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Libya Arrests 2 Russians Accused of Trying to Influence Vote

By Bloomberg

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Zuma / TASS

Libyan security forces arrested two Russian nationals accused of trying to influence upcoming elections in the North African oil-exporter, according to a document obtained by Bloomberg.

The letter from state prosecutors for the internationally recognized government in Tripoli said the Russians had been involved in "securing a meeting" with Saif al-Islam al-Qaddafi, the fugitive son of the ousted Libyan dictator and a potential candidate in elections who has the backing of some officials in Moscow.

Russian officials did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

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Libya had planned to hold elections this year as part of a UN-sponsored roadmap that has

been upended by an assault on the capital led by eastern commander Khalifa Haftar.

Laptops and memory sticks found with the suspects showed that they worked for a company that "specializes in influencing elections that are to be held in several African states" including Libya, the letter, stamped by the attorney general's office, stated. Two Libyan government officials with direct knowledge of the matter confirmed the authenticity of the letter.

A third Russian national had left the country before security services raided their residence, it said. The letter, dated July 3, does not mention when and where the arrests took place but one of the officials said the men were detained in Tripoli in May.

Saif al-Islam, one-time Libyan heir apparent, was put on trial and then freed by the rebels who toppled and killed his father in 2011. He has been in hiding ever since and his whereabouts are unknown. An aide did not immediately respond to a call for comment.

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