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France Says 'No Reason' to Deliver Mistral Warship to Russia

By The Moscow Times

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Russia's President Vladimir Putin (L) bids farewell to French President Francois Hollande as he escorts him to his plane after a meeting at the Vnukovo internatioal airport in Moscow.

French President Francois Hollande reiterated Friday he sees "no reason" to hand over a Mistral-class helicopter carrier to Russia given Moscow's continued destabilization of war-torn eastern Ukraine, news agency TASS reported.

France committed to building two Mistrals for Russia in a 2011 deal worth 1.2 billion euros ($1.5 billion). The first vessel, named Vladivostok, was due for delivery this fall, but Paris delayed the transfer indefinitely in response to Moscow's support for separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine.

Hollande said Thursday: "I have stated this several times: At the current moment there isn't sufficient progress, from France's point of view, to complete the delivery," according to TASS.

Russian sailors who had spent months training on the warship left France's Saint-Nazaire port on Thursday, Reuters reported, raising speculation as to when — if ever — the carrier will be delivered.

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