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Japan May Allow U.S. Military Bases on Disputed Kuril Islands

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A stray dog walks near a recently completed Orthodox church in Yuzhno-Kurilsk, the main settlement on the Southern Kurile Island of Kunashir **Thomas Peter / Reuters**

Japan may allow U.S. military bases on two islands in the southern Kuril chain should the islands once again come under Tokyo's governance.

According to the Japanese newspaper Asahi, the idea was raised in a Nov. 9 meeting in Moscow with the General Secretary of Japan's Security Council Shotaro Yachi and Russian Security Council Head Nikolai Patrushev.

The Kuril Islands would "naturally" fall within the parameters of the agreement on security guarantees between the United States and Japan, Asahi reported.

The TASS news agency earlier reported that former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori had told President Vladimir Putin that building U.S. military bases on the Kuril Islands was "impossible."

Japan and Russia have still not signed a peace treaty since the end of the World War II owing to Japan's territorial claims over four islands in the Kuril chain. Russia has repeatedly refused to discuss the question of Russian territorial sovereignty with Japan.

President Putin is making an official state visit to Japan Dec. 14-15, during which he is expected to discuss the disputed islands.

Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov spoke to journalists on the matter during a daily press briefing on Wednesday. He reminded them that in an interview with the Japanese press, President Putin had said that Russia "could not ignore the the presence of Japan's allied commitments" when considering bilateral relations between Russia and Japan. ⊠⊠⊠

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