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North Korea's Kim Jong Un Planning to Send Special Envoy to Russia 'Soon'

By The Moscow Times

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North Korean leader Kim Jong Un looks through a pair of binoculars.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is to send a personal envoy to Russia, state media said Friday, the latest in a series of diplomatic moves by the isolated country as it fends off accusations of crimes against humanity.

North Korean diplomats have been on a vigorous campaign in recent months to counter a UN resolution urging the country's referral to the International Criminal Court, a move which it has dismissed as part of a U.S.-led plot to destroy its political system.

The short one-paragraph dispatch said Choe Ryong Hae, a high-ranking member of the ruling Workers' Party widely seen as a close confidant of Kim, would visit Russia "soon," without elaborating further.

A statement on the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs website said Choe would visit Moscow

on Monday, followed by a visit to the Far Eastern cities of Khabarovsk and Vladivostok before ending his trip on Nov. 24.

A UN inquiry concluded in a Feb. 17 report that North Korean security chiefs and possibly even Kim himself should face international justice for ordering systematic torture, starvation and killings.

North Korea is already under UN sanctions for repeated nuclear tests and missile launches. Russia, along with the two Koreas, China, the United States and Japan, were participants in years of so-called six-party talks aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear program which came to nothing.

There has been increased diplomatic activity between Russia and North Korea in recent months.

Russia shares a short, remote land border with North Korea and has in recent years completed the refurbishment of a railway line and seaport in the north east of North Korea.

The two sides plan to discuss enhanced trade and economic cooperation, as well as "international issues of common interest," the Russian statement said.

Choe met Chinese President Xi Jinping last year as an official envoy of Kim Jong Un, and made a surprise trip to South Korea in October as part of a high-level delegation to the closing ceremony of the Asian Games.

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