

NORTH KOREA

Enabling Russian Missile Strikes Against Ukraine

MAY 2024



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Since November 2023, North Korea – formally known as the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) – has been providing ballistic missiles to Russia to support Moscow’s war against Ukraine.^{1 2 3} The following highlights Pyongyang’s growing relationship with Moscow, the DPRK’s expanding missile capabilities, and a visual comparison of DPRK state media and missile debris from Kharkiv, Ukraine – visual evidence confirming Russian usage of DPRK missiles against Ukraine.^{4 5 6 7 8 9 10}

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Cover Images: North Korean SRBM paraded in Pyongyang in February 2023; Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin in Russia in September 2023; a DPRK SRBM launched in August 2019^{11 12 13}

Image Sources: DPRK state media^{14 15 16}

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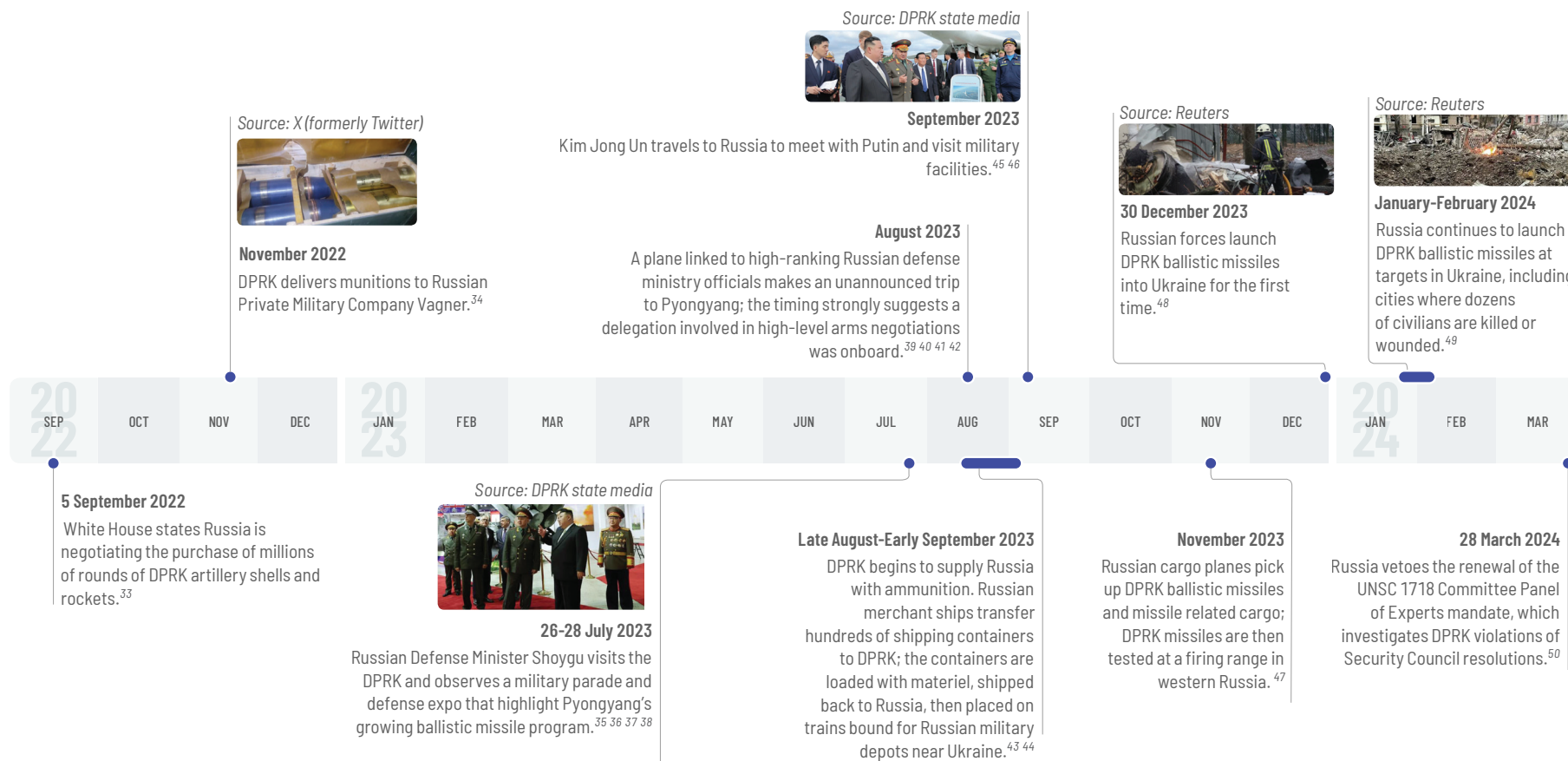
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Timeline of Expanding DPRK-Russia Military Relations¹⁷

