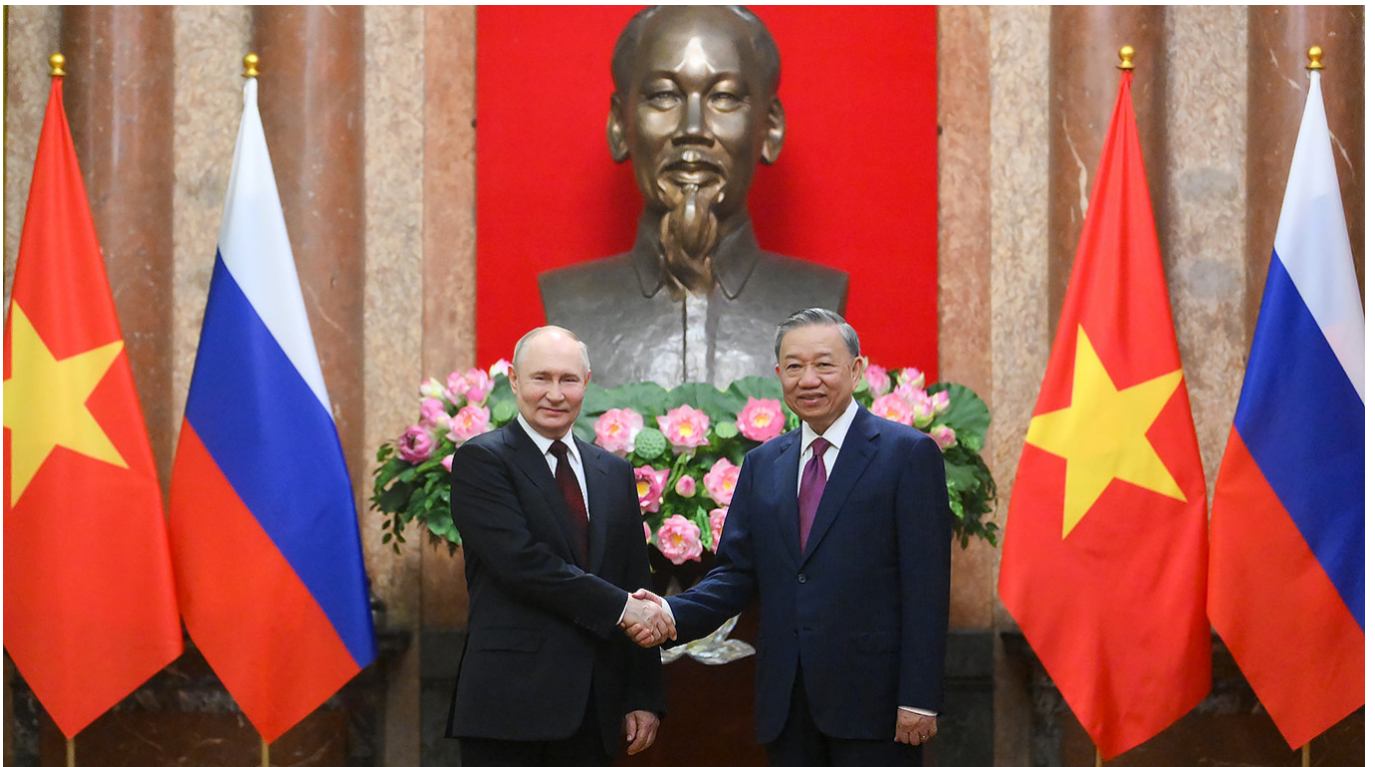


Russia and Vietnam Vow to Strengthen Ties as Putin Visits Hanoi

By [AFP](#)

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Putin with Vietnamese President Tho Lam. **Kristina Kormilitsyna / POOL / TASS**

Updated with cooperation agreement signing.

Russia and Vietnam pledged Thursday to strengthen mutual ties as President Vladimir Putin made a state visit aimed at bolstering his alliances to counter Moscow's growing isolation over the war in Ukraine.

Putin traveled to Vietnam, a close ally of Russia since the Cold War, from a summit with North Korea's Kim Jong Un, who promised "full support" for the Kremlin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and signed a defense pact with Moscow.

The Russian leader did not receive such a clear public declaration of support in Hanoi, but Vietnamese President To Lam indicated a desire to boost defense cooperation.

"The two sides want to push up cooperation in defense and security, how to deal with non-

traditional security challenges on the basis of international law, for peace and security in the region and the world," Lam told reporters after talks with Putin.

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Russia has been Vietnam's main arms supplier for decades, accounting for more than 80% of imports between 1995 and 2023, but orders have dropped since the West introduced sanctions over the war in Ukraine.

The two sides said in a joint statement that their defense and security cooperation was "not directed against any third country" and contributed to "peace, stability and sustainable development" in the region.

Lam and Putin signed around a dozen cooperation agreements ranging from education and justice to civil nuclear projects.

The Kremlin leader told reporters the talks were constructive and that both sides had "identical or very close" positions on key international issues.

Putin later held talks with Nguyen Phu Trong, the powerful general secretary of the ruling Communist Party, and laid a wreath at the memorial to independence leader Ho Chi Minh.

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Vietnam has abstained in UN votes condemning the Russian invasion. And in an op-ed published in the communist party mouthpiece Nhan Dan newspaper ahead of his visit, Putin thanked Hanoi for its "balanced stance on the Ukraine crisis."

Carl Thayer, emeritus professor of politics at Australia's University of New South Wales, said Vietnam has stopped "big ticket" military purchases since 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine.

"Russia and Vietnam have a mutual interest in resuming arms sales but Vietnam is hamstrung by the threat of US sanctions," he told AFP.

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