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Unlawful Military Cooperation including Arms Transfers between North Korea and Russia

Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team

MSMT

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Executive Summary and Key Takeaways

A. The rapid expansion of military, political, and economic cooperation between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) and the Russian Federation in 2024 following the start of Russia's war against Ukraine has resulted in ongoing flagrant violations of relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs) by both North Korea and Russia.

B. Evidence gathered and shared by the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT) participating states demonstrate that throughout 2024 North Korea and Russia engaged in myriad of unlawful activities explicitly prohibited under relevant UNSCRs, including but not limited to:

- transfers of arms and related materiel via sea, air, and rail including shipments of artillery, ballistic missiles, and combat vehicles from the DPRK to Russia for use in Russia's war against Ukraine and air defense systems from Russia to the DPRK;
- training by Russian forces of North Korean troops deployed to Russia for direct support of Russia's war against Ukraine;
- supply of refined petroleum products to the DPRK that far exceed the yearly United Nations Security Council (UNSC)-mandated cap; and
- maintaining correspondent banking relations with the DPRK.

C. According to MSMT participating states, these forms of unlawful cooperation between the DPRK and Russia contributed to Moscow's ability to increase its missile attacks against Ukrainian cities including targeted strikes against critical civilian infrastructure. It also provided the resources to allow North Korea to fund its military programs and further develop its ballistic missiles programs, which are themselves prohibited under multiple UNSCRs, and gain first-hand experience in modern warfare, in return for its military support to Russia against Ukraine in which over 11,000 North Korean troops have been deployed to Russia since October 2024.

D. The signing of the DPRK-Russia Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, frequent high-level exchanges between the two since 2024, the DPRK's deployment of additional troops to Russia in early 2025 and the official confirmation of North Korean military support to Russia by both governments in April 2025, suggest that, at least for the foreseeable future, North Korea and Russia intend to continue and further deepen their military cooperation in contravention of relevant UNSCRs.

I. Introduction

1. When the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) conducted its first nuclear test in October 2006, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted resolution 1718 (2006) and determined that North Korea's behavior constituted a clear threat to international peace and security. The UNSC further decided that the DPRK shall abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs as well as other weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic missile programs in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner. Between October 2006 and December 2017, the UNSC adopted a total of ten resolutions [1] that imposed sanctions on the DPRK responding to six nuclear tests and repeated launches of ballistic missiles, including intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and space launches using ballistic missile technology.[2] Relevant UNSCRs remain in place and are legally binding on all United Nations member states.

2. In 2009, the UNSC adopted resolution 1874 (2009) after North Korea's second nuclear test, this time establishing a Panel of Experts ("the Panel") to monitor and report on the implementation of UN sanctions against North Korea, in particular, incidents of non-compliance. The Panel published 20 reports between 2010 and 2024. However, in March 2024, Russia vetoed the draft UNSC resolution to extend the Panel's mandate.[3]

3. The dissolution of the Panel – which had existed for 15 years – was actively pursued by Russia in support of its own goals to prevent independent scrutiny of its actions, as North Korea and Russia had been engaging in systematic violations of UN sanctions by transferring arms and related materiel from the DPRK to Russia since the fall of 2023, and the Panel had begun investigations into the matter. After the Panel was disbanded, the international community was left without an effective international mechanism to monitor and report on DPRK-related sanctions violations and evasion activities. This has significantly undermined the non-proliferation architecture that Russia itself had previously upheld.

[1] Resolutions 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), 2087 (2013), 2094 (2013), 2270 (2016), 2321 (2016), 2356 (2017), 2371 (2017), 2375 (2017), and 2397 (2017). This report refers to these resolutions as "relevant UNSCRs."

[2] During the same period (2006-2017) North Korea fired more than 120 ballistic missiles. For DPRK missile launches between 1984 and November 2022, see https://missilethreat.csis.org/country/dprk/.

[3] S/2024/255.

4. The Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT) was formed in October 2024 by eleven UN Member States to continue the Panel's work. As stated in its founding document, the MSMT is a multilateral mechanism to monitor and report on violations and evasions of DPRK-related sanction measures established by relevant UNSCRs. Its goal is to assist the full implementation of the relevant UNSCRs that prohibit North Korea's unlawful development, production, and proliferation of WMD and ballistic missile programs by publishing information based on rigorous inquiry into sanctions violations and evasion attempts.[4]

5. Based on this commitment, the MSMT presents its first report focused on unlawful military cooperation between North Korea and Russia including arms transfers and Russia's training of DPRK troops, as the DPRK's direct support for Russia's war against Ukraine marks a dangerous expansion of the war and is one of the most outstanding issues regarding violations of relevant UNSCRs.[5] The facts and analysis contained in this report are primarily based on information from MSMT participating states, international organizations and civil society. This report covers the period between January 1, 2024 and April 30, 2025 but also refers to certain events that took place before 2024.

[4] "In light of the veto which disbanded the UN Security Council's 1718 Committee Panel of Experts this year, we hereby express our intention to establish the MSMT, a multilateral mechanism to monitor and report violations and evasions of the sanction measures stipulated in the relevant UNSCRs. The goal of the new mechanism is to assist the full implementation of UN sanctions on the DPRK by publishing information based on rigorous inquiry into sanctions violations and evasions attempts." The Joint Statement on Establishing Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team for Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions Regarding the DPRK, October 16, 2024.

[5] Other areas of violations of UNSCRs will be covered in future MSMT reports.

II. North Korea and Russia's Unlawful Arms Transfers and Related Sanctions Violations

Overview

6. This report primarily focuses on military cooperation between North Korea and Russia, in particular arms transfers to and from North Korea and other related cooperation in contravention of UNSCRs, including Russia's training of North Korean troops deployed to Russia. These violations threaten international peace and security. The Panel also had investigated arms transfers between North Korea and Russia and shared its findings in its last report before it was disbanded.[6]

7. According to MSMT participating states, Russia and the DPRK have strengthened their military cooperation since September 2023, as the DPRK started supplying Russia with arms and related materiel and later deploying troops to Russia to directly support its war against Ukraine.

8. According to an MSMT participating state, Russian-flagged cargo vessels delivered as many as 9 million rounds of mixed artillery and multiple rocket launcher ammunition from the DPRK to Russia in 2024. Using open source information, the Open Source Centre (OSC) has estimated that Russian vessels delivered 4.2 to 5.8 million rounds of 122mm and 152mm munitions between August 2023 and March 2025.[7]

9. According to an MSMT participating state, the DPRK deployed over 11,000 troops in late 2024. The DPRK subsequently acknowledged publicly its deployment of troops to Russia on April 28, 2025. Meanwhile, Russia is believed to have provided North Korea with air defense equipment and anti-aircraft missiles,[8] as well as advanced electronic warfare systems. It has also supplied refined oil without requisite reporting to the 1718 Committee and employed North Korean workers, both in violation of relevant UNSCRs.

