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AFP

Russia, US sign chopper deal for Afghanistan

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MOSCOW – Russia has signed a contract with the US Army to deliver 21 MI-17 helicopters to Afghanistan, new agencies quoted the defence ministry's arms oversight service as saying Friday.

The contract includes new helicopters, along with "delivery of spare parts, on-ground service, and material-technical support," RIA Novosti quoted the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation statement as saying.

The contract was previously valued by the Russian media at \$367.5 million.

The Russian helicopters will be sent to be used in Afghanistan's air force starting in October, with deliveries continuing through next year, RIA-Novosti reported.

Washington has decided to pick up the tab after months of talks between NATO and Russian officials ground to a halt.

Some NATO states pressed Russia to deliver some of the transport helicopters for free as they were unable to pay Russia for the aircraft.