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France May Delay Mistral Warship Delivery By Three Months

By The Moscow Times

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France may delay the delivery of the first of two Mistral-class warships to the Russian navy.

France may decide to delay the delivery of the first of two Mistral-class warships to the Russian navy by three months, a source familiar with the countries' military cooperation was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency on Thursday.

"The terms of the contract allowed for the possibility of postponing the delivery of the ship to the customer [Russia] by three months," the source said. "Given the current political situation, the French can take advantage of this provision."

The ship, named the Vladivostok, was previously reported to be set for delivery by Nov. 14, but French Finance Minister Michel Sapin told a French radio station last week that the conditions for delivery had not yet been met.

French President Francois Hollande in September defined the conditions for delivery as the

normalization of the situation in Ukraine, and the beginning of a peace process between Kiev and Moscow-backed rebels in the east.

Also on Thursday, a diplomatic source told Interfax that the Russian crew currently in France training how to operate the Vladivostok can remain on site until the end of the year, at which point they must return to Russia if the delivery has not yet taken place.

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