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Russia Slams 'Monstrous, Barbaric' Assassination of Ex-Japan PM Abe

July 08, 2022

Japan's former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (C) speaks during an Upper House election campaign act for a party candidate outside Yamato-Saidaiji Station of Kintetsu Railway in Nara, western Japan, 08 July 2022 just before he was shot and gravely injured. **JIJI PRESS / EPA / TASS**

Russian officials joined leaders from around the world in expressing shock over the assassination of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Friday.

Abe died at age 67 after being shot at a campaign event in the south-central city of Nara outside Osaka. A suspect identified by local media as a former member of Japan's navy has been taken into custody.

Russian-Japanese relations, which have been gridlocked over failed efforts to hammer out a post-World War II peace treaty due to a dispute over Moscow-held Pacific islands, have been further strained by Russia's invasion of neighboring Ukraine.

Tokyo has joined Western sanctions against Russia following Feb. 24, while Moscow barred entry to dozens of Japanese politicians and journalists in retaliation.

Here is how Russian lawmakers, diplomats and officials reacted to Abe's assassination:

— Russian President Vladimir Putin:

"The hand of a criminal cut short the life of an outstanding statesman who headed the Japanese government for a long time and did a lot to develop good neighborly relations between our countries," Putin wrote in a telegram of condolence addressed to Abe's family.

"We maintained regular contacts with Shinzo, in which his excellent personal and professional qualities were fully demonstrated. The bright memory of this wonderful man will forever remain in the hearts of all who knew him."

"I wish you and your family strength and courage in the face of this heavy, irreparable loss."

— Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov:

"We are deeply saddened by the news from Japan and condemn the assassination in the strongest terms."

"Abe was a patriot who defended Japan's interests at the negotiating table, due to which he had good relations with Putin."

— Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova:

"We're convinced that those who planned and committed this monstrous crime will incur due responsibility for this act of terrorism, for which there is no justification and no excuse."

— Mikhail Galuzin, Russia's Ambassador to Tokyo:

"We pray for the health of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. We strongly condemn the barbaric assassination attempt against him," Galuzin said before Abe was reported to have died.

— Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov:

"I learned about [Abe's shooting] during the G20 meeting [in Indonesia]. I was practically the first one to start my speech by expressing condolences to my Japanese colleague. There will probably be an investigation," Lavrov said before Abe was reported to have died.

— Konstantin Kosachev, chair of the upper house of Russian parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee:

"Terrible news from Japan. As prime minister, Shinzo Abe personally supervised a multi-year and very effective project of interregional cooperation through the upper houses of the Russian and Japanese parliaments."

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