# North Korea's Troops Lost to DMZ Mines Amid Strengthening Ties with Russia



## North Korea Loses Troops to DMZ Mines and Strengthens Ties with Russia

### Demilitarized Zone Incidents

Since November 2023, North Korea has lost numerous soldiers to land mines within its segment of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), according to South Korea's military. These soldiers were engaged in construction projects near the border, rebuilding guard posts demolished under a now-suspended 2018 agreement to cease all hostile activities around the DMZ. The hazards have not deterred North Korea from continuing the work, despite many deaths and injuries.

On June 18, 2024, a group of North Korean soldiers briefly crossed into South Korean territory, marking the second such incident this month. South Korean forces responded with warning shots, leading the North Korean soldiers to retreat. The South Korean military considers these intrusions unintentional due to poorly marked borders obscured by vegetation.

### Increased Border Tensions

The ongoing activities in the DMZ are part of a broader pattern of confrontation between North and South Korea. These incidents follow North Korea's use of balloons to send trash across the border and South Korea’s retaliation with propaganda broadcasts.

### Putin's Visit to North Korea

Concurrent with these border incidents, Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Pyongyang on June 18, 2024, marking his first visit to North Korea in 24 years. This visit aims to strengthen military and diplomatic ties between Russia and North Korea amidst their shared opposition to Western policies. Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un intend to bolster their countries' partnership and develop alternative trade mechanisms.

The meeting is set against the backdrop of escalating military cooperation between Moscow and Pyongyang, with accusations from the U.S. and its allies that North Korea has been supplying weapons to Russia for its war in Ukraine. Both Russia and North Korea deny these allegations.

Putin's visit includes meetings with Kim, attendance at a parade in Pyongyang, and various cultural activities. The U.S. has expressed concern over this deepening relationship, while G7 leaders recently condemned the military cooperation between the two nations.