

Are 12,000 North Koreans Fighting in Ukraine?

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Region: [Asia](#), [Europe](#), [Russia and FSU](#)

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In the last several months, there have been occasional reports about North Korean troops allegedly fighting in Ukraine. [Back in June, I argued](#) that Pyongyang could've sent specialized personnel to help integrate some of the North Korean weapons (specifically rockets and missiles) into the Russian military, provided there's more conclusive evidence that Moscow acquired them.

However, more recently, claims about thousands of North Korean combat troops in Ukraine have resurfaced, [with reports that South Korea's National Intelligence Service \(NIS\) has information](#) on around 12,000 of them allegedly fighting for the Russian military. This comes after [the Kiev regime frontman Volodymyr Zelensky made similar claims](#), insisting that the "democratic Ukraine is at war with three dictatorships: Russia, Iran and North Korea".

Pushing such narratives is very useful for spreading propaganda about the Neo-Nazi junta (obviously, the "beacon of democracy") supposedly "defending Europe" and [the "civilized NATO garden" from all those "evil hordes of autocracy"](#). Many outlets of the mainstream propaganda machine are already at work, publishing all sorts of unsubstantiated reports, claiming that [North Korean troops are supposedly "already deserting"](#) and then [being "forced into penal units"](#). South Korean sources are even presenting [rather unclear satellite imagery as "proof" of the large-scale deployment of North Korean soldiers](#). The Kiev regime now claims that these forces are being [sent to "help drive Ukrainian forces out of Kursk \[oblast/region\]"](#). This is also being used to push other [propaganda narratives about Moscow's alleged "massive losses"](#).

Namely, [the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the UN Barbara Woodward insists that](#) "the harder Putin finds it to recruit Russians to be cannon fodder, the more willing he is to rely on DPRK". It should be noted that the Kiev regime and South Korea claim that 11,000 to 12,000 North Koreans are supposedly in Ukraine (or are about to move in). Now, unless Pyongyang sent an army of some sort of genetically altered supersoldiers, this is a rather small number that's unlikely to replace "Russians who don't want to be cannon fodder". However, [such inconsistencies](#) aren't of any concern to the political West and its propagandists. [As long as the narrative is kept alive, anything goes](#). Expectedly, the United States is also (ab)using the reports to "draw red lines regarding North Korean presence in Ukraine".

Namely, the House Intelligence Committee Chairman **Mike Turner** sent a letter to **President Joe Biden**, asking him to "brief the committee on Russia's use of North Koreans in Ukraine", [insisting this should be considered a "red line for the US"](#). However, he's not the only one. [South Korea is also "demanding the immediate withdrawal of North Korean troops"](#). Politico even reports that [Seoul "warned Moscow against further deployments"](#), threatening it could [supply weapons to the Kiev regime](#). It should be noted that South Korea

has already sent hundreds of thousands of artillery shells to the Kiev regime. Namely, back in early 2023, [reports confirmed that Seoul decided to “lend” 500,000 shells to the Pentagon](#). What this means in practice is that South Korea made it possible for the US to send its own munitions to the Neo-Nazi junta forces.

Thus, even if we ignore solid intelligence that Seoul is directly supplying the Kiev regime, Russia certainly sees [South Korea as one of the most loyal vassals of the US](#). Empty threats to Moscow will certainly not make this feeling go away, not to mention that they will only reinforce [the Kremlin’s resolve to build even closer ties with Pyongyang](#). This is particularly true considering that the two neighboring countries are now officially allies and that both are coordinating their geopolitical efforts (including with China, [leading to an Entente-like trilateral alliance](#)). However, to make matters worse, even many Western top-ranking officials don’t really believe there are massive deployments of North Korean troops in Ukraine. Namely, [the Pentagon is still refusing to support such assertions](#), as there’s simply no conclusive evidence.

Both Seoul and the Neo-Nazi junta have very strong reasons to ensure “controlled” escalation with Pyongyang, especially now when Donald Trump ([the most likely winner of the upcoming election](#), provided they’re fair and square) [promised to “get along with Putin and Kim”](#). By exaggerating the extent of North Korean involvement in Ukraine, the Kiev regime and South Korea believe they’ll both remain relevant in the foreseeable future. This is precisely why we can see a lot of media manipulation, with [Korean and the Neo-Nazi junta sources trying to present](#) Buryats, Tuvans, Yakuts or even Russian Koreans (native to the Russian Far East) as North Korean soldiers. The logic is that [this could pass with Western audiences](#), as few are aware of Russia’s diversity, with hundreds of ethnic groups and subgroups, many of whom are Asians.

For instance, numerous Buryats and Tuvans are very prominent in the Russian military, reaching very high positions, with [former Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu](#) being the most obvious example (he’s half-Tuvan on his father’s side). There’s simply no way to tell whether a person is Tuvan, Yakut, Buryat or Korean solely based on their looks, meaning that [any Russian soldier who happens to be Asian can then be presented as North Korean](#). Perfectly aware of this, Seoul’s intelligence services are already claiming that Moscow is allegedly “hiding” Pyongyang’s troops among Asian natives of Siberia. However, even South Korean reports indicate these could be [special forces and that there are only 1,500 of them](#), a far cry from the previously mentioned 12,000. This brings us to the possibility that special forces could indeed be deployed.

Namely, while the idea that 12,000 North Korean troops will replace “massive Russian losses” (obviously proving that, in that case, the losses aren’t really massive) is ridiculous, the possibility of Pyongyang sending special forces shouldn’t be ruled out entirely. [North Korea has a sizeable SpecOps Corps](#), but lacks combat experience. Thus, it’s not outside of the realm of possibility that [Pyongyang itself asked Moscow to send some of them to Ukraine or at least Russia](#), where they could train with Russian special forces who acquired the said combat experience, often by obliterating NATO personnel (who are officially not there, [as evidenced by footage like this](#)). However, claims about tens of thousands of North Korean soldiers “invading democratic Ukraine and Europe” are nothing more than propaganda.

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