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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Sotheby's Removes Allegedly Stolen Russian Painting from Sale

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"Evening in Cairo" by Ivan Aivazovsky

The international auction house Sotheby's withdrew from auction on Tuesday a painting by a famous Russian artist that Russia's Interior Ministry said last week had been stolen in 1997 from a private collection in Moscow.

The auction house said "Evening in Cairo" by Ivan Aivazovsky, had been withdrawn from sale at the request of the consignor, or seller.

Russia's Interior Ministry had asked that British police block the auction.

Sotheby's said last week it had found no record of the painting in the databases of stolen art and would proceed with the sale on June 2, with the agreement of the consignor and the family which said it had been stolen.

It was not clear why there had been an apparent change of mind.

In an e-mailed statement on Tuesday, Sotheby's said: "Ivan Aivazovsky's Evening in Cairo,

Lot 23, in Sotheby's 2 June 2015 Sale of Russian Pictures has been withdrawn at the request of the consignor."

It said there was "no further information available."

Russia's Interior Ministry declined immediate comment, saying it would make its position clear later on Tuesday.

The Interior Ministry did not name the complainant but Sotheby's earlier identified them as the Nosenko family, which Russian media said had purchased the painting in the 1940s.

The 1870 painting had been listed as a lot on the website of Sotheby's, with an estimated value of £1.5-2 million ($2-$3 million), as part of a collection of Russian pictures due to be sold in London on June 2.

The Sotheby's website had listed the work's provenance as being in the collection of N.I. Dedov.

Sotheby's kept the identity of the seller confidential but said that it had acquired the painting in good faith in 2000.

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