Following Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the DPRK became one of only four countries aligned with Russia to vote against a UN resolution condemning the invasion.¹⁸ Later that year, the DPRK was one of only five countries to back Russia in the UN, this time recognizing Moscow's illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory.^{19 20 21} In September 2023, Kim Jong Un traveled to Russia – his first trip abroad since 2019 – visiting Russian President Vladimir Putin and touring Russian military facilities.^{22 23} Russia announced that Putin intends a reciprocal trip to the DPRK, Putin's first visit to the country.²⁴

Pyongyang has also advanced its cooperation with Moscow by providing direct materiel support, including at least 3 million artillery rounds in addition to dozens of ballistic missiles to sustain Russia's war on Ukraine.^{25 26} Russia has used DPRK missiles to strike targets in Ukraine, including population centers, resulting in the death or injury of dozens of civilians.²⁷ In return, Moscow has provided Pyongyang both diplomatic support at the UN by vetoing sanctions enforcement mechanisms and the opportunity to gain insight into how DPRK-made ballistic missiles perform in combat, including against advanced missile defense systems.^{28 29 30 31 32}





DPRK: Developing and Proliferating Missile Technology^{51 52}

The DPRK is further expanding its missile program, increasing the sophistication and reliability of its weapons, while demonstrating a willingness to provide ballistic missiles for use in war.^{53 54 55 56 57}

^{58 59 60 61 62} Pyongyang's ongoing development of new military capabilities indicates the regime will pursue its defense modernization goals for the foreseeable future, which Russia is postured to support as a result of growing ties.^{63 64 65 66 67 68 69} In 2021, DPRK leader Kim Jong Un announced an ambitious military modernization plan, prominently featuring missile development goals as a regime priority.⁷⁰ Since then, the DPRK has repeatedly highlighted its missile production, and it probably has the capability to produce hundreds of missiles of all major system classes in the coming years.^{71 72 73 74 75}

Since the beginning of the DPRK's missile program, Pyongyang has sold ballistic missile technology, including full systems and components.⁷⁶ The DPRK has historically sold ballistic missiles or missile technology to at least Burma, Iran, Libya, Syria, and Yemen.^{77 78}

The Kim regime remains willing to provide ballistic missiles to countries for use in furthering conflicts, exemplified by its shipment of dozens of ballistic missiles to Russia to sustain Moscow's ongoing conflict against Ukraine.^{79 80 81 82}

The DPRK's missile program began in the 1980s under Kim Il Sung and continued under Kim Jong Il, both overseeing the development of liquid-propellant systems based on older Soviet technology.^{83 84 85} DPRK leader Kim Jong Un has since facilitated the DPRK's transition into testing more advanced and diverse systems, expanding Pyongyang's arsenal to include overlapping capabilities to strike regional targets and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) that can reach the continental United States with a nuclear warhead.^{86 87 88}

The photos below depict August 2019 test-launches by the DPRK of two missile systems – both of which it has provided to Russia – striking targets off DPRK's east coast to demonstrate accuracy.^{91 92 93 94 95} Since 2019, the DPRK has flight-tested solid-propellant short-range ballistic missiles (SRBM) dozens of times. These missiles are more capable than Pyongyang's Soviet-era liquid-propellant systems, and the DPRK has touted their accuracy and ability to evade missile defenses.^{96 97 98 99 100 101}



Source: DPRK state media^{89 90}



The following DIA analysis compares open-source images of missile debris found in Kharkiv, Ukraine, following the 2 January 2024 attack and North Korean state media images of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un touring a ballistic missile factory in 2023.^{102 103 104 105} The debris in Ukraine visually matches the missiles in the images from North Korean state media.

