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Second Mistral Warship for Russia to Begin Sea Trials This Month

By The Moscow Times

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The second of two French-built Mistral-class amphibious assault warships commissioned by the Russian navy will begin sea trials this month, Interfax reported Tuesday citing a source in France's shipbuilding industry.

Russia is still waiting for delivery of the first warship, which was halted by Paris last fall due to Moscow's support of separatists fighting in eastern Ukraine.

"Work [on the second ship] is being completed. In mid-March sea trials will begin," the source told Interfax.

The vessel is set to be delivered to the Russian navy in October this year, the source said.

Russia bought the two Mistrals — multifunctional helicopter carriers more advanced than anything the Russian navy currently fields — in 2011 for 1.2 billion euros ($1.3 billion).

But the French government said in September it would not hand over the ships until a political

settlement to the ongoing crisis in eastern Ukraine was implemented.

Russia has threatened to pursue legal damages if the contract is not honored.

The contract also gives Russia the option to build two additional ships in domestic yards with French help. It is unclear whether Moscow intends to pursue that option.

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