borders. This would be one of the most important developments in recent Mideast history.