

MIDDLE EAST BREATHING SPACE:

Jordan, neighbour to rebel-held Iraq, is apprehensive - but now that Private Tommy Atkins has pitched his tent by Amman, the capital, Jordan is considerably less apprehensive than it was a week or two back. There's a reassuring look, too, about the lines of Hunter Jet fighters on the airfield; for this tiny kingdom looked as though it was next item on the agenda of the pro-Nasser elements. But Britain answered King Hussein's appeal to supplement his Arab Legion - and now any would-be rebels will be thinking again. Meanwhile, Private Atkins carries on with the daily round, ready for anything but not unduly worried.

The British Ambassador chats with Brigadier Tom Pearson, whose troops are doing so much to stabilise the situation by just being there.

Hostile propaganda would like the world to think Britain is supporting a royal dictatorship - but the steady stream of Arab tribal chiefs coming to the Royal Palace to re-affirm their allegiance to Hussein, is symptomatic of the widespread popularity of the courageous young monarch.

In the capital, all is calm. Private Atkins, as soon as he has a few hours off, follows his invariable drill of seeing what there is buy. The British are popular in Jordan - partly through the influence of the British-educated King, partly through years of financial help, and partly because British advisers helped create the Legion, the most efficient Arab fighting force. Thousands of miles away, statesmen are saying "Yes," "No" and "Maybe" to Summit talks. A breathing-space for the world - while Private Atkins, managing as always to enjoy himself in his own way without forgetting his serious purpose, provides a breathing-space for a little kingdom which might have been the flashpoint of World War Three.