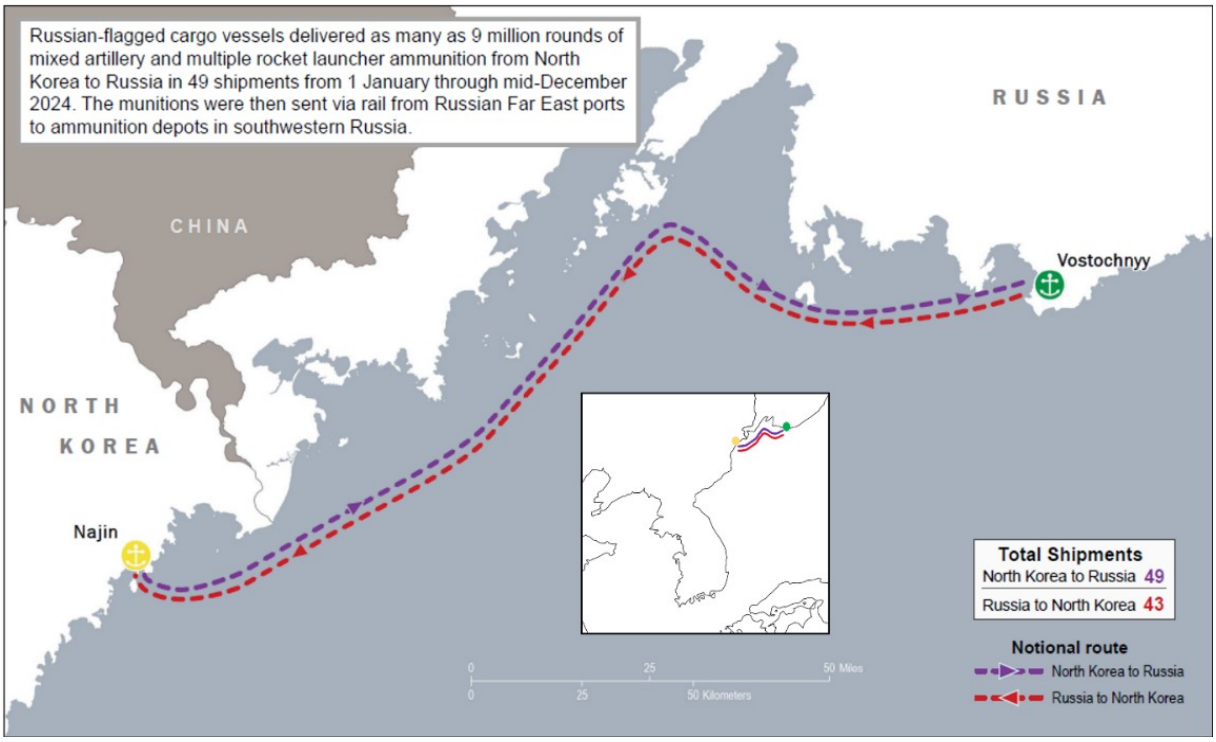
[6] S/2024/215, *paras*. 99-128.

[7] Open Source Centre, "Brothers in Arms: Estimating North Korean Munitions Deliveries to Russia", April 2025 (URL: https://www.opensourcecentre.org/research/brothers-in-arms).

[8] "Russia provided N. Korea with anti-air missiles in exchange for troop deployment: S. Korea's top security adviser", Yonhap News Agency, November 22, 2024 (URL: https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20241122006900315).

10. Arms transfers between the DPRK and Russia each constitute violations of the arms embargo established under UNSCRs 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), and 2270 (2016). Arms transfers from the DPRK to Russia have included ballistic missiles, the DPRK's development of which is itself a violation of UNSCR 1718 (2006). Furthermore, Russia's training of North Korean soldiers involving arms or related materiel is a violation of UNSCRs 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), and 2270 (2016), which collectively impose a broad prohibition on providing or receiving military training or assistance to or from the DPRK.

Figure 1: Routes taken by Russian-flagged vessels delivering arms and related materiel between North Korea and Russia from January 1, 2024 to mid-December 2024



Source: An MSMT participating state

Figure 2: Imagery of Containers at DPRK and Russian Ports and at an Ammunition Depot in Russia

Cargo Ship with Standard 20-Foot Shipping Containers

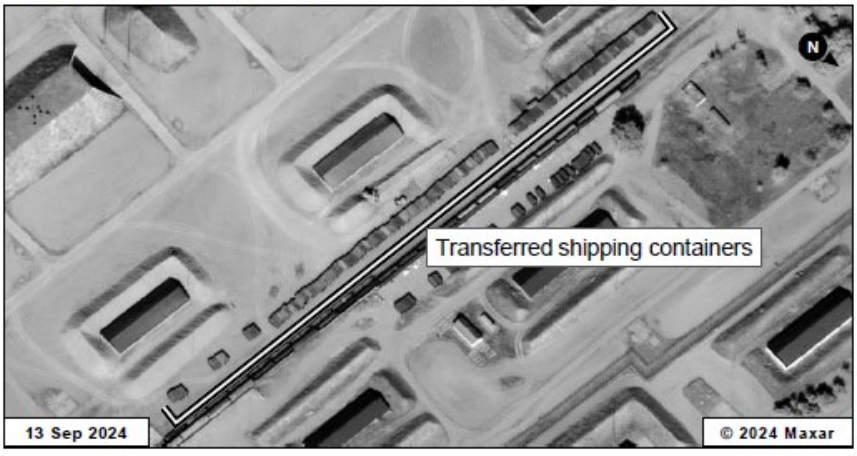
Vostochnyy, Russia 42°44'16" N, 133°05'08" E

Standard 20-Foot Shipping Containers Being Loaded Onto Cargo Ship

Najin, North Korea 42°13'39" N, 130°17'43" E

Standard 20-Foot Shipping Containers at Ammunition Depot

Mozdok, Russia 43°44'24" N, 044°30'55" E



Source: An MSMT participating state

Arms Transfers from North Korea to Russia

11. According to an MSMT participating state, since the DPRK began supplying Russia with ammunition in early September 2023, it has transferred over 20,000 containers of munitions and related materiel to Russia in support of its war against Ukraine. This has included 82mm, 122mm, 130mm, 152mm, and 170mm munitions to support various weapons systems in Russia's arsenal, including the D-20 towed howitzer, the D-30 towed howitzer, the M-30 howitzer, the M-46 howitzer, and the D-74 cannon. Russian-flagged cargo vessels delivered as many as 9 million rounds of mixed artillery and multiple rocket launcher ammunition from North Korea to Russia in 49 shipments from January 1 to mid-December 2024. The munitions were then sent via rail from Russian Far East ports to ammunition depots in southwestern Russia, for use by Russian military forces against Ukraine.

