



King's Counsel: A Memoir of War, Espionage, and Diplomacy in the Middle East

By Jack O'Connell

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A CIA station chief, later Jordan's lawyer in Washington, reveals the secret history of a lost peace.

Jack O'Connell possessed an uncanny ability to be at the center of things. On his arrival in Jordan in 1958, he unraveled a coup aimed at the young King Hussein, who would become America's most reliable Middle East ally. Over time, their bond of trust and friendship deepened.

His narrative contains secrets that will revise our understanding of the Middle East. In 1967, O'Connell tipped off Hussein that Israel would invade Egypt the next morning. Later, as Hussein's Washington counselor, O'Connell learned of Henry Kissinger's surprising role in the Yom Kippur War.

The book's leitmotif is betrayal. Hussein, the Middle East's only bona fide peacemaker, wanted simply the return of the West Bank, seized in the Six-Day War. Despite American promises, the clear directive of UN Resolution 242, and the years of secret negotiations with Israel, that never happened. Hussein's dying wish was that O'Connell tell the unknown story in this book.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

O'Connell, a former CIA agent and attorney for Jordan's King Hussein, recounts four decades of Middle East history in this provocative memoir. The author, CIA station chief in Amman from 1963 to 1971, was delegated to "keep King Hussein in power" and served as the young king's main point of contact and channel to the U.S. Following his retirement from the CIA, O'Connell became Hussein's U.S. attorney and Jordan's American lobbyist until the king's death in 1999. Drawing on his unique access, the author argues that while the Arabs wanted an end to hostilities and Hussein relentlessly pursued secret negotiations with the Israelis, neither Israel nor the U.S. wanted or actively pursued peace. O'Connell characterizes U.S. diplomacy in the region as hypocritical and charges that Kissinger fomented the 1973 Yom Kippur war. He also contends that the U.S. was doing Israel's "dirty work" in opposing Saddam Hussein in 1990 and could have negotiated an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait without resorting to war. O'Connell's eyewitness account of a tragic era in a tumultuous region is long on drama, revealing vignettes, and controversy, but short on balance. More than memoir, this is a passionate brief for King Hussein and the Arab pursuit of peace. (May)

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About the Author

Jack O'Connell (1921-2010) served as CIA station chief in Amman, Jordan, from 1963 to 1971 and was King Hussein's most trusted American adviser. He then became the king's attorney and diplomatic counselor in Washington for three decades.

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