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North Korea Gifts New Apartments to Families of Soldiers Killed Fighting for Russia

By AFP

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Kim Jong Un officially opens the new apartments. **KCNA**

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un presided over a ribbon-cutting ceremony marking the completion of a new block of apartments for the families of soldiers killed fighting alongside Russian troops in the war against Ukraine, state media reported Monday.

"The new street has been built thanks to the ardent desire of our motherland that wishes that... its excellent sons, who defended the most sacred things by sacrificing their most valuable things, will live forever," Kim said in a speech released by the Korean Central News Agency.

The report did not mention Russia specifically, but Kim last week pledged to "unconditionally support" all of Russian President Vladimir Putin's policies and decisions.

"Before their death, the heroic martyrs must have pictured in their mind's eye their dear families living in the ever-prospering country," the North Korean leader said.

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Photos released by KCNA showed Kim touring the new apartments alongside his teenage daughter Ju Ae, who South Korea's spy agency claims has been "designated as a successor" to her father.

North Korea sent thousands of troops to help Russia drive Ukrainian forces out of the southwestern Kursk region, according to Western intelligence agencies. South Korea estimates that around 2,000 North Korean soldiers were killed.

Analysts say Pyongyang has received financial aid, military technology, food and energy supplies from Russia in return.

The timing of the street inauguration is a "highly calculated political move to justify its soldier deployment" ahead of the party congress, Hong Min, an analyst at the Korea Institute for National Unification, told AFP.

"It visualizes the state providing concrete compensation to the families of fallen soldiers... as a symbolic showcase," he said.

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