

New York Post.- 16.09.2023

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Kim Jong Un tours putin's war arsenal, sparks concern over budding alliance— but top US general downplays potential threat

Кім Чен Ин здійснює поїздки до військового арсеналу путіна, викликаючи стурбованість з приводу багатообіцяючого альянсу, але високопоставлений генерал США применшує потенційну загрозу

Науковий співробітник з оборонного та військового аналізу в Міжнародному інституті стратегічних досліджень Джозеф Демпси вважає, що Північна Корея може бути єдиним найбільшим джерелом сумісних застарілих артилерійських боєприпасів за межами росії, включаючи внутрішні виробничі потужності для подальших поставок. Проте Голова Об'єднаного комітету начальників штабів США генерал Марк Міллі заявив, що союз між двома країнами може, зрештою, не мати великого значення. М. Міллі під час поїздки до Норвегії на зустрічі НАТО визнав, що зустріч між Кім Чен Ином і путіном, швидше за все, приведе до угоди, згідно з якою Північна Корея постачатиме артилерію москві.

<https://nypost.com/2023/09/16/kim-jong-un-tours-putins-war-arsenal-sparks-concern-over-budding-alliance-but-top-us-general-downplays-potential-threat/>

Kim Jong Un checked out Moscow's hypersonic missiles, nuclear bomber jets and a warship Saturday during a trip to Russia that sparked concern in the West over a budding alliance between North Korea and Vladimir Putin amid the ongoing war in Ukraine, though the top U.S. general responded by downplaying the potential impact the two countries might have.

Kim traveled to an airport in the eastern Russian port city of Vladivostok, where Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and other top Russian military officials gave him a tour of Russia's warplanes, including the Tu-160, Tu-95 and Tu-22 bombers that have been regularly launching cruise missiles in Ukraine.

Shoigu, flanked by Lt. Gen. Sergei Kobylash, the commander of Russia's longe-range bomber unit, reportedly told Kim that the Tu-160 bomber jet recently was outfitted with new missiles with a range of over 4,040 miles.

The Russian military brass' comments to Kim during the trip are the first time the deployment of these new missiles was confirmed, after officials previously said the weapon was under development.

Shoigu also gave Kim a close-up look a hypersonic Kinzhal missile, which are carried by MiG-31 fighter jets and were first unveiled in Ukraine. The missile is capable of carrying both nuclear and conventional warheads and has the ability to travel over 7,600 mph.

Kim's trip to Russia included over four hours of talks with Putin Wednesday and suggest the potential for cooperation between the North Korean leader, who has recently said he wants to strengthen his Navy, and Moscow, which badly needs ammunition to fuel its war in Ukraine.

The U.S. has been accusing North Korea of sending ammo, artillery, and missiles to Russia and South Korean officials said these weapons were used during the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

North Korea “may represent the single biggest source of compatible legacy artillery ammunition outside of Russia, including domestic production facilities to further supplies,” said Joseph Dempsey, research associate for defense and military analysis at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

However, U.S. Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that an alliance between the two countries may not end up making much of a difference.

Milley, during a trip to Norway for NATO meetings that began Saturday, acknowledged that the meeting between Kim and Putin will likely lead to a deal that will see North Korea provide artillery to Moscow, but it's unclear how much would be provided or when that deal could be executed.

“Would it have a huge difference? I’m skeptical of that,” Milley, emphasizing that while he did not want to downplay the potential weapon trade too much, “I doubt that it would be decisive.”

In return, Kim would likely receive advanced weapons or military technology from Russia, Milley said.

Adm. Rob Bauer of the Netherlands, the chair of the NATO Military Committee, said during Saturday’s meeting that Ukraine also continues to be in need of weapons and ammunition, but the amount it needs is so large it has put a strain on weapons production around the world.

“When they think about giving away weapons or ammunition, they have to think ... what is the risk that I take against my own readiness?” Bauer said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is expected to visit the White House in the coming week during a trip to the U.S. for the United Nations General Assembly, while Congress debates President Joe Biden’s request to send as much as \$24 billion more in military and humanitarian aid for the ongoing war.

“It certainly comes at a critical time, as Russia desperately seeks help from countries like North Korea for its brutal war in Ukraine, as Ukrainian forces continue to make progress in their counteroffensive, and just after the next Ukraine defense contact group meeting that [Defense] Secretary Austin is organizing with dozens of our allies and partners in Europe earlier next week,” National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said Friday during a White House press briefing.