

Hussein Tightens Grip in Cabinet Shuffle

By Patrick E. Tyler

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CAIRO — King Hussein of Jordan has reshuffled his government, replacing his foreign minister with a palace loyalist and putting the management of the royal court and Jordan's intelligence and security services under his cousin, the armed forces commander.

The immediate effect of Monday's moves was to jettison Taher Masri, who had been foreign minister since April 1985 but had become a voice of dissent in the past year over Jordan's initially halting response to the Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories.

Mr. Masri, of Palestinian origin, had criticized the implementation of Hussein's decision in July to sever all administrative ties to the

Israeli-occupied West Bank and relinquish his claim to it to the Palestine Liberation Organization, according to diplomatic sources. Jordan had controlled the West Bank until its capture by Israel in the 1967 war.

Mr. Masri also is known to have clashed over policy with Prime Minister Zaid Rifai, whose tenure seems to have received a vote of confidence from the king in Monday's decisions.

In addition, however, the elevation of Field Marshal Zeid ibn Shaker, a confidant and cousin of the king, to the job as chief of the royal court and head of Jordan's security apparatus indicates a tightening of the royal grip on the security services, whose intrusion into everyday affairs has caused

growing resentment among the populace, according to some Jordanian officials.

Another key move in the cabinet shuffle was the replacement of Mr. Masri with Marwan Qassem, who is the current chief of the royal court and a close adviser to the king.

Mr. Qassem has previously served as foreign minister and, as one of the architects of Jordan's policy toward the Palestinians, his return to that slot is expected to help harmonize the major components of the government.

Mr. Rifai's economic policies have been under siege for most of the year, as Jordan has suffered a squeeze on its hard-currency earnings and its ability to finance imports.

The problem was exacerbated in August when Hussein's decision to break with the West Bank touched off a panic in which thousands of Palestinians transferred their financial holdings out of the Jordanian dinar.

Financial sources say that Mr. Rifai has been able to put the country's economy back on a stable footing, securing short-term financing, and Hussein personally is said to have arranged a new line of financial assistance from Gulf states.

The cabinet changes, government officials said Tuesday, would shuffle or replace ministers of health, supplies, agriculture, tourism and municipal and environmental affairs.

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Taher Masri, who has been dismissed as the foreign minister of Jordan. Page 2.