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Syrian Opposition Mulls Leaving Assad in Power

By Jason Ditz

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Exiled opposition factions from Syria, increasingly resigned to the reality of the situation on the ground and likewise worried about the rise of ISIS, are discussing a proposal for their next big meeting to leave President Bashar Assad in power.

Publicly, the opposition has long insisted that there is no discussion to be had with the Assad government without the understanding that Assad steps down immediately. The new proposal would call for elections in two years.

Even this is unlikely to actually happen, since the opposition has little power and Assad's current term, having been reelected in 2014, extends through 2021, but it reflects a shift of the opposition toward Assad's camp.

The US might be coming along for the ride, as CIA Director John Brennan was quoted yesterday as saying the US is "concerned" about the collapse of Syria if Assad was removed from power, despite continuing to publicly insist they want him gone.

Since the Syrian opposition is so heavily bankrolled by the US government, this may reflect the increasing US uncertainty about the future as well.