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Russian Parliament Ratifies Defense Treaty With North Korea

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Russian lawmakers voted unanimously on Thursday to ratify a strategic partnership agreement between Russia and North Korea that, among other things, provides for "mutual assistance" if either country comes under attack.

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the agreement with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un during a visit to the isolated East Asian country in June, but many details remain unclear, including whether Pyongyang would be covered by Moscow's nuclear umbrella.

The treaty allegedly includes a "secret clause" allowing North Korea to send soldiers to the battlefields of Ukraine, the Wall Street Journal reported this week, citing an anonymous ex-Russian intelligence officer. That report came as Western officials said Pyongyang had sent around 3,000 troops for military training in Siberia.

Lawmakers in Russia's lower-house State Duma voted 397 to 0 to ratify the strategic partnership agreement, which will be now sent to the upper-house Federation Council for a

final vote.

“It’s important for us to develop comprehensive and allied relations” with North Korea, State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin said in a statement.

Moscow has so far declined to comment on the reported deployment of North Korean troops on its territory. Besides those troop deployments, Kyiv’s Western allies believe Pyongyang has already supplied Russia with weapons for use on the battlefield in Ukraine.

Russia and North Korea have been allies since the latter’s founding after World War II, and the two countries have drawn even closer following Moscow’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

AFP contributed reporting.

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