

Japan Imposes New Sanctions on Russian Officials

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Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida.

Japan imposed visa bans on 23 people on Tuesday as it followed the United States and the European Union in announcing expanded sanctions against Russia over its actions in Ukraine.

Moscow has already denounced what it called "Cold War" tactics for the new U.S. and EU sanctions imposed on Russian and Ukrainian allies of President Vladimir Putin.

"Japan expresses serious concern that Russian moves to violate Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including the annexation of Crimea, are continuing," Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said in a statement.

The Japanese Foreign Ministry did not disclose the names, titles or nationalities of the 23 people hit with the new visa bans. A ministry official said Japan's list was based on those compiled by the United States and the European Union.

The new U.S. sanctions, announced on Monday, target the likes of Putin's friend Igor Sechin,

the head of oil giant Rosneft, with visa bans and asset freezes.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who left Japan on Tuesday, faces a tough task during a 10-day European trip.

He must strike a balance between standing by other G7 nations in condemning Russia, while also maintaining working ties with Moscow as Tokyo seeks to diversify energy imports after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Following Russia's recognition of the independence of Ukraine's Crimea region in March, Japan suspended talks with Russia on the relaxation of visa requirements and froze the launch of negotiations on a new investment pact.

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