Jordan's Hussein Names Son Successor; Dramatic Decision Passes Over Brother
By Daniel Pearl

Jordan's King Hussein named his eldest son, Abdullah, crown prince, passing over the king's brother, who had been waiting more than three decades for the throne as crown prince. The dramatic decision puts Jordan's future in the hands of a dashing 36-year-old career army officer rather than the king's intellectual 51-year-old brother Hassan, who had been running the country for the past six months while King Hussein was treated in the U.S. for cancer of the lymphatic system. In a fierce letter to his brother, read over Jordanian television early Tuesday, King Hussein said he had to intervene from his sickbed after Prince Hassan had tried to remove "loyal and qualified people" from the army. "We have to think about the interests of Jordan," the king said. But the king may have been worrying more about the Hashemite dynasty's long-term survival than recent disputes. Prince Abdullah, who has his father's charisma, has a strong following in the army, a key to stability in Jordan, says Roscoe Suddarth, president of the Middle East Institute in Washington and former U.S. ambassador to Jordan. Also, by passing the crown to the next generation, King Hussein is removing some thorny succession issues that would have greeted his brother if he took the crown. Still, "Everyone is shocked. We all got used to the crown prince," said Mr. Suddarth, who worries it could be destabilizing for Jordan to lose him. Monday's brief announcement came after days of speculation Prince Hassan had been replaced. The decree gave no indication of Prince Hassan's future.