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Japan Protests Russian Military Drills on Disputed Island

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Japan has rebuked Russia's planned military exercises on a Pacific island claimed by both countries in the latest row over the territory that has kept the countries from signing a formal peace agreement marking the end of World War II.

Tokyo said last week it regretted Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev's visit to one of the four Russian-held islands known in Russia as the Kurils. On Monday, the Kyodo news agency reported that Russia had notified Japan of its plans to hold live-fire exercises off one of the islands from Aug. 5-11.

Related article: Japan Says Russian Prime Minister's Visit to Disputed Island Is Regrettable

"We've lodged a protest through a diplomatic channel because the drills are linked to Russia's military buildup on the Northern Territories," Japan's cabinet spokesman Yoshihide Suga was quoted as saying by The Japan Times newspaper.

Japan, which calls the islands the Northern Territories, lodged similar protests against Russian shooting exercises there in April.

The drills and Medvedev's visit come barely a month after Russian President Vladimir Putin said the neighbors had moved toward establishing joint economic activities on the disputed islands.

Japan has previously expressed displeasure with Russian buildup on the islands, which Moscow has rejected.

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