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Japan's Abe Postpones Russia Meeting Under U.S. Pressure

By The Moscow Times

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Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe walks past the flags of the United States and Japan after speaking to an audience at Columbia University while in New York for the United Nations General Assembly September 22, 2014.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has postponed a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin scheduled for next spring under pressure from the U.S, a news report said Tuesday.

Abe was due to meet Putin in Tokyo this autumn but was asked to reschedule the meeting by the U.S., which has led the chorus of Western condemnation against Russia over its involvement in Ukraine, Japan's Kyodo News reported, citing government sources.

A councillor at the Japanese Embassy, Kotaro Otsuki, later told radio station Echo Moskvy that the invitation had not been formally withdrawn and that a decision on Putin's visit to Tokyo had yet to be taken.

Relations between Japan and Russia have soured in recent months following the imposition of Japanese sanctions against Russia over Ukraine and an ongoing dispute over a chain of islands in the Pacific.

Earlier this month, Moscow's acting ambassador to Japan had hinted that the bilateral meeting in Tokyo could be delayed from the Russian side given the disruptions caused by the Japanese sanctions.

"We had built a very clear timetable to prepare for the visit of Vladimir Putin to Japan. Unfortunately that schedule has been moved," Ambassador Yevgeny Afansiyev was quoted as saying by Rossiiskaya Gazeta.

If the Tokyo meeting is indeed rescheduled, the two leaders could still meet on the sidelines of an APEC summit in November, Kyodo News reported.

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