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Russia Conducts Military Drills on Disputed Kuril Islands

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A view of the Kuril Islands.

Russia has conducted military anti-landing drills in a Pacific island chain, parts of which are also claimed by Japan, the Interfax news agency cited the Russian Defense Ministry as saying Thursday.

"Units were scrambled as part of large-scale anti-landing drills. ... [They] worked on coastal defense from possible sea or air attacks," Interfax quoted the press service for Russia's Eastern Military District as saying.

Tokyo and Moscow have been involved in a decades-old dispute over islands north of Hokkaido, known as the Kuril Islands in Russia and referred to as the Northern Territories in Japan.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said last week that he was ready to discuss the issue but blamed Japan for a lack of dialogue.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has previously said that Russian military exercises on the islands are ''totally unacceptable.''

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