

Foreign Ministry Says NATO Might Be Targeting Gadhafi

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The Foreign Ministry said NATO could be targeting Moammar Gadhafi and his family after Libyan officials said his youngest son and three grandchildren were killed in an airstrike.

"Statements by participants in the coalition that the strikes on Libya are not aimed at the physical destruction of ... Gadhafi and members of his family raise serious doubts," a ministry statement said Sunday.

A State Duma deputy who often serves as a mouthpiece for the Kremlin's views on foreign affairs was less diplomatic.

"More and more facts indicate that the aim of the anti-Libyan coalition is the physical destruction of Gadhafi," said Konstantin Kosachev, who heads the Duma's International Affairs Committee.

Kosachev called on Western leaders to make their position on the airstrikes clear.

"I am totally perplexed by the total silence from the presidents of the United States, France, the leaders of other Western countries," Kosachev said in an interview, according to Interfax. "We have the right to expect their immediate, comprehensive and objective assessment of the coalition's actions."

NATO denied targeting Gadhafi or his family in the Saturday evening bombing, but said it had launched airstrikes on military targets. Libyan officials said there had been an "assassination attempt."

Libyan government spokesman Mussa Ibrahim said Gadhafi's youngest son, Saif al-Arab, 29, was killed in the attack along with three of Gadhafi's grandchildren.

Kosachev and the Foreign Ministry were following the lead of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who has harshly criticized the airstrikes and accused NATO of trying to kill Gadhafi.

Russia abstained in the March vote in the UN Security Council that authorized the use of force in Libya to protect civilians.

The Foreign Ministry on Sunday also echoed its plea of a week ago for an immediate cease-fire and the "beginning of a political settlement without any preconditions."

"Moscow is treating the reports about civilian casualties with growing concern," it said.

The Libyan rebels and NATO have rejected Gadhafi's offer for a cease-fire, saying it lacked credibility.

(Reuters, AP)

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