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North Korea's Kim Leaves Russia, Given Drones as Gift

By AFP

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Yuriy Smituk / TASS

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un left Russia on Sunday on his armoured train, Russian news agencies reported, wrapping up a six-day trip which has focused largely on military matters.

Kim's first official visit abroad since the coronavirus pandemic has fanned Western fears that Moscow and Pyongyang will defy sanctions and strike an arms deal.

The RIA Novosti agency published a video of Kim's departure, and said a "departure ceremony" was held at the Artyom-Primorsky-1 station, while TASS news agency said that Kim's train was headed around 250 kilometers towards the border.

The footage shows Kim waving goodbye from his train to a Russian delegation led by Natural Resources Minister Alexander Kozlov, before the Russian march "Farewell of Slavianka" is played as the train departs.

Earlier Sunday, TASS said Kim had been given five explosive drones, a reconnaissance drone and a bulletproof vest as gifts from a regional governor.

TASS said the "leader of the DPRK received five kamikaze drones and a 'Geran-25' reconnaissance drone with vertical takeoff," using the official name of North Korea.

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TASS said the governor of the Primorye region, which borders China and North Korea, also "offered Kim Jong Un a set of bulletproof protection" and "special clothing not detectable by thermal cameras."

On Saturday he met the Russian Defense Minister in Vladivostok, where he inspected state-of-the-art weapons including a hypersonic missile system.

Kim's extended tour of Russia's far eastern region, which began on Tuesday, has focused extensively on military matters, as evidenced by his own officer-dominated entourage, a symbolic exchange of rifles with President Vladimir Putin and a tour of a fighter jet factory in Komsomolsk-on-Amur.

Moscow is believed to be interested in buying North Korean ammunition to continue fighting in Ukraine, while Pyongyang wants Russia's help to develop its internationally condemned missile programme.

The Kremlin has said no agreement has or will be signed.

Kim also met with North Korean students studying in Vladivostok on Sunday.

North Korean news agency KCNA has described the atmosphere during Kim's visit as "fervent and warm" and said a "new era of friendship, solidarity and cooperation" was opening between North Korea and Russia.

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