

Gadhafi Plays Chess With Ilyumzhinov

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June 13, 2011



Ilyumzhinov chose black for his match at Gadhafi's residence in Tripoli.

Moscow's efforts to mediate in Libya's civil war took a bizarre turn over the weekend when FIDE president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov showed up in Tripoli to take on Moammar Gadhafi for a chess party.

Ilyumzhinov said Monday that the embattled Libyan leader told him that he would never leave his country after showing him the house where he claims that a son and three grandchildren were killed by NATO bombs a month ago.

"He said, 'If I lost my children my grandchildren, where should I go? I will stay here,'" Ilyumzhinov [told](#) Ekho Moskvyy radio.

At Sunday's meeting, the flamboyant Ilyumzhinov invited his host to a game of chess, which he seemingly won quickly. Libyan state television [footage](#) available on YouTube showed Gadhafi making some slow moves that were quickly countered by a smiling Ilyumzhinov, and the two men soon shaking hands.

Asked who won, Ilyumzhinov said Monday that defeating Gadhafi would not have been diplomatic because the Libyan leader was an “amateur.” “I proposed a draw with him,” he said.

Ilyumzhinov, who served as leader of his native Kalmykia republic for 17 years before quitting in October and claims to have befriended extraterrestrials, said he held the talks in his capacity as head of the World Chess Federation, which he has headed since 1995.

Mikhail Margelov, President Dmitry Medvedev’s special envoy for Africa and Moscow’s point man in the simmering conflict, said Ilyumzhinov had informed him about the upcoming visit last Friday.

“He called me, and I advised him to play white and move E2-E4 and make it clear to Gadhafi that his side is close to the endgame,” Margelov told Interfax.

Ilyumzhinov, however, chose to play black.

Margelov said Ilyumzhinov was one of many people trying to take part in Libya mediations in a private capacity. President Dmitry Medvedev promised to deploy Russian diplomats to help mediate Gadhafi’s departure late last month.

Margelov held talks with the Libyan opposition in Benghazi last week and plans to visit Tripoli this week for talks with the Libyan government.

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