

## Russia says hands ships back to Ukraine ahead of summit

*Росія заявляє, що повертає назад кораблі в Україну до саміту*

*Іранське видання в статті пише про передачу Росією трьох військово-морських кораблів Україні. Після обміну полоненими у вересні та виведення деяких фронтових військ протягом останніх тижнів, передача ознаменувала ще один крок у спробі вирішити п'ятирічний конфлікт на сході України, - підкреслює видання.*

<http://www.iran-daily.com/News/261750.html>



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Russia said on Monday it handed over three navy ships, apprehended a year ago from Ukraine, in the latest move to ease tensions between the two countries ahead of a crucial summit.

After an exchange of prisoners in September and the withdrawal of some frontline forces over the last few weeks, the handover marked another step in trying to resolve the five-year conflict in eastern Ukraine, AFP wrote.

Efforts have been building since the election this year of Volodymyr Zelenskiy as Ukraine's new president, and on Friday France announced he would hold his first face-to-face talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Paris on December 9.

The talks, which will also include French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, will be the highest-level negotiations on the conflict since 2016.

Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Monday that the ships – two gunboats and a tugboat – had been handed over to Ukraine.

It said they had "illegally crossed the Russian border" and been held as evidence but were no longer needed.

The Ukrainian ships were seized in November last year in the most serious confrontation between the two countries since the start of the conflict in 2014.

Russian forces boarded and took control of the vessels as they headed through the Kerch Strait, a narrow waterway giving access to the Sea of Azov that is used by Ukraine and Russia.

They captured 24 Ukrainian sailors, who were returned to Ukraine as part of the September prisoner swap.

Border officials had said on Sunday that the ships would be returned and local television showed footage of them being towed by the Russian coastguard through the Kerch Strait.