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Zelensky ‘Ready’ to Hand North Korean POWs to Pyongyang

By AFP

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Volodymyr Zelensky / Telegram

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Sunday he was ready to hand captured North Korean soldiers to Pyongyang in exchange for the return of Ukrainian POWs held in Russia.

Zelensky's offer comes a day after Ukraine announced it had captured two North Korean soldiers wounded fighting against Kyiv's troops in Russia's Kursk region. However, Kyiv did not provide any proof of their nationality.

On Sunday, South Korea's National Intelligence Service backed up Ukraine's account, telling AFP it “confirmed” that the Ukrainian military had captured two North Korean soldiers on Jan. 9 in the Kursk region.

“Ukraine is ready to hand over Kim Jong Un's soldiers to him if he can organize their exchange for our warriors who are being held captive in Russia,” Zelensky wrote on X.

There will “undoubtedly be more” North Korean soldiers captured by Kyiv, he added.

For “those North Korean soldiers who do not wish to return, there may be other options available,” said Zelensky.

Related article: Seoul Confirms Ukraine Captured 2 North Korean Soldiers

North Koreans who want “to bring peace closer by spreading the truth about this war in Korean will be given that opportunity.”

Neither Moscow nor Pyongyang have acknowledged that North Koreans have been deployed to fight against Ukraine.

The two countries have worked to boost their military cooperation since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Zelensky said that Russian President Vladimir Putin could not “manage without military support from Pyongyang.”

The Ukrainian president posted a video of an interrogation with the two North Korean prisoners, one of whom is lying in a bunk bed and the other sitting up in bed with a bandage around his jaw.

One man can be heard speaking to a Ukrainian official through an interpreter, saying in translated comments that he did not know he was going to fight in a war with Ukraine and that his commanders “told him it was just training.”

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