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Pro-Russia Japanese MP Resigns From Party Over Moscow Trip

By AFP

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Muneo Suzuki. **Council.gov.ru**

A pro-Russia Japanese lawmaker left his opposition party Tuesday after facing criticism for making a surprise visit to Moscow and declaring his support for Russia in its war against Ukraine.

Muneo Suzuki, a former parliamentary vice-minister of foreign affairs, submitted a letter of resignation to the center-right opposition Japan Innovation Party, the party's secretary-general Fumitake Fujita said.

The party had been taking steps to expel him over the trip, but Suzuki told leaders that he wished to leave of his own accord, Fujita said.

"The party decided to accept his wish," Fujita said at a press conference.

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Suzuki, a veteran lawmaker, will continue to serve as a member of parliament, with his current term due to end in 2025.

He visited Russia for a five-day trip in early October, meeting with various Russian officials including Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko.

It was the first known visit by a Japanese lawmaker to Russia since Moscow invaded Ukraine last year.

During the visit, he told Russian media that he believed Moscow would be victorious, a comment that he reiterated after returning to Japan.

Tokyo has sided with allies the United States, European Union and others in sanctioning Moscow over the war, and urges its citizens not to visit Russia.

Suzuki, once a member of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), has been deeply involved in Japan's efforts to solve its territorial disputes with Russia over small islands off Japan's northern coasts.

He was forced to leave the LDP in the early 2000s over bribery and political fund scandals.

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