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Russia Moves Missile Systems From Island Chain Claimed by Japan – Reports

September 01, 2023



A S-300V missile system. **Vitaly V. Kuzmin (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

Russia has moved two S-300 surface-to-air missile systems from a chain of disputed Far East islands that Japan claims as its own, Japan's Kyodo news agency reported Friday, citing satellite imagery.

Yu Koizumi, a University of Tokyo lecturer who analyzed the images from U.S. space tech company Maxar, speculated that Russia may have repurposed the S-300V4 systems for its war in Ukraine.

"The Russian military is deploying all weapons at their disposal, which is evidence of their active engagement in the [Ukrainian] conflict," Koizumi told Kyodo.

Moscow deployed the S-300V4s on Iturup and Kunashir, two of the four Russian-held Kuril Islands, in late 2020. Tokyo, which refers to the Kuril Islands as the Northern Territories, protested the moves at the time.

Kyodo noted that Maxar images showed the two S-300V4 systems in Iturup's Kasatka Bay (known in Japan as Etorofu's Hitokappu Bay) and Kunashir's Yuzhno-Kurilsk (known as Kunashiri's Furukamappu) back in September 2022.

Koizumi said he believes both systems have since been redeployed to Russia's western borders with Ukraine "in preparation for a potential attack."

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An unspecified number of old tanks and howitzers in southern Sakhalin may have been repaired and sent to Ukraine, the lecturer also said.

A similarly unspecified number of residents of Iturup and Kunashir have also been mobilized into the Russian military, where some have since died, Koizumi added.

Kyodo's report comes a week after Ukraine's military intelligence claimed to have destroyed a Russian S-400 missile defense system in annexed Crimea. The Russian military has not commented on the claims.

The S-300 is a mobile, long-range air defense system developed in the 1970s that can detect, track and destroy ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and aircraft. Russia's S-400 Triumf surface-to-air system entered service in 2007.

Russia has controlled the Kuril Islands, which lie north of Japan's Hokkaido, since seizing them in the final days of World War II in 1945.

The territorial dispute and Russia's growing militarization of the island chain have kept Moscow and Tokyo from signing a peace accord that would formally mark an end to the war.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/09/01/russia-moves-missile-systems-from-island-chain-claimed-by-japan-reports-a82331