

It and south korean president park geun- hye

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It was a 30 minute visit to a controversial shrine by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe; that's all it took to ignite a predictable firestorm of criticism and condemnation from Japan's neighbors.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe says he visited Yasukuni Shrine to pay his respects to those who died for their country and to renew a pledge for Japan not to go to war again. Mr. Abe explained: " I wanted to pray for the souls of the war dead, not honor war criminals. I want to pray for everyone. I have renewed my determination before the souls of the war dead to firmly uphold the pledge never to wage a war again" While visiting the Shinto shrine on Thursday he also paid a visit to the Chinreisha shrine inside the Yasukuni Jinja compound. " This shrine is for all those who fell in battle grounds, including people of other countries who are not honored at the main shrine", Mr. Abe said.

" I have no intention whatsoever of hurting the feelings of the people of South Korea and China. It is a common attitude of leaders around the world to pray for the souls of those who died fighting in wars and leaving behind their loved ones. I will continue to explain to all the countries that my shrine visit has no other meaning" Abe's visit came exactly a year after he took office, during which time he has received the cold shoulder from both Chinese President Xi Jinping and South Korean President Park Geun-hye during regional conferences. Abe's Explanation's Not Enough Seoul said it was furious with the " deplorable" act, and Beijing labelled the visit " absolutely unacceptable" and summoned Japan's ambassador. US officials said the visit would " exacerbate tensions" in the region." Japan is a valued ally and friend, nevertheless, the United States is disappointed that Japan's

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leadership has taken an action that will exacerbate tensions with Japan's neighbors", U.

S. Embassy in Tokyo said. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said Beijing seriously condemned the visit." This poses a major political obstacle in the improvement of bilateral relations.

Japan must take responsibility for all the consequences that this creates," he said. Japan occupied Taiwan, the Korean peninsula and much of China. During World War Two Japanese imperial forces committed atrocities throughout East and South East Asia, killing over 20million people, including the use of Korean women as sex slaves and carrying out massacres in China." Honoring the shrine is, in its essence, embellishing and falsely beautifying Japan's military invasion and colonization", South Korean Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism said. Jeff Kingston, director of Asian studies at Japan's Temple University, said Japan has made its history into an issue when it should be seeking the cooperation of China and South Korea in dealing with the threat North Korea poses.