

Japan's Abe Is Latest Leader to Decline Invite to Moscow's Victory Day Parade

April 28, 2015



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe answers questions at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States April 27, 2015.

TOKYO — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will not attend an official ceremony in Moscow on May 9 to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II because of a schedule conflict, the nation's top government spokesman has said.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a news conference on Tuesday that Japan's ambassador to Russia will attend the ceremony instead.

Japan has invited Russian President Vladimir Putin for a visit but it was put off last year because of the Ukraine crisis.

Suga also said the rescheduling of Putin's visit has not been decided.

Abe, eyeing Russia's energy resources, had made improving ties a priority, but they have been strained by sanctions imposed by Tokyo on Moscow over the Ukraine crisis, as Tokyo seeks

to stay in step with its close ally the United States.

A feud over Russian-controlled islands off northern Japan seized by the former Soviet Union at the end of the war remains unresolved, precluding a formal peace treaty.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has already declined an invitation to the ceremony due to tensions over the Ukraine crisis, though she will lay a wreath at the Monument of the Unknown Soldier in the Russian capital one day later.

The European Union and the United States accuse Russia of arming the separatists in east Ukraine and reinforcing their ranks with troops. Moscow has repeatedly denied involvement and blames the United States for pushing the pro-Western government in Kiev to war.

Chinese President Xi Jinping is expected by Moscow to attend the ceremony, though Beijing has yet to confirm that.

Chinese state media said Tuesday that 110 People's Liberation Army troops had already arrived in Moscow to prepare for the parade. China and Russia have close diplomatic and trade ties.

"It will be the first time that China has dispatched a marching contingent to take part in a military parade in Red Square," Chinese ambassador to Russia Li Hui told the official Xinhua news agency.

China will be hosting its own war anniversary event in Beijing in September, also with a military parade, though it has given few details on who will participate.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/04/28/japans-abe-is-latest-leader-to-decline-invite-to-moscow-s-victory-day-parade-a46147>