

Russians Return Home After 3 Years in Libyan Jail

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Sirte, Libya, where Muammar Gaddafi has spent his last days.

Two Russian citizens arrested in Libya in 2011 on suspicion of aiding former President Moammar Gadhafi have been freed and allowed to return home, Kommersant reported Tuesday.

Alexander Shadrov, 61, and Vladimir Dolgov, 53, who had been working as engineers in Libya's oil industry during the country's turbulent civil war, have reportedly returned to Russia after quietly being freed over the summer.

The circumstances of their release remain unclear, but a Ukrainian citizen who was held in detention along with them was cited by Newsru.com as saying: "Russia freed us."

Dolgov first commented on his release on the Odnoklassniki social network in mid-September, writing: "It's a sweet word — freedom!"

The two Russian men were sentenced to life imprisonment by a military tribunal in Tripoli

in June 2012 for allegedly having helped Gadhafi, who had been captured and killed by rebels months earlier. They Russians were charged along with about 20 Ukrainians and three Belarussians for repairing military equipment that the new government said was used by Gadhafi against his own people.

Russia's Foreign Ministry considered the men's detention illegal and repeatedly demanded their release, sending diplomats to visit them in jail and supply them with food and clothes.

The ministry confirmed the men's release in a statement Tuesday, saying they had returned home thanks to "intensive, well-targeted work that didn't allow for publicity."

In the aftermath of Gadhafi's ouster, thousands of people were rounded up and detained by various rebel factions. During the trial of Shadrov and Dolgov in 2012, a spokesman for Ukraine's Foreign Ministry told Interfax that more than 5,000 foreign citizens, including Europeans, were being held in Libyan prisons.

Gadhafi was in power for 42 years before being violently overthrown.

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