

North Korea Sending 'Large-Scale' Troop Deployments to Fight in Ukraine War, Seoul Says

By [AFP](#)

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Video grab

North Korea is sending "large-scale" troop deployments to support Moscow's war against Ukraine, with 1,500 special forces already stationed in Russia's Far East where they are undergoing training, Seoul's intelligence agency said Friday.

The National Intelligence Service (NIS) released detailed satellite images of what it said was Pyongyang's first deployment to Russia.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol convened an emergency security meeting Friday, with Seoul slamming the North's move as "a significant security threat not only to our country but also to the international community," the president's office said.

The NIS said it had "detected that from the 8th to the 13th [of October], North Korea

transported its special forces to Russia via a Russian Navy transport ship, confirming the start of North Korea's military participation" in Moscow's war against Ukraine.

According to the spy agency, multiple Russian landing ships and frigates have already completed transporting the first contingent of troops, who are currently stationed in military bases across Russia's Far East.

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The special forces soldiers "are expected to be deployed to the front lines [of the war in Ukraine] as soon as they complete acclimatization training," it said. The soldiers have been issued Russian military uniforms and Russian-made weapons, the NIS added.

"This seems to be an effort to disguise the fact that they are North Korean troops by making them appear as Russian soldiers," the spy agency said.

More troops are likely to be sent to Russia soon, South Korean officials said, adding that it estimated the North could send around 12,000 soldiers in total. "A second transport operation is expected to take place soon," they said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin made a rare visit to Pyongyang in June, with the two countries signing a mutual defense treaty, fuelling speculations of further arms transfers.

South Korea's NIS said Friday that the North had "provided Russia with more than 13,000 containers' worth of artillery shells, missiles, anti-tank rockets and other lethal weapons" since last August.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Thursday that intelligence reports indicated Pyongyang was training 10,000 soldiers to support Russia in its fight against Kyiv. He claimed Russia is relying on North Korean troops to compensate for its substantial losses.

Earlier this month, Ukrainian media reported that six North Korean military officers were killed in a Ukrainian missile attack on Russian-occupied territory near Donetsk on Oct. 3.

South Korea's Defense Minister Kim Yong-hyun told lawmakers at the time that it was "highly likely" that the report was true.

Experts said that moving from supplying shells to soldiers to Russia was the next logical step.

"For North Korea, which has supplied Russia with many shells and missiles, it's crucial to learn how to handle different weapons and gain real-world combat experience," said Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Seoul's Institute for Far Eastern Studies.

"This might even be a driving factor behind sending North Korean soldiers — to provide them with diverse experiences and war-time training," he told AFP.

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