

# Saudi-Russian talks raise questions on Syrian war drive, Boston bombings

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11 September 2013

Recent accounts of secret talks between Saudi spy chief Prince Bandar bin Sultan and Russian President Vladimir Putin raise further questions about US and Saudi roles in fabricating a pretext for war in Syria, as well as in the April 15 Boston Marathon bombings.

These accounts have been buried in the Western media, even though it is known that US and Saudi intelligence are involved in both these events. An August 29 report by AP reporter Dale Gavlak and independent journalist Yahya Ababeh brought forward substantial evidence that the August 21 chemical attack in Ghouta, which has been used as the pretext for the current US-led war drive against Syria, was carried out by the US-backed opposition using weapons obtained from the Saudis.

Russian and Lebanese reports of the Putin-Bandar meeting make clear the close connection between the Syrian war and terrorist operations by US-backed, Saudi-controlled forces. At the “stormy,” four-hour meeting in the Russian president’s luxury Novo-Ogaryovo residence, Bandar offered Putin a quid pro quo; if Russia abandoned Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, then Saudi Arabia would cooperate with Russia on issues like supporting the Egyptian military junta, Russian oil interests in Europe, and Chechen terrorism.

Bandar bluntly demanded that Russia drop Assad: “The key to the relations between our two countries starts by understanding our approach to the Syrian issue. So you have to stop giving [the Syrian regime] political support, especially at the UN Security Council, as well as military and economic support.”

Bandar, whose close ties to the US and to the Bush family have earned him the nickname “Bandar Bush,” stressed that he was speaking for the US and Saudi governments. He said, “Any understanding we reach in this meeting will not only be a Saudi-Russian

understanding, but will also be an American-Russian understanding. I have spoken with the Americans before the visit, and they pledged to commit to any understandings that we may reach, especially if we agree on this approach to the Syrian issue.”

Bandar was thus selected to present an offer from the US government—perhaps because the mixture of threats and inducements he was offering was so blatantly criminal that Washington wanted to be at liberty to deny having proposed it.

In addition to offering continued Saudi support for the bloodstained Egyptian military junta, Bandar proposed “a unified Russian-Saudi strategy on the subject of oil,” to prop up oil prices, and therefore Russian and Saudi oil revenues. Russia, whose economy relies on energy sales for over 40 percent of its state budget and much of its economy, depends on such revenues.

Bandar pledged that US-led regime change in Syria would not be used to turn Syria into a pipeline nexus cheaply transporting Middle Eastern oil and gas to the European market, competing with Russia. He said, “We understand the importance of the Russian gas pipeline to Europe. We are not interested in competing with that.”

Bandar also implicitly threatened that if Russia did not agree to his proposal, Saudi Arabia would give Chechen Islamist terrorists groups a green light to intensify their attacks in Syria and also to attack the 2014 Olympic Games in the nearby Russian city of Sochi.

If the Kremlin agreed to a deal, Bandar said, “I can give you a guarantee to protect the Winter Olympics in the city of Sochi on the Black Sea next year. The Chechen groups that threaten the security of the games are controlled by us, and they will not move in the

Syrian territory's direction without coordinating with us ... We use them in the face of the Syrian regime, but they will have no role or influence in Syria's political future."

Putin rejected Bandar's proposal, insisting that the Kremlin would continue to seek a "political solution" in Syria and to oppose new UN Security Council measures targeting Iran.

Bandar replied to Putin's refusal by indicating that war would begin in Syria. Predicting that the situation in Syria would "intensify," he said: "There is no escape from military action, because it is the only currently available choice given that the political settlement ended in stalemate."

Three weeks later, the Ghouta attack in Syria provided the United States, Saudi Arabia, and their allies with a pretext for military action that they were clearly looking for.

These reports raise serious questions both about the Syrian war drive and the Boston Marathon bombings. Firstly, they again show that Washington's brief for war in Syria is a fabrication, based on lies and provocations, like its case for aggression against Iraq 10 years ago.

They substantiate the Gavlak-Ababeh detailed reports of Saudi involvement in the Ghouta attacks, making clear that Saudi Arabia had a motive for giving the opposition poison gas. This use of poison gas, blamed on Assad by the Western media, would provide the basis for claims that Assad had crossed a "red line" of chemical weapons use, and thus for a war that the US and Saudi governments desperately wanted.

Bandar's claims that Saudi Arabia controls Chechnya's Islamist terrorist groups also raises further questions about the April 15 Boston Marathon bombing. The Tsarnaev brothers, who allegedly carried out the bombings, had close family connections to Chechen Islamist opposition fighters in Russia. Their uncle, Ruslan Tsarni, helped former CIA Kabul station chief Graham Fuller set up an organization that supplied equipment to Chechen Islamist groups. The elder Tsarnaev brother, Tamerlan, traveled to the region to contact such Islamist groups.

The statements by Bandar thus raise the question as to whether Saudi or US officials knew about the Tsarnaev brothers' plans for the Boston Marathon bombing—a terrorist attack that killed 3 people,

wounded hundreds, and served as the pretext for US authorities to put an entire city under police lockdown, in flagrant violation of basic constitutional rights.

If Chechen groups do not mount attacks in Syria without Saudi or US approval, they would not attack an even more sensitive target—a major American city, like Boston—without such approval.

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