The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
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G7 Urges North Korea, Russia to 'Cease Unlawful Arms Transfers'

May 31, 2024



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un next to a missile system. **Korean Central News Agency / AP / TASS**

G7 foreign ministers said Friday they were "gravely concerned" about deepening cooperation between Russia and North Korea, particularly arms transfers from Pyongyang to Moscow for use on the battlefield in Ukraine.

"We are gravely concerned by the deepening DPRK-Russia cooperation in flagrant violation of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions," they said in a statement issued by this year's G7 president, Italy.

"We call on the DPRK [North Korea] and Russia to cease unlawful arms transfers," read the statement, which was also issued on behalf of ministers from South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and the European Union.

They said recent sanctions by their governments "represent a coordinated effort to hold the DPRK and Russia to account and to impose costs on actors and entities involved in the unlawful transfer of arms from the DPRK to Russia for use in attacking Ukraine."

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A Pentagon report released earlier this week said Russia was using North Korean ballistic missiles in Ukraine, citing debris analysis. South Korea also accuses Pyongyang of sending thousands of containers of munitions to Russia, which would violate rafts of United Nations sanctions on both countries.

Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, denied the allegations earlier this month, calling the claim "absurd." But experts maintain that a recent testing spree, which has seen Pyongyang fire off rockets, cruise and ballistic missiles, may be of weapons destined for use on the battlefield in Ukraine.

North Korea is barred by UN sanctions from any tests using ballistic technology. But Moscow used its UN Security Council veto in March to effectively end UN monitoring of violations, for which Pyongyang has specifically thanked Russia.

"By the use of its veto, Russia has sought to deprive all UN member states of the objective and independent information and guidance they need to implement binding Security Council resolutions concerning the DPRK which all remain in effect," the G7 ministers said.

"We urge the DPRK to respond to the numerous and genuine offers to return to diplomacy, the only path to an enduring peace on the Korean Peninsula," they added.

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