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Libya Slams Russian Intervention: 'Wherever Wagner Goes Destruction Happens'

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Amru Salahuddien / Xinhua via ZUMA Wire / TASS

Russia is using private military contractors to escalate the conflict in Libya and boost its influence there, the security chief of Libya's UN-backed government has said.

Libyan interior minister Fathi Bashagha's accusations follow reports of at least two deployments of Kremlin-linked Wagner mercenaries in recent months as forces based in eastern Libya attempt to take the capital. Russia denies its military presence in Libya and says it supports conflict settlement efforts in the oil-rich nation.

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"The Russians have intervened to pour fuel on the fire and enhance the crisis rather than finding a solution," Bashagha told Bloomberg in an interview published Saturday.

Pointing to other reported Wagner deployments in Syria and sub-Saharan Africa, Bashagha warned: “wherever Wagner goes destruction happens.”

Forces loyal to eastern commander Khalifa Haftar launched an offensive this spring to seize Tripoli from Libya’s internationally recognized government. Russia is reported to be providing unofficial assistance to Haftar with the Wagner Group, a private army linked to President Vladimir Putin through businessman Yevgeny Prigozhin.

Bashagha accused Moscow of intervening in Libya to revive the remnants of ousted dictator Muammar Gaddafi’s regime and to strengthen its influence in Africa and on the southern edge of Europe.

Libya has descended into chaos after the 2011 uprising against Gaddafi, with the conflict evolving into a proxy war between foreign powers.

“The U.S. was a strong partner in bringing down the old regime,” Bashagha told Bloomberg.

He called on the U.S. to step up support for Libya’s UN-backed government, saying Washington has a “moral and legal” obligation to restore the country’s stability and security.

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