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Libyan Envoy Says Gadhafi Will Stay

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Libyan Foreign Minister Abdul-Ati al-Obeidi leaving the Foreign Ministry after talks with Lavrov on Wednesday. **Mikhail Metzel**

Libya's foreign minister denied on Wednesday that there were talks about easing Moammar Gadhafi out of power, but said his government wanted to end the nation's bloody conflict in a way that would satisfy all Libyans.

"Gadhafi's departure is not being discussed," Abdul-Ati al-Obeidi said after talks with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Interfax reported.

Obeidi said the confrontation between Gadhafi's government and rebels seeking to end his 41-year rule would not be resolved by force and said foreign support for the rebels "will not help solve the problem," Interfax reported.

"We must all work on a peaceful solution in which all Libyans would participate and not just the council in Benghazi," he was quoted as saying in a reference to the rebel Transitional National Council.

The closed-door meeting was part of a Russian effort to engage Gadhafi's government, in

contrast to what it calls a counterproductive Western "policy of isolation." Moscow says Gadhafi must give up power but has also criticized Western military and diplomatic support for the rebels in Libya, where Russia had billions of dollars in energy, arms and infrastructure deals.

President Dmitry Medvedev, whose Africa envoy has met both rebels in Benghazi and top officials in Tripoli in recent weeks, said Tuesday that there was still a chance for compromise between the warring sides.

Echoing Russia's inclusive tone, Obeidi said, "We came out with a proposal that it is necessary to find a solution that would be acceptable to all Libyans, including the opposition in Benghazi," RIA-Novosti reported.

But there was no sign of flexibility on the fate of Gadhafi, who has refused to resign. Konstantin Kosachev, who heads the State Duma's International Affairs Committee, said Wednesday's talks had been requested by the Libyans and called for cautious optimism. "It means that people who are still in power in Tripoli are ready to talk and not just suppress the resistance of the population with tanks or other heavy weapons," he said.

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