

Iraq Says Baghdad, Moscow Intend to Fulfill \$4Bln Arms Deal

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Moscow and Baghdad are going ahead with a more than \$4 billion deal that would make Russia Iraq's second-largest arms supplier, Iraq's foreign minister said Friday, contradicting reports the contract had been scrapped over possible corruption.

Iraq was a lucrative arms market for the Soviet Union but considered off-limits to Moscow following the 2003 ouster of Saddam Hussein.

"In principle, both sides intend to fulfill this order," Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari told Interfax.

President Nouri al-Maliki last year announced the cancellation of the deal for military jets, helicopters and missiles from Russia

But he was then contradicted by the acting defense minister, who said the agreement was

valid.

Last week, the Russian state arms exporter Rosoboronexport said the deal had not been canceled but had not yet entered into force, and it said the deal still needed to pass through a series of legislative formalities.

“I think that it is a question of the distribution of money,” said Zebari. “It is necessary to pay in advance, and we have a political crisis. Our budget for 2013 was not yet approved by the parliament.”

The arms agreements are a sensitive issue for Iraq. U.S. military hardware remains key for Iraq’s armed forces, but the Russian deal appeared to open a way for al-Maliki to push back against U.S. pressure by diversifying his suppliers.

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