

Belarus Leader Says U.S. Nationals Detained Ahead of Election

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Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. **Natalia Fedosenko / TASS**

Belarus has arrested a number of U.S. nationals, its President Alexander Lukashenko said days before the country's presidential election.

Authorities have cracked down on the Belarusian opposition as Lukashenko seeks a sixth term in office, with rights groups saying more than 1,300 people have been detained.

"Some people were detained with American passports, married to Americans, working in the State Department," Belarus' state-run Belta news agency [quoted](#) Lukashenko as saying.

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Lukashenko didn't specify when or why the Americans were detained.

He has previously [accused](#) foreign powers of seeking to destabilize Belarus and organize a popular uprising in the run-up to the Aug. 9 vote, which is set to be his toughest re-election

bid yet.

Belarusian authorities last week arrested 33 Russian nationals for allegedly plotting to destabilize the country ahead of Sunday's vote and said they were searching for at least 170 others.

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