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North Korean Arms Shipments to Russia Continue With 500K Munitions – Bloomberg

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Kim Jong Un and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu **Russian Defense Ministry**

Continuing North Korean arms shipments to Russia this winter are allowing Moscow to maintain pressure on Ukraine as it faces the risk of losing critical Western supplies, Bloomberg reported Tuesday, citing satellite imagery.

The United States, South Korea and Japan said in October they had confirmed North Korea was supplying Russia with arms and military equipment supplies for use against Ukraine, adding that Pyongyang was seeking Moscow's military assistance in exchange. Russia and North Korea deny the claims.

Satellite imagery from October-December 2023 appears to show hundreds of shipping containers loaded onto and unloaded from Russian ships at North Korea's Najin and Russia's Dunay ports, which are located 180 kilometers apart, according to Bloomberg.

The Russian-North Korean trade has "continued unabatedly despite additional U.S. sanctions and widespread reporting on this activity in the past few months," analyst Jaewoo Shin of the Austrian Open Nuclear Network risk-reduction program told Bloomberg.

Bloomberg said North Korea holds some of the world's largest munitions stores, much of which is interoperable with Russian weapons in Ukraine.

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Recent deliveries may include 120mm mortars, 122mm and 152mm artillery shells and 122mm rockets, according to conflict analyst Joost Oilemans, who cited an analysis of frontline supplies.

"[S]o for all we know that's another half million shells," said Oilemans, the creator of the open-source intelligence project Oryx, which documents military equipment losses in the Ukraine conflict.

South Korean intelligence said in November that the North had likely delivered more than 1 million rounds of artillery to Russia via 10 shipments since August.

"[North Korean arms shipments] will allow Russia to keep up much higher pressure for longer on Ukrainian forces," Oilemans added.

Russia and North Korea, which have pledged closer military cooperation, deny the arms transfers for use in the Ukraine conflict.

The reported steady stream of deliveries comes as flagging U.S. and European military aid threatens Ukraine's ability to defend itself against Russia.

Russian-North Korean cooperation will likely continue into 2024 due to "symbolic and largely insufficient" sanctions, said former CIA Korea analyst Soo Kim, who now works at the U.S. management consulting firm LMI.

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