12. Based on open source information, the Open Source Centre (OSC) has estimated that Russian-flagged cargo vessels delivered 4.2 to 5.8 million munitions, including 122 mm and 152mm artillery shells and 122mm rockets, from the DPRK to Russia between August 2023 and March 2025.[9]

13. According to an MSMT participating state, between January and December 2024 alone the DPRK transferred to Russia at least 100 ballistic missiles, which were subsequently launched into Ukraine to destroy civilian infrastructure and terrorize populated areas such as Kyiv and Zaporizhzhia. The DPRK also transferred to Russia elements of three brigade sets of heavy artillery, including DPRK-origin 170mm long range self-propelled artillery pieces, 240mm long-range multiple rocket launchers, more than 200 total vehicles, self-propelled guns, multiple rocket launchers, and reload vehicles for both types of weapons.

[9] Open Source Centre, "Brothers in Arms: Estimating North Korean Munitions Deliveries to Russia", April 2025 (URL: https://www.opensourcecentre.org/research/brothers-in-arms).

Figure 3: North Korean 170mm self-propelled gun transported through Russia

Source: An MSMT participating state

Figure 4: North Korean multiple rocket launcher ammunition (left) and anti-tank missile 9M113 (right) found in Ukraine

Source: An MSMT participating state

14. According to an MSMT participating state, North Korea also supplied anti-tank missiles to Russia. Upon examining the North Korean weapons recovered from the battlefield, the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense concluded that the weapons North Korea supplied to Russia included *Bulsae*-4 (불새-4) anti-tank missiles and rocket propelled grenade (RPG) anti-tank rockets.[10]

15. Three experts from the Panel visited Ukraine in April 2024 and submitted an incident report to the 1718 Committee on the origin of the missile that hit Kharkiv, Ukraine in January 2024. According to the press,[11] the UN experts found that the missile was a North Korean *Hwasong-11* series ballistic missile whose transfer to Russia was a violation of the UN arms embargo on the DPRK.[12] According to a media report, there are signs that the accuracy of North Korean ballistic missiles is improving through the data obtained from Russian forces using the weapons against Ukraine.[13]

Figure 5: Remnants of *Hwasong*-11A short-range ballistic missile obtained in Ukraine

Source: An MSMT participating state

[10] See https://www.nis.go.kr/CM/1_4/view.do?seq=320.

[11] "UN experts say North Korean missile landed in Ukraine's Kharkiv," Reuters, April 30, 2024 (URL: https://www.reuters.com/world/un-experts-say-north-korea-missile-landed-ukraines-kharkiv-2024-04-29).

[12] The result of an investigation conducted by Conflict Armament Research (CAR) also showed that the missile was either KN-23 (*Hwasong-11A*) or KN-24 (*Hwasong-11B*). See *paras*. 17-19.

[13] "Ukraine sees marked improvement in accuracy of Russia's North Korean missiles", Reuters, February 6, 2025 (URL: https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/ukraine-sees-marked-improvement-accuracy-russias-north-korean-missiles-2025-02-06/).

16. Both the DPRK and Russia are violating the UN arms embargo on the DPRK through these transfers. Paragraph 8(b) of UNSCR 1718 (2006), as modified by paragraph 9 of resolution 1874 (2009) and paragraph 9 of resolution 2270 (2016), prohibits the DPRK from transferring to Member States, and Member States from procuring from the DPRK, all arms and related materiel. Additionally, the DPRK's production of ballistic missiles violates resolution 1718 (2006), which prohibits the DPRK's development of its WMD and ballistic missile programs.

Transfer of Ballistic Missiles: Research by Conflict Armament Research (CAR)

17. Conflict Armament Research (CAR), a UK-based research organization, investigated ballistic missiles recovered from the battlefield in Ukraine between January and August 2024, and confirmed that they were manufactured in the DPRK. Initial analysis in January and February 2024 revealed that the remnants of a ballistic missile documented in Kharkiv, Ukraine, indicated North Korean origin. The conclusion was made on the basis of distinct characteristics such as: unique jet vane actuators, the bolt pattern around the igniter, and the presence of Korean (Hangul) characters on the barometers, among others.

Figure 6: Front end of the rocket motor of a DPRK missile (left) and the rocket motor documented by CAR in Ukraine on January 11, 2024 (right)

Source: Conflict Armament Research (CAR)[14]

[14] Conflict Armament Research, "Documenting a North Korean missile in Ukraine", January 2024 (URL: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/3a4e9d713f59426d9d1ea3881abecbf3) and "North Korean missiles produced in 2024 used in Ukraine", September 2024 (URL: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/15ae6ca767bc46a1b536ac7e2d962b66).

18. CAR's subsequent investigation in August 2024 documented the remnants of four additional missiles retrieved in Bila Tserkva, Vitrova Balka, and Rozhivka, Ukraine, further indicating the continued use of DPRK-manufactured missiles on the battlefield. One of these missiles contained components marked with the figure "113," (see Figure 7) possibly referring to the year 2024 in the *Juche* calendar (official dating system of North Korea), indicating its production in 2024. All the missiles examined by CAR were identified as either *Hwasong-11A* or *Hwasong-11B.*

19. CAR's findings in 2024 suggest that newly manufactured DPRK ballistic missiles were used against Ukraine, with only a short interval between the production, transfer, and deployment of the missiles. Additionally, CAR's discovery of recently produced non-DPRK components highlights North Korea's ongoing efforts to evade UN sanctions in acquiring foreign-manufactured parts through third-party distributors.[15]

Figure 7: Numerical mark stamped on the jet vane actuator per CAR analysis

Source: Conflict Armament Research[16]

[15] Conflict Armament Research, "North Korean missile relies on recent electronic components," February 2024 (URL: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/0814c6868bbd45a98b15693a31bd0e7f).
[16] *Ibid.*

Arms Transfers from Russia to North Korea

20. According to an MSMT participating state, Russia transferred air defense systems to the DPRK. Since November 2024, Russia is believed to have provided North Korea with short-range air defense systems[17] and advanced electronic warfare systems including jamming equipment using Russian cargo aircraft, and also transferred operational knowledge.

21. According to an MSMT participating state, Russia has transferred at least one *Pantsir*-class combat vehicle to the DPRK. The *Pantsir* is a mobile air defense system, designed to target fixed and rotary wing-aircraft, cruise missiles, precision munitions, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The deployment of the *Pantsir* provides the DPRK with a more modernized air defense system compared to its current inventory of legacy Russian systems and its domestically-produced systems that have yet to be deployed.

22. According to an MSMT participating state, Russia has supported North Korea's ballistic missile programs by providing data feedback on ballistic missiles, leading to improvements in missile guidance performance.

