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BY ADAM ENTOUS, NOUR MALAS AND MARGARET COKER

Officials inside the Central Intelligence Agency knew that Saudi Arabia was serious about toppling Syrian President Bashar al-Assad when the Saudi king named Prince Bandar bin Sultan al-Saud to lead the effort.

They believed that Prince Bandar, a veteran of the diplomatic intrigues of Washington and the Arab world, could deliver what the CIA couldn't: planeloads of money and arms, and, as one U.S. diplomat put it, wasta, Arabic for under-the-table clout.

Prince Bandar—for two decades one of the most influential deal makers in Washington as Saudi ambassador but who had largely disappeared from public view—is now reprising his role ...

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