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France Indefinitely Suspends Delivery of Mistral Warship to Russia

By The Moscow Times

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France's Mistral class assault ship the Dixmund in the French port of Toulon.

France on Tuesday indefinitely suspended delivery of the first of two Mistral helicopter carrier warships to Russia, citing conflict in eastern Ukraine where the West accuses Moscow of fomenting separatism.

Russia's Deputy Defense Minister Yury Borisov told news agency RIA Novosti that Russia would for now not pursue claims against France over non-delivery, but expected the contract to be fulfilled.

"We are satisfied with everything. It's the French who are not satisfied. We will wait patiently," Borisov was quoted as saying. "Everything is laid down in the contract. We will act in accordance with the letter of the contract as all civilized people do."

France has been under pressure for months from its Western allies to scrap the 1.2 billion euro

($1.58 billion) contract, but faces potential compensation claims if it breaches terms. Suspension of contracts is a sensitive issue at a time when France is finalizing other military deals.

"The president of the republic considers that the situation in the east of Ukraine still does not permit the delivery of the first BPC [helicopter carrying and command vessel,]" said a statement from President Francois Hollande's office.

"He has therefore decided that it is appropriate to suspend, until further notice, examination of the request for the necessary authorization to export the first BCP to the Russian Federation."

The United Nations reported that over 4,300 people have been killed in the pro-Russian separatist insurrection in eastern Ukraine that the West says Moscow has promoted. Russia denies any involvement and accuses the Ukrainian military of using indiscriminate violence against civilians.

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