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Russian Sailors Reportedly Barred From Mistral Ship in France

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The 400 Russian sailors who have been training since June on the Vladivostok have not had access to the ship since Monday.

The Russian sailors training on a Mistral helicopter carrier docked in the French port of St. Nazaire have been barred from accessing the French-built ship as France continues to stall over its delivery to Russia, French media reported Tuesday morning.

According to local newspaper Ouest-France, the 400 Russian sailors who have been training since June on the Vladivostok, the first of two helicopter carriers in a $1.6 billion deal between Russia and France, have not had access to the ship since Monday. The decision was made by French authorities, according to Ouest-France, which cited the French Defense Ministry as denying knowledge of the situation.

Russia's Interfax news agency reported Tuesday afternoon that sailors had regained access to the Vladivostok, citing an unnamed military source.

As tensions between Russia and the West over the Ukrainian crisis escalated in recent months,

France's Western partners have urged it to refrain from delivering the promised warship to Russia. Russian state news agency RIA Novosti reported last week that Russia could demand monetary compensation if France fails to deliver the Vladivostok by the end of the month.

French President Francois Hollande said at the G20 Summit held over the weekend in Australia that a decision about the Mistral's delivery would be made "without any kind of pressure, in accordance with France's interests and my assessment of the situation," French media outlets reported.

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