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Around 1K North Korean Soldiers Killed Fighting for Russia – BBC

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A captured North Korean soldier in Ukraine. **@V_Zelenskiy_official**

Around 1,000 North Korean soldiers have been killed and 3,000 wounded while fighting in Russia's war against Ukraine, the BBC's Russian service reported Wednesday, citing unnamed Western officials.

North Korea is believed to have sent thousands of troops last fall to help the Russian military drive out Ukrainian forces that are occupying the southwestern Kursk region.

Neither Moscow nor Pyongyang has officially acknowledged the deployment of North Korean soldiers in Ukraine. When asked about the issue, Russian President Vladimir Putin has declined to confirm or deny the reports, instead deflecting attention to criticize Western military support for Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said earlier this month that Ukrainian forces captured two North Korean soldiers, one of whom told army interrogators that there had been major losses among his fellow soldiers.

Related article: North Korean POW Tells Ukrainian Interrogators About Major Troop Losses

The total estimated North Korean casualty rate of 4,000 — including those killed, wounded, missing or captured — represents 36% of the deployed force. The BBC noted it remains unclear where wounded North Korean soldiers are receiving medical attention or whether Pyongyang plans to send additional troops.

But later on Wednesday, the New York Times, citing an unnamed senior U.S. defense official, reported that Russia is expecting North Korea to send additional reinforcements "within the next two months."

Ukraine, along with the United States and South Korea, has accused North Korea of deploying over 10,000 troops to support Russian forces. In mid-January, South Korea reported that 300 North Korean soldiers had been killed and 2,700 wounded since their deployment.

South Korean lawmaker Lee Seong-kweun, citing Seoul's intelligence agency, said the high casualty rate reflects the soldiers' lack of experience in modern warfare and their ineffective use by Russian forces.

Last year, Russia and North Korea signed a landmark defense pact requiring mutual assistance in the event of external aggression.

AFP contributed reporting.

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