23. These transfers violate the arms embargo established under UNSCRs 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), and 2270 (2016), which all Member States are required to implement.

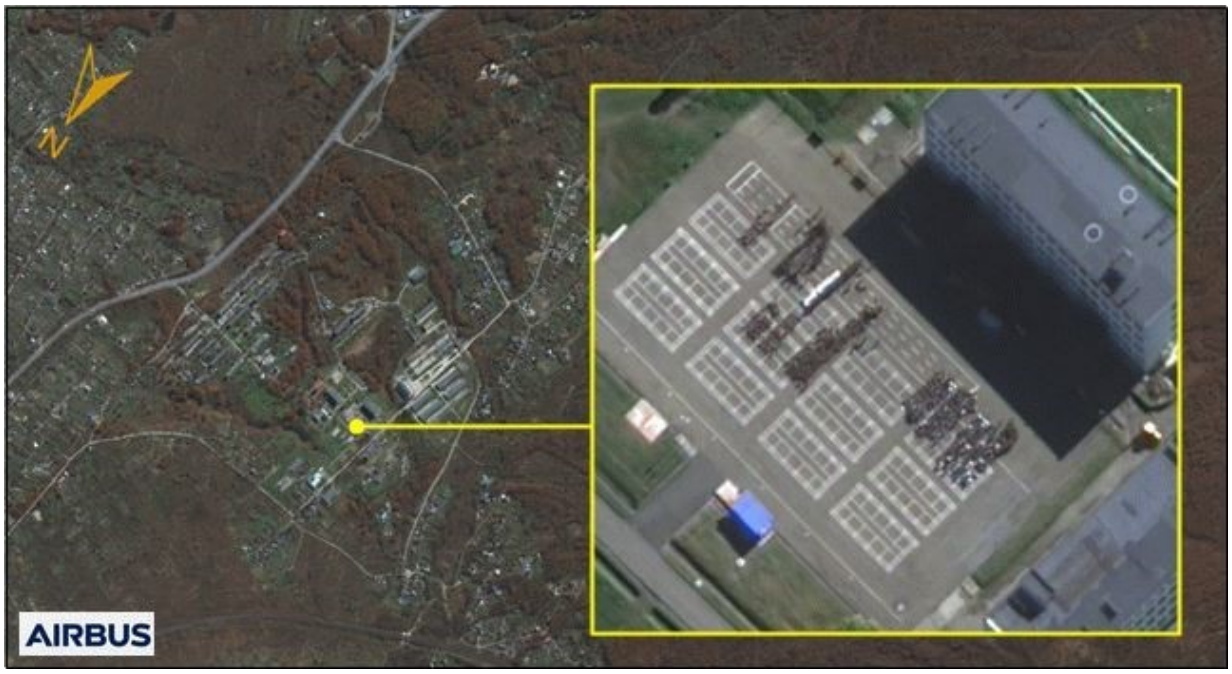
Deployment of DPRK Troops to Russia and their Training by Russian Forces

24. According to an MSMT participating state, the DPRK may have discussed the deployment of its troops to Russia soon after Ukraine's incursion into Kursk Oblast, Russia, in August 2024. By early October 2024, North Korea started to deploy its troops wearing Russian uniforms, using Russian aircrafts and naval vessels.

25. According to an MSMT participating state, the DPRK deployed over 11,000 troops into eastern Russia in late 2024, which were moved to the far-western Kursk Oblast where they began engaging in combat operations alongside Russian forces in support of Russia's war against Ukraine. These DPRK soldiers were trained by Russian forces in artillery, UAV, and basic infantry operations including trench clearing, which are critical skills for frontline operations.

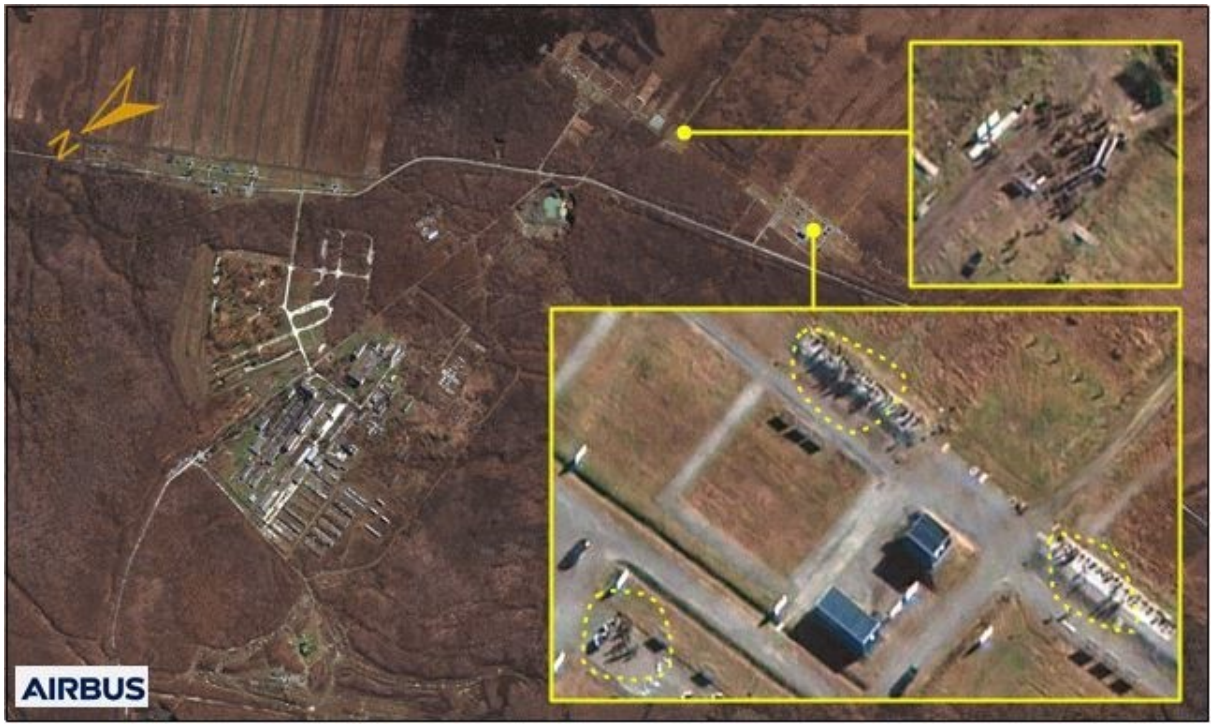
[17] "Russia provided N. Korea with anti-air missiles in exchange for troop deployment: S. Korea's top security adviser", Yonhap News Agency, November 22, 2024 (URL: https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20241122006900315).

