

Japan Protests Russian Military Drills on Disputed Island

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Christopher Jue / EPA / TASS

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 <u>said</u> 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.

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"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 <u>quoted</u> as saying by The Japan Times newspaper.

Japan, which calls the islands the Northern Territories, <u>lodged</u> 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 <u>buildup</u> on the islands, which Moscow has <u>rejected</u>.

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