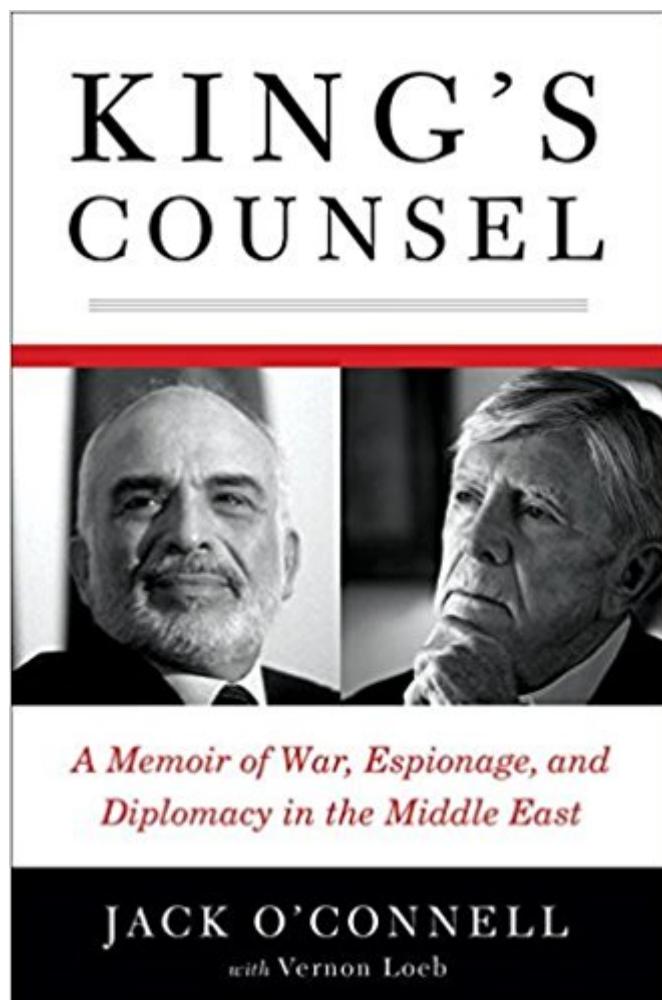


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# King's Counsel: A Memoir Of War, Espionage, And Diplomacy In The Middle East



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

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.

As one who worked for the Intelligence Community for 48 years, taught strategic intelligence warning at the national level and facilitated case studies of past intelligence successes and failure, this book filled in so many knowledge gaps. I have always admired King Hussein, but often wondered how he walked the fine line between being the guardian of the Heshamite Kingdom and truly wanting peace in the Middle East. The author's direct knowledge of King Hussein's initiatives is priceless and I am so thankful that he wrote this book. He omits at least a couple of conversations between the King and Sadaam Hussein, which my still be classified or he just chose not to discuss, which may have darkened the King's role ever so slightly, but overall this book rates as one of the best I have ever read. He tells a story that no one else could possibly know. Highly recommended.

A very fascinating work by a man who was "in the room where it happened" during some of the most significant historical events in the modern Middle East. O'Connell spent much of his CIA career working directly with King Hussein, and continued to work as his attorney afterward. It comes as no surprise, then, that he paints the King and Jordan generally in a favorable light. That does not diminish the quality of the book, but the reader should be aware that alternate interpretations and narratives exist. I recommend Kai Bird's *The Good Spy* along with this, as Bob Ames, another CIA Arabist, had a different understanding of events that compliments and contradicts O'Connell's.

An good read from someone who had unique access to one of the middle east's most interesting and misunderstood leaders. King Hussein could have been the region's Mandela, but he was taken too soon. O'Connell has a perspective that sometimes lacks nuance when it comes to Israeli

decision makers. While many of his observations are correct he doesn't take into account the domestic give and take inside Israel. Jordan largely made its decisions based on the King's will, but in Israel that wasn't the case. It might have seemed that way to an outsider, but there was never the kind of consensus about the West Bank that he implies. Overall a good read with some interesting insights. I'd recommend it for anyone already familiar with the middle east who wants some behind the scenes drama.

It's a very thin book for a 30 year or so career. Hopefully what he was unable to say is said in a well researched biography of Jack O'Connell; his life is a real page turner in and of itself.

This book offers a very good perspective on the Middle East and King Hussein. This is, in my view, just as good as an autobiography because even though it's written from an outsider's perspective, the author was close enough to know the truth. The internal workings of the State Department and CIA are also fascinating from the view of a layman reader.

A deeply personal and highly political book by a senior CIA officer about the elusive quest for lasting peace in the Middle East, including truly damning revelations of Israel-lobby manipulation of US administrations going back to at least 1967.

I purchased this book for a class on politics in the Middle East. I never thought it would be as interesting as it was. It was a fantastic read and very informative.

Excellent .... An eye opener to Middle Eastern political intrigue...

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