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PYONGYANG, NORTH KOREA - On June 19, 2024, Russian President Vladimir Putin landed in Pyongyang, marking his first visit to North Korea in 24 years. Upon arrival, Putin was met with a warm reception from North Korean leader Kim Jong-un at Pyongyang Airport. The two leaders shared a handshake and hug before engaging in a brief, awkward exchange over who would enter the awaiting car first, with Putin ultimately relenting.

The official welcoming ceremony took place at Kim Il Sung Square, attracting thousands of North Koreans who greeted the leaders with cheers, balloons, and bright-colored decorations. Military guards on horses saluted Putin and Kim, further emphasizing the ceremonious nature of the event.

Both leaders proceeded to Kumsusan State Guest House for their first official talks on North Korean soil. The meeting was described as a historic event, symbolizing the robust unity and friendship between Russia and North Korea. During the talks, Putin thanked North Korea for its unwavering support of Russian policies, particularly concerning the conflict in Ukraine.

Putin and Kim discussed various issues, including forming a "comprehensive strategic partnership treaty" that could involve security cooperation and enhancing economic and technological exchanges. The leaders also addressed their opposition to the sanctions imposed by the United Nations and Western countries, vowing to develop trade and payment systems independent of Western control.

The visit highlighted the deepening relations between the two nations, with displays in Pyongyang featuring portraits of Putin and Russian flags. The event provided a rare glimpse into North Korea's tightly controlled environment for foreign media. Russian state broadcasters captured images of the spotless streets and the elaborate decorations set up for Putin’s visit.

Key figures from North Korea's Politburo, including Kim’s sister Kim Yo Jong and Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui, were introduced to Putin. Discussions during this visit are believed to focus on potential arms arrangements, with North Korea purportedly offering munitions to support Russia’s military actions in Ukraine in exchange for economic assistance and advanced technology.

International reactions have varied, with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg and Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba expressing concerns over the implications of this alliance, particularly regarding the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. The nature and extent of North Korea’s support for Russia remain unclear, but both nations have indicated a shared intent to strengthen their strategic partnership.