

Russia Recognizes Libya's Transitional Council

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Russia recognized Libya's ruling interim council as the country's legitimate authority on Thursday, moving to increase its influence on postwar reconstruction and protect its economic interests in the oil-producing North African nation.

"The Russian Federation recognizes the National Transitional Council as the current authorities," the Foreign Ministry said on its web site.

Russia, which was critical of NATO's operation in Libya, announced its decision as leaders and envoys from world powers and international bodies gathered in Paris to coordinate Libya's political and economic reconstruction.

Moscow had billions of dollars worth of arms, energy and infrastructure deals with Libya under its deposed leader Moammar Gadhafi, and Russian officials have expressed concern that those deals could be lost in the transition.

"We proceed from the position that all previously agreed treaties and other mutual

obligations ... will be implemented in good faith," the Foreign Ministry said.

Russia allowed Western military intervention in Libya to go ahead by abstaining from a UN Security Council resolution vote in March, but then repeatedly accused NATO forces carrying out air strikes of overstepping their mandate to protect civilians and of siding with anti-Gadhafi forces in the civil war.

Some in Libya have signaled that the new authorities could slight nations like Russia and China in favor of those that gave more support to Gadhafi's foes.

Russia's representative at the Paris talks, Medvedev's special Africa envoy Mikhail Margelov, said he was confident that would not happen.

"I don't think the new government of Libya will start off by evaluating contracts with Russia on political rather than technical and economic criteria," Margelov said, Interfax reported.

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