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# Russia Threatens to Sue France If Mistral Warship Isn't Delivered

By The Moscow Times

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The Mistral-class helicopter carrier Vladivostok is seen at the STX Les Chantiers de l'Atlantique shipyard site in Saint-Nazaire, France.

Russia will take France to court if Paris cancels the delivery of the first of two Mistral-class warships due to be handed over to the Russian navy within the next two weeks, a top Kremlin official said Friday.

France has been under huge pressure from its allies to nix the sale of the ships over Russia's actions in Ukraine, but if Paris reneges on the 1.2 billion euro ($1.5 billion) deal, "there will be a court appeal and a demand for compensation for breach of contract, as is done throughout the civilized world," President Vladimir Putin's chief of staff Sergei Ivanov was quoted as saying by the RIA Novosti news agency.

The ball is entirely in Paris' court, he said.

The Mistral-warships, which were purchased by Russia in 2011, have become a symbol of the West's discord over how to respond to Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in March and subsequent support for pro-Moscow rebels in Ukraine's restive east.

Struggling with near-zero economic growth, France was unwilling to abandon the deal. But lobbying efforts led by Washington appeared to pay off in September, when the French presidential administration announced it was withholding delivery of the first ship. French President Francois Hollande soon clarified Paris' position however, saying the delivery was contingent on the situation in Ukraine at the end of October — the delivery date written into the contract.

With the month drawing to a close, no further word has been heard from the French side, despite numerous Russian media reports in recent weeks quoting officials calling for a clear statement from Paris concerning the fate of the deal.

Ivanov on Friday lamented: "We have a long-standing relationship with France, and I would not want short-term considerations to sacrifice these long-term mutual interests."

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