The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

NATO Chief Says North Korean Troops Sent to Russia's Kursk Region

By AFP

October 28, 2024



North Korean soldiers. **KCNA**

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte said Monday that North Korean troops were sent to Russia's embroiled Kursk region, decrying the deployment as a sign of Russian President Vladimir Putin's "growing desperation."

Speaking in Brussels after a briefing with South Korean intelligence officials, Rutte said he could confirm that North Korean military units had been sent to southwestern Russia's Kursk region.

"The deepening military cooperation between Russia and North Korea is a threat to both the Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic security," Rutte told a press conference. "The deployment [of] North Korean troops to Kursk is also a sign of Putin's growing desperation."

Ukrainian forces launched a surprise incursion into the Kursk region in early August, initially

taking control of a large swath of territory that Russian troops have since gradually clawed back in counteroffensive operations.

Related article: North Koreans Fighting for Russia Put Warm Words into Practice

Rutte said more than 600,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded since Moscow launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine nearly three years ago, adding the Kremlin was unable to sustain its war without foreign support.

Growing military ties between Russia and North Korea are a major concern for the United States and the EU, as Putin presses ahead with his efforts to build an anti-Western alliance.

Last week, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned that Russia was planning to send North Korean troops into battle within days. He has claimed North Korea is training 10,000 soldiers to support Russia.

"This is an escalation. Sanctions alone are not enough. We need weapons and a clear plan to prevent North Korea's expanded involvement in the war in Europe," Zelensky's chief of staff Andriy Yermak said on social media Monday, referring to confirmation of the deployment.

"Today, Russia brings in North Korea; next, it could broaden their engagement, and then other autocratic regimes may see that they can get away with this and come to fight against NATO," Yermak added. "The enemy understands strength. Our allies have this strength."

Earlier this month, South Korea, NATO and the United States said thousands of North Korean troops were sent to Russia for military training.

Rutte, a former Dutch prime minister who took over the reins of NATO just weeks ago, called on Moscow and Pyongyang to "cease these actions immediately."

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/10/28/nato-secretary-general-mark-rutte-decried-the-deployment-as-a-sign-ofrussian-president-vladimir-putins-growing-desperation-a86832