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Rogozin Tells Japanese To Commit Ritualistic Suicide Amid Kuril Island Spat

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Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin

A Russian government official responded to Japanese protests over Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev's visit to one of the disputed Kuril Islands by suggesting Sunday that those offended in Tokyo commit ritualistic suicide rather than go on "making noise."

Medvedev on Saturday visited one of the four disputed Pacific islands, which have been the subject of a territorial dispute between Japan and Russia since the end of World War II, prompting the Japanese Foreign Ministry to lodge an official complaint with the Russian embassy in Tokyo.

This didn't go down well with Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, the Russian government's point man for all things military.

"Had they been real men, they would have followed the tradition of committing harakiri and would have calmed down finally. Instead, they are only making noise," Rogozin, known for his controversial remarks, said on Twitter on Sunday.

Harakiri, also known as seppuku, is a form of ritualistic suicide by disembowelment traditionally practiced by samurai looking to die with honor rather than fall to their enemies.

Japanese protests over Medvedev's visit to the disputed islands mean that a scheduled visit by President Vladimir Putin to Japan later this year might not go ahead, the Vedomosti newspaper reported Monday.

At the end of World War II, the Soviet Union seized the four disputed islands at the southern end of the Kuril archipelago. Known to the Japanese as the Northern Territories, Tokyo has maintained its territorial claim on the four islands ever since.

During his visit to Iturup Island on Saturday, Medvedev dismissed Japan's position.

“Our position is simple: We want to be friends with Japan, Japan is our neighbor. We have a good attitude toward Japan, but this shouldn’t be linked in any way with the Kuril Islands, which are part of the Russian Federation,” Medvedev was quoted by Reuters as saying Saturday.

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