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Medvedev Dismisses Japanese Anger Over Kurils Visit

By The Moscow Times

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Stormy weather accompanied Medvedev on his visit to the Kuril Islands.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev brushed off Tokyo's angry reaction to his visit to the disputed Kuril Islands on Thursday after a senior Japanese official said the visit would damage bilateral relations.

Medvedev said he was "absolutely indifferent" to Japan's hostile response and that there was nothing untoward in Russia's head of government visiting Russian territory, Interfax reported.

Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro Gemba said Wednesday that "Medvedev's visit to Kunashir [one of the southernmost Kuril Islands] pours cold water on our relations."

Russia captured the islands — known as the Kuril Islands in Russia and the Northern Territories in Japan — in 1945. Japan still claims them as its own.

In a sign that tension over the islands could increase, Medvedev called on more government officials and journalists to make trips to the Kurils.

"This is a very interesting place. I think that everyone should spend time here, including government heads, members of parliament and journalists," Medvedev told the Itar-Tass news agency.

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