

Japan Protests Russian Internet Expansion on Disputed Islands

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Japan has expressed [displeasure](#) with a Russian plan to lay fiber-optic cables on disputed Pacific islands, seized from Japan at the end of World War II, to provide local residents with internet access.

Both countries, who have yet to sign a treaty formally marking the end of the war, claim sovereignty over the island chain known in Russia as the Kuril Islands and in Japan as the Northern Territories. The dispute over the fiber-optic cables is only the latest tension in the region, where Russia is paving the way for its first military base in the area.

Related article: [Between Russia and Japan: Life on the Kuril Islands](#)

"We've lodged protests via diplomatic routes with Russia and China," Japanese government spokesman Yoshihide Suga told reporters at a daily briefing Monday, calling the plan

“deplorable” and arguing it “has no legal basis.”

The cables will [provide](#) high-speed internet access to Kuril’s [estimated](#) 20,500 residents with the help of Chinese communication equipment giant Huawei.

The head of Russia’s state-controlled telecom operator Rostelecom [pledged](#) to President Vladimir Putin to connect Kuril to mainland Russia as part of the Far East development program by the end of 2018.

The Kremlin said last month that Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe could discuss joint business activity between the two countries on the Kuril Islands.

Russia continued its controversial militarization of the Kurils this year by [deploying](#) warplanes on the island’s civilian airport.

“We can see that the local residents use these modern devices extensively,” head of Rostelecom, Mikhail Oseyevsky, told Putin this year in vowing to connect the islanders to high-speed internet to help them access phone and computer services.

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