

Japan's Abe Looks to Settle Territorial Dispute With Russia Over Kuril Islands

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Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe speaks during a debate session with seven other party leaders, ahead of the December 14 lower house election, in Tokyo on Dec. 1, 2014.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has vowed to settle a territorial dispute with Russia over the Kuril Islands and to conclude a formal peace treaty with Moscow that has not been signed since the end of World War II.

"My mission as a politician, as prime minister, is to resolve the problem of the Northern Territories at any cost [and to conclude a peace treaty]," Abe was quoted as saying by Russia's state-run RIA Novosti, which in turn cited Japan's Kyodo news agency.

Territorial claims over four islands in the Kurils — known as the Northern Territories in Japan and the Southern Kurils in Russia — have been at the heart of a territorial dispute between Moscow and Tokyo that has prevented them from concluding a formal World War II peace treaty.

Japan in August strongly condemned Russia for conducting military drills on the contested

island chain, saying it would lodge a protest with the country's Foreign Ministry.

A month later, Kremlin chief of staff Sergei Ivanov announced that the Russian government would spend 64 billion rubles (\$1.25 billion) on the development of the Kuril Islands between 2016 and 2025, RIA Novosti reported.

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