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Russia Approves Deployment of Warplanes to Kuril Islands

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Russia's Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has approved the deployment of Russian warplanes on the disputed Kuril Island chain between Russia and Japan.

The countries have been locked in a territorial dispute dating back to the end of World War II when the Soviet Union seized the Kuril Islands from Japan. Both countries claim sovereignty over the island chain and have yet to sign a treaty marking the end of the war.

"The militarization of the Kuril Islands is not a new phenomenon," a Japanese military source in Tokyo told the Kommersant business daily on Friday. Japanese authorities have yet to comment on the record about the decision.

Medvedev had signed a decree on Thursday to allow Russian warplanes to use a civilian airport on the island for military purposes.

The decision came ahead of a scheduled meeting between the deputy foreign ministers of the

two countries to discuss cooperation on the disputed territory and Japan's decision to allow Washington to build a military base there.

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