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FIFA Compliance Head Says Russia, Qatar World Cups Could Be Taken Away

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Domenico Scala, Chairman of the FIFA's Audit and Compliance Committee addresses a news conference at the FIFA headquarters in Zurich, Jun. 2

ZURICH — Russia and Qatar could be stripped of their World Cup hosting rights if evidence emerges of bribery in the bidding process, the independent chairman of FIFA's audit and compliance committee told a Swiss newspaper.

The FBI's investigation of bribery and corruption at FIFA includes scrutiny of how soccer's governing body awarded World Cup hosting rights to Russia and Qatar, a U.S. law enforcement official told Reuters this week.

Domenico Scala told SonntagsZeitung that the two countries could lose the hosting rights should evidence emerge of bribery in the bidding process.

"If evidence should emerge that the awards to Qatar and Russia only came about thanks to bought votes, then the awards could be invalidated," Scala said in an interview published

on Sunday. "This evidence has not yet been brought forth."

Russia and Qatar have previously denied wrongdoing in the conduct of their bids for the 2018 and 2022 tournaments, which were not the subject of charges announced by U.S. prosecutors last week against FIFA officials.

Scala had made similar comments in 2013 but events over the last two weeks, which included a dawn police raid in Zurich and the arrests of several FIFA officials on U.S. charges, have added urgency to his remarks.

Sepp Blatter unexpectedly announced on Tuesday he was resigning, just four days after securing a fifth term as FIFA president and shortly before it emerged that he too was under investigation by U.S. law enforcement.

In a separate interview with Swiss paper SonntagsBlick, Scala also floated the idea of term limits for the FIFA presidency.

"If a FIFA president does two or three cycles that is enough," Scala is quoted as saying.

A representative for Scala confirmed his remarks.

FIFA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

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