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Soviet, Japanese World War II-Era Bodies Found on Kuril Islands

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Defense Ministry archeologists found the remains of Japanese and Soviet soldiers on the Kuril island of Shumshu.

A team of Defense Ministry archeologists unearthed the remains of Japanese and Soviet soldiers during an expedition to the Kuril island of Shumshu, where a decisive World War II battle was fought some 70 years ago.

"During the excavation ... we found the remains of 10 Soviet Army soldiers and five Japanese soldiers," Defense Ministry spokesman Alexander Gordeyev said in comments carried Monday by state-run news agency RIA Novosti.

"The remains of the Soviet soldiers have been transferred to representatives of the North Kurils municipal administration for a ceremonial burial, and the remains of the Japanese soldiers will soon be transferred to the Japanese side," Gordeyev added.

In addition to the soldiers' remains, the expedition uncovered an American fighter jet that was flown by Soviet soldiers during World War II, a Japanese Ka-Mi amphibious tank, and two

Japanese trains, the report said.

Shumshu, which is located on the northern tip of the Kuril archipelago, played host to one of the final battles of World War II in August 1945, when Soviet forces invaded the territory then-occupied by Japan. Fortifications, pillar boxes and bunkers can still be found on the island, which today is primarily uninhabited.

The Kuril Islands remain a source of tension between Russia and Japan. An ongoing dispute over rightful ownership of the southern Kurils has prevented the two countries from concluding a formal World War II peace treaty.

The Defense Ministry trip to the Kurils, which was carried out under the auspices of Russia's Geographical Society, ran from Sept. 8 to Sept. 25.

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