Figure 8: A military facility in Ussuriysk, Russia (with about 400 suspected DPRK soldiers present, October 16, 2024)



Source: An MSMT participating state

Figure 9: A military facility in Khabarovsk, Russia (with about 240 suspected DPRK soldiers present, October 16, 2024)



Source: An MSMT participating state

26. According to an MSMT participating state, by December 2024, some North Korean troops were deployed to the frontlines in Kursk. Combat involving North Korean forces was confirmed in Plekhovo, in the southeastern part of Kursk in December, and later in the northwest, including Malaya Loknya. In early 2025, North Korean troops participating in battle in the Makhnovka region reportedly suffered heavy damage. Reports vary on the number of North Koreans deployed in 2025 to replace those killed and wounded. An MSMT participating state has estimated that North Korea deployed over 3,000 additional troops to Russia between January and March 2025.[18]

27. In April 2025, both the DPRK and Russia acknowledged the deployment of North Korean troops to Russia, with the former confirming that the North Korean leader himself had made the decision to deploy troops justifying the decision under the DPRK-Russia Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.[19]

28. Russia's training of North Korean soldiers involving arms or related materiel is a violation of resolutions 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), and 2270 (2016), which collectively impose a broad prohibition on providing or receiving military training or assistance to or from the DPRK.

[18] "N. Korea presumed to send at least 3,000 more troops to Russia: JCS," Yonhap News Agency, March 27, 2025 (URL: https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20250327002200315).

[19] "North Korea, Russia, North Korean troops to Russia are recognized one after another...Did Kim Jong Un Start 'Build Up' in Russia," Maeil Business Newspaper, April 28, 2025 (URL: https://www.mk.co.kr/en/politics/11303349).

III. Actors, Networks, and Means of Transportation

Travel of Designated Individuals

29. According to an MSMT participating state, several UN-designated North Korean nationals travelled to Russia since September 2023. Pursuant to UNSCR 1718 (2006) paragraph 8(e), absent a limited exception, all Member States shall take the necessary steps to prevent the entry into or transit through their territories of the designated persons.

30. Since the signing of the DPRK-Russia Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in June 2024, the DPRK has been actively seeking to expand the scope of military cooperation through high-level visits to Russia. Notably, Kim Jong Sik (UN designated individual, KPi.066), the first Vice Director of the Munitions Industry Department (UN designated entity, KPe.028), visited Moscow in August 2024 to attend the International Military-Technical Forum (Army-2024).[20] Kim Jong Sik had accompanied Kim Jong Un during his visit to the Russia-operated Vostochny space launch facility in Russia in September 2023, alongside UN-designated individual Chang Chang Ha (KPi.037), President of the Second Academy of Natural Sciences (SANS, KPe.018) and another known key aide of the North Korean leader.[21]

Means of Transportation

31. According to an MSMT participating state, arms transfers from the DPRK to Russia had been initially conducted by rail. However, to meet Russia's increased demand for artillery shells, Russian-flagged maritime vessels were later used as primary method of transport for large-scale shipments of these items. Meanwhile, sensitive and critical equipment, such as missiles and transporter-erector-launchers (TELs), were mainly transported by rail or Russian military cargo aircraft.

32. According to an MSMT participating state, Russia further used state-owned and military transportation services to conduct this trade. These aircraft were operated by the Russian Command of the Military Transport Aviation (VTA) and the Russian state-owned enterprise Joint Stock Company the 224th Flight Unit State Airlines. The following Russian Federation Ilyushin Il-76MD (see Figure 10) and Antonov AN-124 aircrafts were

[20] "Sanctioned North Korean missile official attends Russian defense expo," NK NEWS, August 13, 2024 (URL: https://nknews.org/2024/08/sanctioned-north-korean-missile-official-attends-russian-defense-expo).

[21] "Vladimir Putin meets Kim Jong Un at spaceport, offers to help build satellites", NK NEWS, September 13, 2023 (URL: https://www.nknews.org/2023/09/kim-jong-un-meets-vladimir-putin-at-spaceport-in-russian-far-east/).

identified as being involved in the transfer of DPRK ballistic missiles and missile-related cargo in November and December 2023, in contravention of relevant UNSCRs:

- Aircraft Tail Number RF-86898; Aircraft Manufacture Date Jan 28, 1982; Aircraft Mode S Transponder Code 155372; Aircraft Model IL-76; Aircraft Manufacturer's Serial Number (MSN) 23435028.
- Aircraft Tail Number RF-78757; Aircraft Manufacture Date Apr 27, 1988; Aircraft Mode S Transponder Code 1533A5; Aircraft Model IL-76MD; Aircraft Manufacturer's Serial Number (MSN) 83484547.
- Aircraft Tail Number RF-82011; Aircraft Manufacture Date Dec 31, 1986; Aircraft Mode S Transponder Code 15405B; Aircraft Model AN-124; Aircraft Manufacturer's Serial Number (MSN) 9773054616023.
- Aircraft Tail Number RF-82041; Aircraft Manufacture Date Feb 8, 1991; Aircraft Mode S Transponder Code 154079; Aircraft Model AN-124; Aircraft Manufacturer's Serial Number (MSN) 9773054055089.
- Aircraft Tail Number RA-78817; Aircraft Manufacture Date Jul 31, 1989; Aircraft Model IL-76; Aircraft Manufacturer's Serial Number (MSN) 93495851.
- Aircraft Tail Number RA-82030; Aircraft Manufacture Date Dec 30, 1987; Aircraft Model AN-124; Aircraft Manufacturer's Serial Number (MSN) 9773054732045.

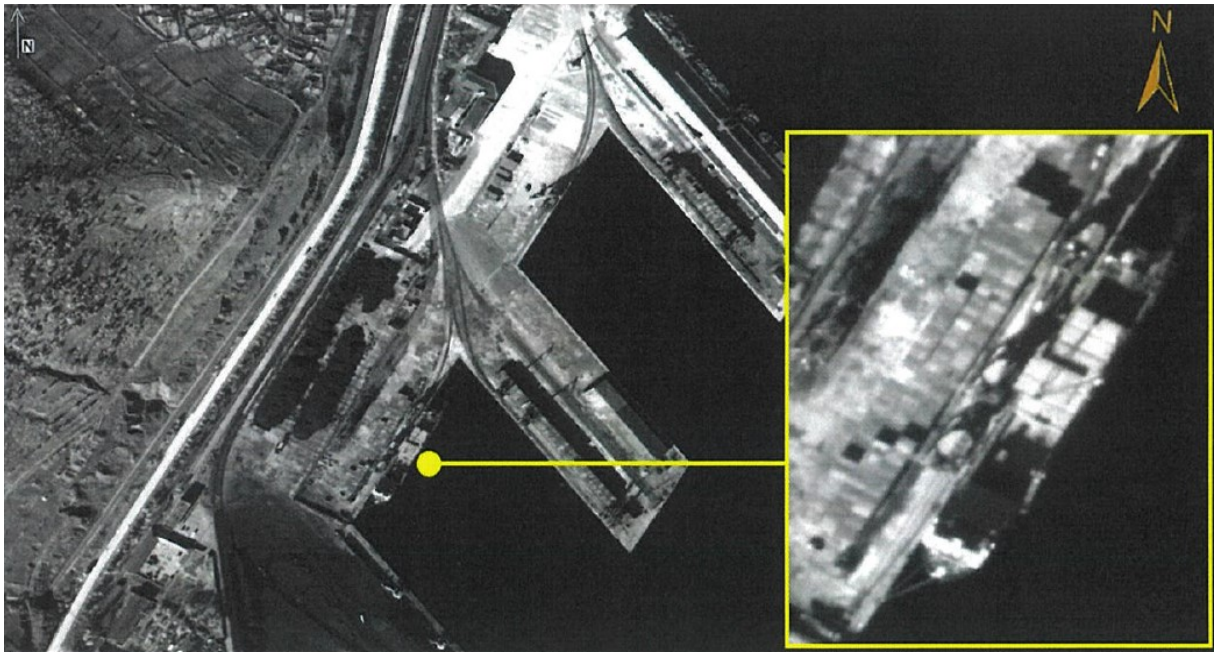
Figure 10: Russian aircraft IL-76 observed at the Sunan Airport, DPRK (December 27, 2023)

