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Russia Blames 'Revisionist' U.S. for Disputed Islanders' Visas

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Russians born on the Kuril Islands are required to name Japan as their birthplace to receive permanent residency in the U.S. **Sergei Krasnoukhov / TASS**

The United States exercises World War II "revisionism" by classifying Russian visa-seekers born on a disputed island chain in the Far East as Japanese nationals, Russia's Foreign Ministry said Sunday.

Russians born on the islands of Habomai, Shikotan, Kunashiri and Etorofu have been required to name Japan as their birthplace to receive permanent residency known as green cards since 2018, Japan's Hokkaido Shimbun reported earlier, citing the U.S. State Department. The dispute over the Russian-held islands, which Russia calls the Kurils and Japan claims as the Northern Territories, has kept the sides from striking a formal peace treaty to end World War II.

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“The Kuril Islands were handed to the U.S.S.R. as part of a 1945 decision. Today, the State Department challenges the results of World War II, encouraging revanchism,” the Foreign Ministry said in a tweet.

“Do we need more proof that the U.S. is a revisionist power?” it asked, telling Washington to “know your borders and ‘red lines’” in a post on its official Telegram channel.

The U.S. has said it recognizes Japan’s sovereignty over the disputed islands. A Russian state media translation of the Hokkaido Shimbun report noted that Japan’s foreign ministry was unaware of that recognition.

The State Department, the report said, issued the classification to help Russian green-card applicants from the Kurils “avoid mistakes in applying for U.S. visas and encounter fewer rejections.”

A set of constitutional changes enacted by President Vladimir Putin this summer includes a clause banning territorial concessions, which is viewed as being designed to allow Russia to keep the Kurils and Crimea.

A Russian state-funded poll in early 2019 said that 96% of the islands’ adult population opposed ceding the islands to Japan.

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