

Medvedev Urges Libya Peace Talks

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SOSNOVY BOR, Buryatia — President Dmitry Medvedev called on Moammar Gadhafi and Libya's rebels on Wednesday to stop fighting and sit down for talks, saying the embattled leader still had some power and military might.

"We want the Libyans to come to an agreement among themselves," Medvedev said after talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Il at a military base near Buryatia's capital, Ulan-Ude.

"We would like [the fighting] to stop as soon as possible and for them to sit down at the negotiating table and reach an agreement on Libya's future," Medvedev said in his first public remarks on Libya since Gadhafi fled his Tripoli stronghold.

"Despite the rebel successes in the offensive on Tripoli, Gadhafi and his supporters still maintain some influence and military potential," he said.

Medvedev described Moscow's position on Libya as "cautious" and said Russia was closely monitoring the situation.

He suggested that Russia could establish formal relations with the rebels if they emerge as a force with nationwide public support, a sign that Moscow is edging toward recognizing those forces poised to topple Gadhafi's 42-year-old rule.

"If the rebels have enough strength and opportunities to unite the country for a new democratic start, then naturally, we will consider establishing relations with them," he said.

More than 30 countries, including the United States and some European Union nations, have recognized the rebel National Transitional Council as the new Libyan authorities.

Russian officials have warned that NATO aerial support for the storming of Tripoli could cast doubt on the rebels' legitimacy.

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