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Poland, Too, Says France Should Cancel Mistral Deal With Russia

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PARIS — Poland's foreign minister urged France on Tuesday to cancel a 1.2 billion euro ($1.66 billion) contract to sell Mistral helicopter carriers to Russia, saying these would be used to threaten East European nations.

Asked if France should deliver the two vessels, Radoslaw Sikorski told newspaper Le Monde: "No, because Russian generals have already said what these ships will be used for: to threaten Russia's neighbors in the Black Sea and that means Europe's partners. I do not think France would want to be in the position of supplying efficient weapons to an aggressor."

The U.S. and some European partners have been urging Paris to reconsider its supply of high-tech military hardware to Moscow following Russian action in Ukraine, including its annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in March.

France has so far rebuffed those calls, saying that canceling the deal would do more damage to Paris than Moscow and illustrating the limitations of European Union sanctions meant to punish Russia.

Sikorski was speaking ahead of French President Francois Hollande's visit to Poland on Wednesday. U.S. President Barack Obama is due in Paris for bilateral talks with Hollande on Thursday, and U.S. officials have said he will bring up the Mistral sale, piling pressure on Paris.

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