Source: An MSMT participating state

33. Additionally, according to an MSMT participating state, Russia used Russia-flagged vessels *ANGARA* (IMO: 9179842; see Figure 11), *MARIA* (IMO: 8517839; see Figure 12), *LADY R* (IMO: 9161003; see Figure 13), and *MAIA-1* (IMO: 9358010; see Figure 14) to transport containers from the DPRK to Russia.[22]

34. According to commercial vessel tracking data, these vessels lack recorded P&I Club (protection and indemnity) insurance cover, many have operated with tracking systems off for months at a time and often have no recorded inspections for the last three years. This behavior is commonly described as 'deceptive shipping practices' and means that these vessels pose a significant risk to the maritime environment and the coastlines they travel past.

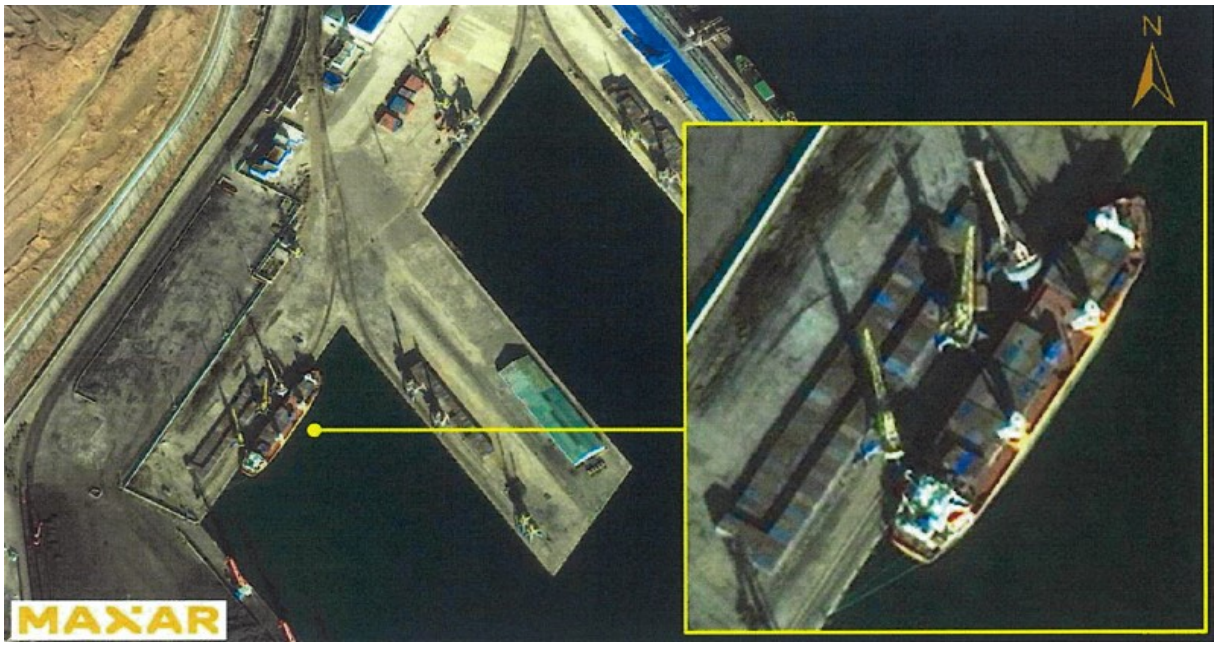
Figure 11: Russia-flagged *ANGARA* at Rajin Port, DPRK (Oct. 25, 2024)



Source: An MSMT participating state

[22] The UN Panel also reported on the activities of these vessels and raised the possibility of the involvement of at least one other vessel. See S/2024/215, *paras*. 99-120.

Figure 12: Russia-flagged *MARIA* at Rajin Port, DPRK (Dec. 14, 2024)



Source: An MSMT participating state

Figure 13: Russia-flagged *LADY R* at Rajin Port, DPRK (Dec. 25, 2024)

Source: An MSMT participating state

Figure 14: Russia-flagged *MAIA-1* at Rajin Port, DPRK (Feb. 12, 2024)

Source: Open Source Centre[23]

Facilitators

35. According to an MSMT participating state, the DPRK and Russia conducted unlawful transfers of arms and military equipment through actors and networks that evaded sanctions by using front companies, and the following individuals and entities have facilitated Russia-DPRK military shipments: Ashot Mkrtychev, Rafael Anatolyevich Gazaryan, Trans Kapital Limited Liability Company, Rafort Limited Liability Company, Aleksey Budnev, and Tekhnologiya OOO.[24]

[23] Open Source Centre, "Red Passage – Russian-DPRK munition carrier seeks to transit the Suez", February 2025 (URL: https://stories.opensourcecentre.org/red-passage/).

[24] For more information, see https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2345.

IV. Illicit Trade and Other Violations

Supply of Refined Petroleum to North Korea above the UN Threshold

36. Pursuant to UNSCR 2397 (2017) paragraph 5, North Korea can procure no more than 500,000 barrels of refined petroleum products during a period of twelve months beginning on January 1 subject to the conditions stipulated in the resolution. However, since 2018, the Panel repeatedly pointed out that the UN-imposed cap had been breached every year.

