

Who Killed US Army Special Forces Operators Training anti-ISIS forces in Jordan?



US Fifth Special Forces Group Operators Killed in Jordan

Source: US Army

Friday, November 4, 2016, three Special Operators from the US Army Fifth Special Forces Group, based at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, were shot and killed at the gates to the King Faisal Al-Jafr airbase in Jordan. They had been assigned to Al-Jafr for training anti-ISIS coalition forces. The Al-Jafr complex comprises one of the US-led coalition airbases used for operations in both Syria and Iraq. Al-Jafr is located 158 miles southeast of Amman the Capital of Jordan. The King Faisal base is less than 37 miles from Ma'an in Southern Jordan that had been a hotbed of support for ISIS. The issue is who in Jordan killed these brave young Army Special Forces operators. This despite Jordan being a significant non-NATO ally of the US led by King Abdullah, who is an implacable foe of ISIS.

In November 2015, a Jordanian police officer [killed](#) several foreign trainers at a US funded Jordanian International Police Training facility outside Amman. The death toll included two Americans, a South African, and two Jordanians. Also wounded, before the assailant was taken down, were two other Americans and two Jordanians.

The Valiant US Army Special Forces Operators who fell in Jordan

Patrick Goodenough of CNS [reported](#) on what occurred at the King Faisal Airbase in Al -Jafr, Jordan:

“The three service members were in Jordan on a training mission, and the initial report is that they came under fire as they were entering the facility in vehicles,” said Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook. “We are working closely with the government of Jordan to determine exactly what happened.”

The three have been identified as Staff Sgt. Matthew Llewellyn, 27, of Lawrence, Kansas, Staff Sgt. Kevin McEnroe, 30, of Tucson, Arizona, and Staff Sgt. James Moriarty, 27, of Kerrville, Texas.

All three were with the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), based in Fort Campbell, Kentucky. According to the U.S. Army, Llewellyn had more than six years of service in the army and was on his second overseas tour; McEnroe had more than eight years of service and was on his third overseas tour; and Moriarty had more than five years of service, and was on his second overseas tour.

According to Jordan’s Petra news agency, two of the three Americans were killed at the base entrance, and the third died subsequently of injuries sustained in the shooting.

It said a Jordanian non-commissioned officer was also injured in the shooting, although it was not clear whether he was in the vehicle too, or had he been involved in firing at the Americans.

Jordanian television claimed they had tried to enter the base without paying heed to guards’ orders.

Government spokesman and minister for media affairs,

Mohammad Momani, told the *Jordan Times* the killings were “unfortunate.”

He extended the government’s condolences to the families of those killed, and stressed that Jordan values its relationship with the U.S. and was investigating the incident.

Although the facts remain unclear, the deaths of Llewellyn, McEnroe and Moriarty take to seven the number of U.S. military personnel killed in combat circumstances since President Obama announced the anti-ISIS mission in September 2014. Five of the seven were special operators, including a Delta Force commando and a Navy SEAL.

Jordan’s Muslim Brotherhood Problem

King Abdullah, while a valued ally of both the US in the war against ISIS, has some acknowledged internal problems regarding the Muslim Brotherhood and ISIS supporters. The recent September 2016 Parliamentary elections saw the return of the Muslim Brotherhood affiliate, the Islamic Action Front (IAF). The IAF had previously boycotted parliamentary elections in 2010 and 2013 after being blocked in 2007. This year “[boycotting the elections](#)” in 2010 and 2013. In previous remarks, IAF Secretary General Mohammad Zyoud said the party boycotted the previous elections, because of the one-person, one-vote electoral system, the “interference of authorities” in the electoral process and “forgery of the elections’ results” in 2007.

The Elections Law discarded the one-person, one-vote electoral system and replaced it with a voting system in which candidates run for parliamentary elections on large tickets at the constituency level.

According to a *Washington Post* [report](#) the Muslim Brotherhood was forced to rebrand itself:

The Brotherhood has rebranded itself after years of pressure from the Jordanian government that pushed it to the brink of dissolution.

Over the past two years, the group lost its license to operate as a political movement, its assets were frozen in a court battle and security services shuttered its headquarters in Amman, the capital. The government issued a license to a new pro-regime splinter group, the New Muslim Brotherhood, a band of Brotherhood renegades who lack the support and numbers of the original group.

[...]

The Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamist political group founded in Egypt in 1928, came to Jordan in the 1950s after King Hussein offered it a safe haven from a crackdown by Egypt's president and the king's rival, Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Over the decades, the Brotherhood in Jordan was allowed to operate a vast network of charitable organizations, hospitals and mosques, winning supporters in urban slums and Palestinian refugee camps.

But when King Hussein reinstated parliament in 1989, the Brotherhood emerged as a powerful opposition force, clashing with the palace over the country's peace treaty with Israel in 1994, and in recent years, calling on his successor, King Abdullah II, to cede his powers to parliament.

The Brotherhood's ardent supporters remain Jordanians of Palestinian origin and Jordanians who believe that an Islamist government, because it is supposed to be devoted to God, would be free of corruption.

But it is viewed with suspicion by the royal palace, tribal leaders and large swaths of the public, who see it

as driven by a desire for power and determined to diminish the influence of the tribes and the military.



The ISIS support center of Ma'an in Southern Jordan

In a June 2014 on the cusp of the declaration of an Islamic State in Mosul, Iraq, we interviewed on the Lisa Benson Radio show Mudar Zahran, Secretary General of the Jordanian Opposition Coalition. He drew attention to the daily pitched battles in the southern town of Ma'an between Jordanian security forces and local tribal supporters of the IAF flying ISIS flags. The headline in a *Washington Post* [His Majesty King Abdullah](#) on Sunday, told reporters later in the day the alliance would ensure that Jordan remains safe and that no threat emerges at its northern borders.

Problem is that on October 24, 2016, ISIS seized the important city of Rutba, an important road junction controlling the Karameh border crossing located 200 miles to the northeast of Jordan's capital of Amman. *Al Jazeera* [noted](#) this strategic diversion by ISIS:

In Rutba, they seized the mayor's office, captured and executed at least five people – civilians and policemen – and controlled neighborhoods, army commanders said.

Rutba is home to more than 20,000 people.

"Rutba is a very strategic town. It is seen as a significant victory," said Al Jazeera's Imran Khan, reporting from Erbil. "The fact that they lost this town is very significant."

The town of Rutba controls the road from Baghdad to Jordan and Syria.

Jordan had planned on opening the desert route link to the western Anbar border crossing in May 2016 after a year's

closure. That would open up an important road link for over \$1 billion in Jordanian exports to Iraq. There were also prospects of sending back some of the 200,000 Iraqi refugees in Jordan. However, the ISIS seizure of Rutba has eclipsed that prospect by once again closing the border, while tough battles to retake both Mosul and Raqqa pre-occupies the mixed Coalition forces in both Syria and Iraq.

In the meanwhile, the matter of who killed our US Army special operators in the Kingdom needs an answer if the US is to continue cooperative anti-ISIS training in Jordan. If that effort is to succeed in securing Jordan's borders and assisting in the defeat of the self-declared Caliphate. A big if.