

Kim Jong Un Awards Soldiers Who Fought With Russia Against Ukraine

By [AFP](#)

August 22, 2025



Kim Jong Un. **STR / KCNA VIA KNS / AFP**

North Korean state media on Friday released images of leader Kim Jong Un kneeling before portraits of soldiers killed fighting for Russia in Ukraine, as well as embracing a visibly emotional veteran of the conflict.

The ceremony, held at the ruling Workers' Party headquarters in Pyongyang, showed Kim presenting medals, laying flowers and consoling returned soldiers as the leadership hailed them as "heroes" who had "sacrificed their youth and lives."

South Korean and Western intelligence agencies say North Korea deployed more than 10,000 troops to Russia in 2024, alongside shipments of artillery shells, missiles and long-range rocket systems. Around 600 North Korean soldiers were killed and thousands more wounded, according to Seoul.

Kim praised the soldiers “who returned home with great honor” after enduring “the hail of bullets and bombs of the life-and-death war in a foreign country,” the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported. Images showed Kim placing medals and flowers at portraits of the fallen and embracing a soldier who buried his face in the leader’s chest.

KCNA said Kim personally awarded the title of “DPRK Hero” to commanding officers who “performed distinguished feats” in overseas operations. He also met with bereaved families and laid flowers at a memorial wall.

North Korea only confirmed its troop deployment to Russia in April and acknowledged that some had been killed in combat. Russian President Vladimir Putin last week praised the North Korean soldiers as “heroic” in a letter to Kim, according to KCNA.

Washington, meanwhile, has accused Moscow of offering Pyongyang advanced space and satellite technology in return for its support.

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