37. MSMT participating states assess that the 1718 Committee has not been fully informed by Russia on its supply of refined petroleum products to North Korea. The Committee website shows that only about 60 percent of the permitted 2024 annual cap of 500,000 barrels of refined petroleum products had been supplied, based on reports by two UN Member States to the Committee, while a joint analysis by the Open Source Centre (OSC) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) shows that more than a dozen different North Korean oil tankers arrived at an oil terminal in Russia's Far East a total of 43 times between March and October 2024, supplying North Korea with more than a million barrels of oil.[25] The discrepancy between the official tally and actual estimates has not been fully accounted for since the introduction of the oil cap by resolution 2397 (2017).

[25] "Satellite images show Russia giving N Korea oil, breaking sanctions", BBC, November 22, 2024 (URL: https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cjr4pr0gyyzo).

Table 1: 2024 monthly reports received from UN Member States

Month	Amount reported for each month (in barrels)*	Amounts received by the Committee (in tons)	Source country
January 2024	15,279.913	1,914.776	Russian Federation
	4,877.715	585.56	China
February 2024	2,099.577	252.05	China
March 2024	7,064.506	848.08	China
April 2024	20,661.316	2,480.35	China
May 2024	14,591.577	1,751.69	China
June 2024	51,619.677	6,196.84	China
July 2024	13,037.366	1,565.11	China
August 2024	39,447.548	4,735.60	China
September 2024	65,386.918	7,849.57	China
October 2024	35,517.954	4,263.86	China
November 2024	30,618.581	3,675.70	China

Source: UN 1718 Committee website[26]

[26] "Supply, sale or transfer of all refined petroleum products to the DPRK", UN 1718 Committee website, https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/sanctions/1718/supply-sale-or-transfer-of-all-refined-petroleum. Accessed on April 9, 2025.

Dispatch of North Korean Laborers to Russia

38. The UN Panel report published in March 2024[27] stated that more than 100,000 DPRK workers were still working in approximately 40 countries to generate income for North Korea in violation of relevant UNSCRs. According to an MSMT participating state, North Korea sought visas for 8,000 workers to Russia in 2024. North Korea is planning to send thousands more laborers in the first half of 2025 to work in the construction and forestry sectors in Russia.

39. According to an MSMT participating state, North Korea also intends to send information technology (IT) workers and medical personnel to Russia. Furthermore, according to another MSMT participating state, North Korea possibly dispatched 481 workers to Russia (198 people in the construction industry and 283 people in the textile industry) from December 2024 through the end of February 2025. Paragraph 17 of UNSCR 2375 (2017) explicitly prohibits UN Member States from providing work authorizations for DPRK nationals in their jurisdictions absent Committee approval. Paragraph 8 of UNSCR 2397 (2017) further expands on this rule, deciding that UN Member States shall repatriate to the DPRK all DPRK nationals earning income in their jurisdictions absent a limited exception.

Increasing North Korea's Financial Connectivity

40. Russia and the DPRK have actively engaged in financial transactions using ruble accounts. According to an MSMT participating state, Russia is facilitating North Korea's evasion of UN sanctions and Financial Action Task Force (FATF) requirements by allowing North Korea to make payments through UN-designated Foreign Trade Bank (a.k.a. FTB, KPe.047) and Korea Kwangson Banking Corporation (a.k.a. KKBC, KPe.025) using ruble accounts it set up in November 2023 at MRB Bank in Georgia's South Ossetia region.[28]

41. Paragraph 33 of UNSCR 2270 (2016) explicitly prohibits financial institutions within Member States' territories or subject to their jurisdiction from maintaining correspondent relationships with DPRK banks, unless such transactions have been approved by the Committee in advance. FATF Recommendation 7 and Immediate Outcome 11 require the implementation of targeted financial sanctions without delay and effectiveness in complying with relevant UNSCRs to prevent, suppress, and disrupt proliferation financing. FATF Recommendation 19 also requires countries to apply countermeasures and terminate correspondent banking relations with the DPRK.

[27] S/2024/255.
[28] On the activities of MRB Bank, see https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2590.

V. Recommendations

42. Taking into consideration the findings described above, as well as previous recommendations made by the UN 1718 Committee Panel of Experts, MSMT participating states recommend the following to the international community.

- **(Recommendation 1)** Raise awareness on all types of DPRK sanctions evasion by the DPRK and Russia in various multilateral fora including the UNSC, with the aim of deterring further violations of relevant UNSCRs.

- **(Recommendation 2)** Examine specific individuals and entities involved in DPRK sanctions evasion and exercise increased vigilance over ongoing DPRK-related sanctions violations, including arms transfers and other forms of unlawful cooperation with the DPRK.

- **(Recommendation 3)** Work together at the UNSC and the 1718 Committee to designate additional individuals, entities, and vessels that engage in DPRK-related sanctions evasion.

- **(Recommendation 4)** Pursuant to paragraph 27 of UNSCR 2270 (2016), redouble efforts to monitor and prevent the supply, sale, and transfer of items that could contribute to the development of the DPRK's nuclear or ballistic missiles programs, including through enhanced screening and more stringent export control measures.

- **(Recommendation 5)** Monitor financial transactions of DPRK nationals and entities and support the FATF's call for action on the DPRK which requests all countries to: apply counter-measures to protect the international financial system from the risks posed by the DPRK, terminate correspondent relationships and limit business relationships with the DPRK, and enhance due diligence related to the DPRK and its ability to facilitate transactions on its behalf.

- **(Recommendation 6)** Fully implement existing UNSCRs related to the DPRK, assist other countries implement their obligations, and prevent key stakeholders from engaging in prohibited conduct.

- **(Recommendation 7)** Take steps to fill the gap created by the disbandment of the Panel by publicizing information on DPRK-related sanctions evasion and/or sharing such information with other countries.

- **(Recommendation 8)** Implement relevant recommendations previously made by the Panel, including that:

"[M]*aritime authorities of Member States be aware of the DPRK's deceptive practice of re-configuring its cargo ships to carry refined petroleum and conduct the necessary ship inspections when DPRK cargo ships call at their port / port areas. Relevant maritime actors should further take appropriate preventive measures to guard against potential illicit oil procurement in such a manner.*" (S/2022/668)

"Member States with evidence should share a list of vessels suspected of delivering petroleum products to the DPRK with the relevant Member State authorities in order to conduct their own due diligence and deter vessels that facilitate imports of refined petroleum into the DPRK." (S/2020/151)

Annex 1

Current Status of the DPRK's Nuclear and Ballistic Missile Programs

1. North Korea's violations of relevant UNSCRs continued into 2025. During this period, North Korea continued activities related to the unlawful development of its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs, further escalating tensions on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia, posing a threat to international peace and security. North Korea's unlawful activities are in line with "The Five-year Plan for the Development of Defense Science and Weapon Systems" announced by Kim Jong Un in January 2021.[29]

Nuclear

2. In September 2022, North Korea adopted a law that includes preemptive nuclear use in the event that deterrence fails. This policy was further reflected in its constitution in September 2023. Following Kim Jong Un's directive in 2022 to "exponentially increase the production of nuclear warheads," the DPRK intensified activities related to the production of fissile materials (both high enriched uranium and plutonium).

