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Russia Deploys 3rd Coastal Defense System on Island Chain Claimed by Japan

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Moscow and Tokyo's dispute over the Kuril Islands has prevented them from signing a formal peace treaty since the end of World War II. **Press service of the Russian Defense Ministry / TASS**

The Russian military said Thursday it has deployed its third Bastion coastal defense missile system on the Kuril Islands, a Pacific territory that Japan claims as its own.

The Russian Navy previously deployed Bastion systems with their counterparts called Bal on the Kuril's Iturup and Kunashir islands in 2016.

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The Navy's Pacific Fleet delivered the Bastion system and personnel to the central island of Matua this year for round-the-clock monitoring of the surrounding area, Interfax quoted the Pacific Fleet as saying.

The Pacific Fleet has erected a special "autonomous military town" on the uninhabited volcanic island to provide operational maintenance for the Bastion, which has a range of up to 450 kilometers.

According to Interfax, the Russian military has previously announced plans to build an airfield for light military transport aircraft and a base point for Russian Navy ships on Matua.

The Kremlin said Thursday that Russia is free to deploy systems like the Bastion wherever it deems appropriate.

Russia has controlled the Kuril Islands, which lie north of Japan's Hokkaido and are called Northern Territories by Tokyo, since seizing it in the final days of World War II.

The territorial dispute and Russia's growing militarization of the island chain has kept Moscow and Tokyo from signing a peace accord that would formally end their wartime hostilities.

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