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Official: France and Russia Are Close to Signing Agreement on Mistral Warships

By The Moscow Times

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The two Mistral-class helicopter carriers Sevastopol and Vladivostok are seen at the STX Les Chantiers de l'Atlantique shipyard site in Saint-Nazaire, western France, May 25.

A Russian presidential aide said Thursday that France and Russia are close to signing an agreement on the compensation that Russia has demanded from France for its non-delivery of two Mistral-class helicopter carriers, news agency RIA Novosti reported.

Russia ordered the two Mistral warships from France in 2011, but France froze the delivery last year as the West leveled sanctions against Russia for its involvement in the Ukraine crisis.

"The negotiations are entering the final stage, in the near future we will sign an agreement with France on refunding the money to Russia," RIA quoted presidential aide Vladimir Kozhin as saying. Kozhin advises Russian President Vladimir Putin on issues of military and technical cooperation.

Citing an unidentified source, RIA reported earlier on Thursday that Russia and France had reached a preliminary agreement on the amount France will compensate Russia for the non-delivery of the warships.

Now the delegations are discussing the technical aspects of transferring the compensation, the source told RIA.

Citing inside sources, newspaper Kommersant reported in May that Russia had demanded 1.16 billion euros ($1.29 billion) to cover not only its 893 million euro ($992 million) advance, but additional costs incurred to prepare bases, sailors and helicopters for the ships.

France, according to the newspaper, was ready to pay Russia 785 billion euros ($871 million).

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