

Russia Confirms Ship Heading to Syria Carried Helicopters

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A cargo ship that turned back toward Russia while traveling to Syria was carrying three repaired helicopters as well as air defense systems, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Thursday.

"The ship was carrying air defense systems, which can be (used) only for repelling foreign aggression and not against peaceful demonstrators ... and it was carrying three repaired helicopters," Lavrov told Ekho Mosvky radio.

The ship, the Curacao-registered MV Alead, turned back to Russia on Tuesday after its U.K. insurer removed its coverage.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said the ship would ultimately continue to Syria after docking in Murmansk on Saturday, where it will switch its registration and travel under a Russian flag, Interfax reported.

He said Russia had no choice but to deliver the helicopters, as they "are the property of Syria

and must be returned to them after their repair."

(Reuters, MT)

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