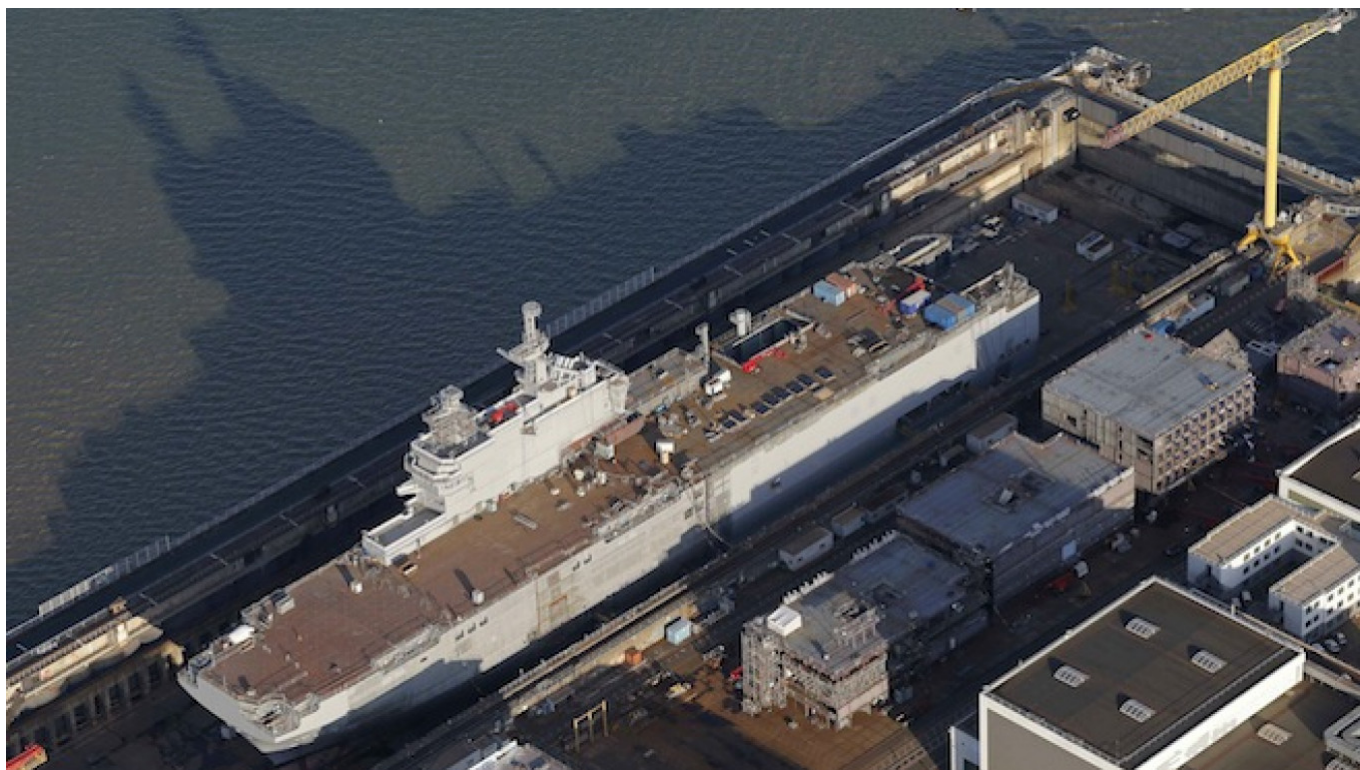


As Russia Waits on France's Mistral, Navy Orders Domestic Assault Ship

By [Matthew Bodner](#)

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An aerial view shows the Mistral-class helicopter carrier Sevastopol at the STX Les Chantiers de l'Atlantique shipyard site in Saint-Nazaire, western France, September 22, 2014.

While waiting for France's final ruling on the delivery of its Mistral-class assault ship, Russia has proceeded to order a more modest amphibious landing vessel from its own shipyards, the CEO of the Nevsky Design Bureau was quoted by TASS as saying Monday.

Although pricing has yet to be determined, the order is for an Ivan Gren-class large amphibious landing ship. The warship will be the second of its kind.

Russia's post-Soviet navy, significantly weakened by years of decay and neglect, has been one of the prime beneficiaries of President Vladimir Putin's ambitious 20 trillion ruble (\$500 billion) rearmament program through 2020. The Ivan Gren class is a key part of this ambitious plan, as vessels of its type are vital for expanding a military's reach and launching attacks on foreign territory.

Under the program, the navy is also building 16 new nuclear power submarines for long-range deployments and modernizing 12 older nuclear submarines, TASS reported in early September.

Estimating the cost of the second Ivan Gren is difficult though, as the design firm expects to replace a number of major imported components with domestic equivalents, according to Nevsky Design Bureau CEO Sergei Vlasov.

"There are a number of substitutions that are problematic," Vlasov admitted. "In particular, refrigeration units and sewage and bilge systems," he said, adding that domestic producers for certain parts have already been located.

Construction on the first Ivan Gren, built in Russia's Yantar Shipbuilding plant, began in 2004 and after several delays is expected to enter service with the Russian navy in 2015.

Meanwhile, Russia has been pushing France for a final decision on the saga of the Mistral carrier deal, valued at 1.2 billion euros (\$1.5 billion). The U.S. and several of its NATO allies have been pushing Paris to ax the deal in response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and support of pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine. France has sent mixed signals on the delivery of the first ship, tentatively scheduled for Nov. 4, according to Russian media reports in recent weeks.

However, the Ivan Gren-class differs significantly from the Mistral warships Russia is eagerly awaiting. The Russian design can drop up to 300 marines, 40 armored personnel carriers, or 13 tanks on foreign shores. The Mistral is significantly more capable in that it serves as a command center for a landing operation, and has the ability to provide air support for its troops with up to 35 helicopters.

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