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Kremlin Says Unable to Confirm Putin-Kim Jong Un Summit

By AFP

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Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin during a meeting in 2019. **Valery Melnikov / POOL / TASS**

The Kremlin on Tuesday declined to confirm a possible summit between Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, which U.S. officials have said they expect.

U.S. officials and media have said they believe Kim will make a rare trip abroad to neighboring Russia to meet Putin.

"No, we cannot" confirm this, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, when he was asked if Kim would meet Putin soon. "We have nothing to say on this."

Washington has accused Pyongyang of supplying weapons to Moscow for its Ukraine offensive.

Russia is one of a handful of countries that has friendly relations with the secretive state.

As its Ukraine offensive drags on, it has in recent months worked for even closer ties with Pyongyang.

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, who in July visited North Korea, on Monday said Moscow was considering joint military drills with North Korea.

"Why not? They are our neighbors," Shoigu was quoted as saying by the state-run TASS news agency when asked about the possible exercises.

Shoigu became Kim's first known foreign guest since the Covid-19 pandemic when he visited Pyongyang on July 27.

He was shown Pyongyang's nuclear missiles during a personal tour by the North Korean leader.

Russia shares a short border with North Korea on its Pacific coast.

If Kim does visit, he is expected to cross the border by armored train, as he did in 2019 when he met Putin in the Far East Russian city of Vladivostok.

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