

Tall Ship Skips U.S. Port in Snub Linked to Jewish Case

By [Natalya Krainova](#)

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A Russian frigate refused to dock in San Francisco on a Pacific tour because of concerns that it might be seized and held as collateral for a collection of Jewish books and manuscripts.

The three-masted Nadezhda turned sail on the advice of the Foreign Ministry, even though a welcome delegation was waiting for it at the pier, the ship's owner, the Vladivostok-based Maritime State University, [said](#) Tuesday.

The [incident](#) took place last Friday, but the university only disclosed the official reason for the snub on its web site this week.

The ministry warned that the tall ship might be seized over a ruling by a Washington court that came into force this month in connection with a lawsuit by Chabad Lubavitch, a Hasidic group, the university said.

The New York-based Chabad Lubavitch is seeking to obtain the so-called Schneersohn collection — 12,000 books and 50,000 manuscripts gathered by Smolensk rabbis between the 18th and the early 20th century. The collection was nationalized by the Bolsheviks and is currently located in the Russian State Library in Moscow.

The group won a restitution lawsuit in Washington, but Russian authorities consider the ruling illegal. The spat has already resulted in a ban on stateside exhibits of Russian art over the same confiscation fears.

But leading maritime expert Mikhail Voitenko suggested that the snub was not linked to the Jewish lawsuit but a U.S. blacklist of Russian officials implicated in the death of Hermitage lawyer Sergei Magnitsky.

The sudden cancellation, "shameful in form and offensive in essence," came months after the Jewish lawsuit but just a day before the Foreign Ministry announced that it had compiled a tit-for-tat blacklist of U.S. officials, Voitenko [noted](#) on his blog on Ekho Moskvyy on Sunday.

Nadezhda, a Polish-built training vessel, is now heading toward Mexico on its voyage, which marks the upcoming 2012 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Vladivostok. It is set to visit a total of 15 countries, including Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia and China.

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