SRBM Comparison: Forward Motor Section^{106 107 108 109}

The forward motor section from a North Korean system pictured on the left matches the physical characteristics shown in two images of missile debris on the right.^{110 111 112 113}

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Source: DPRK state media

Kim Jong Un gives guidance during a visit to a missile plant in August 2023¹¹⁴

DEBRIS FROM ATTACK AGAINST UKRAINE



Source: X (formerly Twitter)¹¹⁶

Source: Reuters

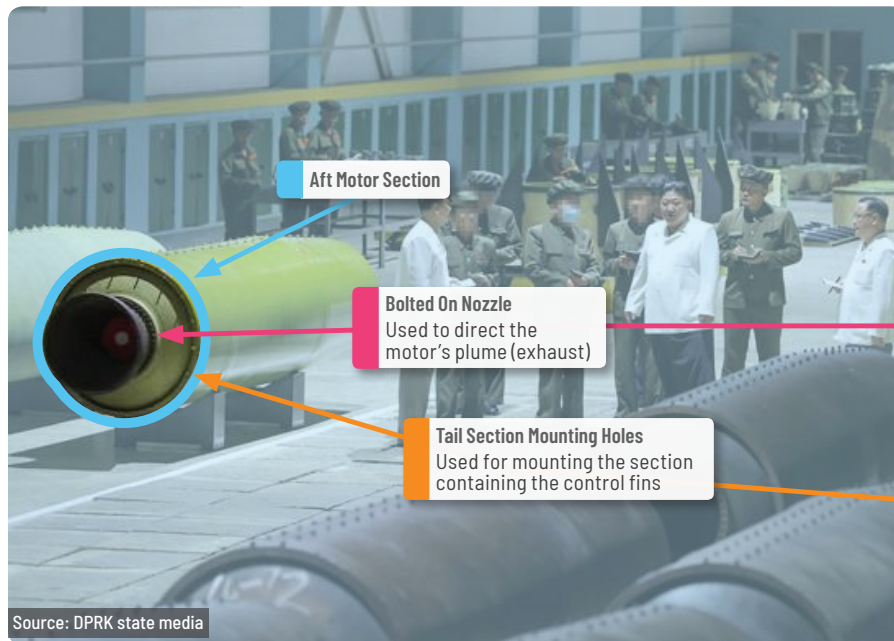
Debris of a DPRK missile in Kharkiv, Ukraine, in January 2024¹¹⁵



SRBM Comparison: Aft Motor Section¹¹⁷

The aft motor section from a North Korean system pictured on the left matches the physical characteristics shown in the missile debris on the right.¹¹⁸

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Regime officials and factory workers note Kim's guidance during his tour of a ballistic missile plant¹¹⁹

DEBRIS FROM ATTACK AGAINST UKRAINE



This image of debris found in Kharkiv prominently shows the aft motor section and burned nozzle of a DPRK missile¹²⁰



SRBM Comparison: Cable Tray and Handling Ring Connectors¹²¹

The cable tray and handling ring connectors' proportions from the North Korean state media image on the left are identical to the cable tray and handling ring connectors shown in the missile debris from the 2 January Kharkiv attack on the right.¹²²



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DEBRIS FROM ATTACK AGAINST UKRAINE



Kim observes missiles at a factory in August 2023¹²³

Ukrainian personnel inspect debris in Kharkiv on 2 January 2024¹²⁴

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