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France to Sell Late Putin Opponent's Riviera Chateau

By AFP

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Chateau de la Garoupe on the Cote d'Azur. **Google Maps**

French authorities have put up for sale a luxurious multi-million-euro chateau seized from the Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky who died in 2013 and was a sworn opponent of President Vladimir Putin, the agency handling confiscated assets said Friday.

Berezovsky acquired the Chateau de la Garoupe on the Cote d'Azur in the 1990s while post-Soviet Russia's first president Boris Yeltsin was in power and the tycoon was considered one of the most powerful people in the country.

But it was confiscated by French authorities in 2015, two years after Berezovsky was found dead in exile at his home in England in circumstances that have never been fully explained. He had by then become a bitter opponent of Putin.

The property was built on the prestigious Cap d'Antibes by the British industrialist and MP

Charles McLaren, and its rich history has seen it associated with the likes of Pablo Picasso, Cole Porter and Ernest Hemingway.

The chateau "represents exceptional architectural and cultural heritage. Its acquisition offers a unique opportunity to own a prestigious residence steeped in history in an enchanting setting," France's Agrasc agency on confiscated assets said in a statement.

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Interested parties can express their interest from June 16 to July 17 and those validated as possible buyers can submit bids from September.

The chateau, like the neighboring property of the Clocher (Belltower) de la Garoupe, also owned by Berezovsky, was confiscated after being judged to be the proceeds of money laundering committed by investment company Sifi and its manager, Jean-Louis Bordes.

They were ruled to have acted as a front for Berezovsky.

Reacting in response to an initial complaint filed by Russia, the French authorities needed 10 years to unravel the complex history of purchases including that of the Chateau de la Garoupe in December 1996.

The Cote d'Azur has been popular with rich Russians going back to visits from the imperial family at the turn of the century.

After the collapse of the U.S.S.R., it became a favorite playground for the country's oligarchs.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and sanctions from the West has made owning property and even entering France increasingly problematic for many Russians.

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