

Russia Will Delay Delivery of Helicopters to Syria

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Alaed

Russia will deliver anti-aircraft equipment and three Mi-25 helicopters set to go to Syria only after the situation in the country stabilizes, a news report said Friday, citing a military source.

The scheduled delivery of the aircraft and equipment, already delayed after the ship carrying the cargo was forced to return to Russia when its insurance was revoked, had prompted sharp criticism from Western powers seeking to put pressure on the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

A source told Interfax that the delivery has now been postponed indefinitely due to the intensification of the 16-month conflict in Syria, where a bomb attack in Damascus on Wednesday killed three top government officials. Since the attack, street battles have broken out between government troops and opposition forces on the outskirts of the Syrian capital.

The three Mi-25 helicopters that are set to be delivered are the last of 20 that Russia had been contracted in 2007 and 2008 to repair for Syria, the source said.

On Friday, the ship carrying the choppers, the Alaed, owned by shipping company Femco, arrived at a port in St. Petersburg, a Femco spokesman told Interfax.

Last month, the ship had been forced to turn back en route to Syria after its British insurer cancelled the ship's coverage, citing European Union sanctions against Syria. It was later reported that the Alaed would travel to Syria along with another vessel.

Meanwhile on Friday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich called reports that Assad's wife had fled to Moscow "rumors."

"I don't want to comment on rumors of some kind. I think that this is a very dishonest informational trap," Lukashevich told journalists, RIA-Novosti reported.

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