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Official Reprimanded for Saying Russia Won't Buy Mistral Warships – Report

By The Moscow Times

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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, May 21, 2015.

An official who declared this week that Russia was no longer interested in purchasing two French-built Mistral-class warships has been chastised by a top official for speaking out of turn, the Kommersant newspaper reported Wednesday, citing an unidentified source in the government.

The outspoken official — Oleg Bochkarev, the deputy chairman of Russia's Military-Industrial Commission — was sternly reprimanded by Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, who oversees the defense industry, the report said.

Bochkarev was widely cited in the Russian media yesterday after telling the RBC news agency that it was "a matter of fact that Russia is not taking [the Mistral ships]."

The unidentified official told Kommersant that Bochkarev had never been involved in negotiations regarding the Mistral ships, which Russia ordered from France in 2011. Paris has suspended delivery of the warships in response to Moscow's support for separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Citing inside sources, Kommersant reported two weeks ago that Russia had demanded 1.16 billion euros ($1.26 billion) to cover not only its 893 million euro ($972 million) advance, but also additional costs incurred in preparing bases, sailors and helicopters for the ships. France has offered to pay just 785 million euros ($854 million), Kommersant reported.

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