



Ukraine

Japan's minister visits Ukraine to stress 'grave concern' over North Korean troops

Tokyo to also discuss growing military links between North Korea and Russia, Japan's foreign ministry said

Associated Press in Kyiv

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Japan's foreign minister arrived in Kyiv on Saturday to discuss **North Korea's deepening military alliance with Russia**, including the deployment of thousands of troops to support Moscow's war in Ukraine.

Takeshi Iwaya will meet his Ukrainian counterpart, Andrii Sybiha, to reaffirm Japan's "strong support" for **Ukraine** against Russia's invasion and to discuss further sanctions against Moscow, Japan's foreign ministry said.

High on the agenda was Tokyo's "grave concern" over growing military cooperation between **North Korea** and Russia, the ministry said.

According to US, South Korean and Ukrainian intelligence assessments, **up to 12,000 North Korean troops have been sent to Russia** as part of a major defence treaty between the countries. Last week, Ukrainian officials said Ukraine and North Korean troops engaged in small-scale fighting while Ukraine's army fired artillery at North Korean soldiers in Russia's Kursk border region, where Ukraine launched a surprise push on 6 August.

Sybiha said Saturday that Ukraine's intelligence services believe Pyongyang is aiding Moscow's invasion in return for access to **Russian missile, nuclear, and other military programmes**.

"The deepening military-technical cooperation between Russia, North Korea and Iran poses a direct threat not only to **Europe** but also to Southeast Asia and the Middle East," he said at a joint press conference alongside Iwaya.

"Only strong and systematic support for Ukraine can stop **Russia** and bring a comprehensive, just and sustainable peace."

Sybiha also said the pair had discussed Japan's involvement in implementing a "victory plan and peace formula" for Ukraine.

It coincides with a new interview with Ukrainian president, **Volodymyr Zelenskyy**, who told journalists at Ukrainian Radio that he would do everything "to end this war next year through diplomatic means".

New focus has been placed on potential future negotiations after Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election on 5 November.

Russian president, **Vladimir Putin**, and German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, also held their first phone call in nearly two years Friday.

But **Zelenskyy warned that increased Russian willingness to engage in talks** did not mean Moscow truly wants to end the war, and urged the US to maintain its position that the Kremlin had violated both Ukraine's territorial integrity and international law.

"I don't think Putin wants peace at all. But that does not mean that he doesn't want to sit down with world leaders," Zelenskyy said Saturday.

"For him, it destroys the political isolation that's been built since the beginning of the war. And it benefits him to sit down, talk, and not reach an agreement."

The Ukrainian capital was attacked overnight by Russian drones, damaging residential buildings and infrastructure in Kyiv's Obolon district. No casualties were reported.

Ukrainian air defences neutralised up to a dozen drones, said the head of Kyiv's military administration, Serhii Popko.

Russia attacked Ukraine with 83 Shahed drones in the early hours of Saturday morning, the Ukrainian air force reported. Of those, 55 were shot down, while another 30 veered off course or were lost after electronic jamming, it said.

Meanwhile, Russia's ministry of defence said it had destroyed 35 Ukrainian drones, including 20 over the western Kursk region and 11 over the Bryansk region.

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