3. In September 2024 and January 2025, the DPRK publicly revealed images of Kim Jong Un inspecting uranium enrichment sites. The Yongbyon nuclear power plant and its 5 MW(e) reactor were observed to be operating throughout 2024, except for intermittent interruptions between August and October. According to the IAEA, this interruption is of sufficient length to refuel the reactor and start its 7th operational cycle. The reprocessing operation has likely restarted at the Radiochemical Laboratory at Yongbyon in January 2025.[30] The light water reactor at Yongbyon also appeared to have been operational, with a possible test-run beginning in October 2023.

4. North Korea has conducted nuclear-related military exercises since 2022. In March 2023, North Korea displayed the purported tactical nuclear warhead which seemed to be written as *"Hwasan-31,"* and also introduced a "Nuclear Trigger" system described as a "national nuclear weapons comprehensive control system." The regime claimed it tested this system during a simulated comprehensive nuclear counterattack drill

[29] At the 8th Party Congress of the Worker's Party of Korea (WPK), Kim Jong Un announced the five-year plan, which explicitly included the DPRK's goal to further develop hypersonic missiles and ICBMs propelled by solid-fuel engines. This has been assessed to be part of North Korea's broader plans to develop a variety of strategic weapons systems that also include nuclear attack submarines and surveillance and reconnaissance systems.

[30] The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General's Introductory Statement of March 2025 corroborates this information. See https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/statements/iaea-director-generals-introductory-statement-to-the-board-of-governors-3-march-2025.

conducted in April 2024. In May 2024, North Korea launched short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) simultaneously and claimed to have conducted the launch under an integrated fire control system simulating military action targeting the Republic of Korea. Kim Jong Un ordered the “mass production of tactical nuclear weapons” in December 2022, and announced the deployment of 250 new tactical ballistic missile launchers to frontline military units by August 2024.

Ballistic Missiles

5. The DPRK continued ballistic missile launches in violation of relevant UNSCRs. In 2022, North Korea resumed ICBM testing by launching *Hwasong-17* after the moratorium on ICBM launches it had declared in 2018. In 2023, North Korea launched a solid-fuel ICBM *(Hwasong-18)* three times. North Korea test-fired the new solid-fuel *Hwasong-19* ICBM in 2024, calling it an "ultimate version” of its long-range missile series and lauded it as "the world's most powerful strategic missile," according to the Korea Central News Agency (KCNA).

6. Kim Jong Un pronounced that the launch of the new *Hwasong-16B* missile in April 2024 perfected the DPRK's project for "putting all the tactical, operational, and strategic missiles with various ranges on a solid-fueled, warhead-controlled, and nuclear warhead-carrying basis,” according to the state news agency KCNA. Additionally, North Korea claimed to have tested ballistic missiles with hypersonic vehicles in January 2024 and January 2025. Between 2019 and April 2025, North Korea launched approximately 150 ballistic missiles including ICBMs.

7. As highlighted in the last Panel report published on March 7, 2024, North Korea has continuously expressed its interest in developing mobile missile launch platforms.[31] The DPRK publicly displayed numerous transporter erector launchers (TELs) in 2024, which included Kim Jong Un’s visit to an ICBM TEL factory in January and a new TEL with at least twelve axles in September 2024.

8. Beyond ballistic missiles, North Korea continued developing new weapon systems such as nuclear-capable strategic cruise missiles (*Hwasal-1* and *Hwasal-2*) and claimed to test an unmanned underwater nuclear attack boat (*Haeil*). As part of its five strategic weapons tasks, North Korea launched so-called military reconnaissance satellites unlawfully using ballistic missile technology three times in 2023 to enhance intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities. On November 21, 2023, North Korea claimed that its reconnaissance satellite *Malligyong-1* successfully entered orbit. In May 2024, one additional satellite launch occurred, which failed due to a midair explosion shortly after liftoff.

[31] S/2024/215, *paras*. 28-29.

Annex 2

UN Security Council Resolutions Applicable to Russia-DPRK Military Cooperation

1. The DPRK's transfer of arms to Russia for use against Ukraine and arms transfers from Russia to North Korea: Both the DPRK and Russia are violating the DPRK-related UN arms embargo established by UNSCRs 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), and 2270 (2016) through these arms transfers. Separately, the DPRK's production of ballistic missiles violates resolution 1718 (2006), which prohibits the DPRK's development of its WMD and ballistic missile programs.

   Resolution 1718 (2006)

   - In response to the DPRK's first nuclear test, resolution 1718 OP 8(a) prohibits all UN Member States from providing to the DPRK specific items (e.g., battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, large caliber artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles and missile systems, and spare parts).

   - Resolution 1718 OP 8(b) prohibits all UN Member States from receiving the same items from the DPRK.

   Resolution 1874 (2009)

   - In response to the DPRK's second nuclear test, resolution 1874 OP 9 expanded the DPRK-related arms embargo to cover all arms and related materiel procured from the DPRK.

   - Resolution 1874 OP 10 extended the DPRK-related arms embargo to cover all arms and related materiel – except small arms and light weapons and related materiel – provided to the DPRK.

   Resolution 2270 (2016)

   - Finally, in response to the DPRK's fourth nuclear test and subsequent ballistic missile launches, resolution 2270 OP 6 extended resolution 1718 OP 8(a) to cover all arms and related materiel, without exception, provided to the DPRK.

2. The DPRK's deployment of troops to Russia: Russia's training of DPRK soldiers violates Security Council resolutions 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), and 2270 (2016), which collectively impose a broad prohibition on providing or receiving military training or assistance to or from the DPRK.

Resolution 1718 (2006)

- Resolution 1718 OP 8(c) prohibits all Member States from providing to or receiving from the DPRK technical training, advice, services, or assistance related to the provision, manufacture, maintenance, or use of the arms and related materiel set forth in OP 8(a) of resolution 1718.

Resolution 1874 (2009)

- Resolution 1874 OP 9 expands the DPRK-related arms embargo to encompass other forms of support received from the DPRK, specifically, technical training, advice, services or assistance related to the provision, manufacture, maintenance, or use of all arms and related materiel.

- Resolution 1874 OP 10 prohibits all Member States from providing to the DPRK technical training, advice, services, or assistance related to the provision, manufacture, maintenance, or use of all arms and related materiel except small arms and light weapons.

Resolution 2270 (2016)

- Resolution 2270 OP 6 expands the arms embargo to encompass the transfer of small arms and light weapons to North Korea.

- Resolution 2270 OP 9 clarifies that the prohibitions in resolution 1874 OP 9 prohibit UN Member States from hosting DPRK trainers, advisors, or other officials for the purpose of military-, paramilitary-, or police-related training.