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Most French Citizens Think Paris Should Deliver Mistral to Russia

By The Moscow Times

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The two Mistral-class helicopter carriers Sevastopol (L) and Vladivostok are seen at the STX Les Chantiers de l'Atlantique shipyard site in Saint-Nazaire, western France, Dec. 23, 2014.

Over 60 percent of French citizens think their country should honor a 1.2 billion euro ($1.39 billion) contract with Russia for the stalled delivery of two French-built Mistral-class helicopter carriers, according to a poll published Tuesday.

In contrast, 36 percent of French citizens support French President Francois Hollande's decision to deliver the warships only if tensions in Ukraine begin to settle, according to the poll commissioned by newspaper La Tribune.

Meanwhile, 77 percent of respondents in the poll said that failing to fulfill the contract with Russia would have direct consequences for the French shipbuilding industry, as well as the country's broader defense industry.

The poll also found that 75 percent of respondents felt that canceling the transfer of the advanced warships to the Russian navy would encourage an end to hostilities between Moscow and Kiev. Slightly over 50 percent said Western sanctions against Russia were ineffective.

The delivery of the first ship, the Vladivostok, was scheduled for November but delayed as the United States and European Union pressured France to void the high-tech military transfer amid rising tensions with Moscow over the Ukraine crisis. Russian officials have openly suggested pursuing legal damages for a violation of contract, although no moves have been made yet.

The poll, conducted by the French Institute of Public Opinion, was carried out from Jan. 9 to 12 and surveyed 1,001 respondents. No margin of error was given.

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