

# Kremlin: North Korea's Kim Jong Un Will Not Attend Victory Day Parade

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North Korean leader Kim Jong Un speaks during the 5th meeting of training officers of the Korean People's Army.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will not attend events in Moscow next week commemorating the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe, the Kremlin said Thursday.

"He has decided to stay in Pyongyang," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on a conference call. "This decision is related to [North] Korea's internal affairs."

The trip would have been Kim's first overseas since he took power in 2011 after the death of his father.

Shin Kyung-min, a member of South Korean parliament's intelligence committee, had said Wednesday that South Korea's spy agency expected Kim to go to Moscow although there was no independent confirmation of the plan.

Yang Moo-jin, an expert at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said Kim could have boosted his image by going to Moscow and it was not clear why he had decided not to go.

"He was at the stage in his leadership where he should have been seen working on external affairs and trying to overcome international isolation, especially in light of the negative publicity he's got in recent months," he said.

"By visiting Russia, he would have been able to exert pressure on China and also on South Korea, and he would have been able to improve his own image by going over there with his attractive wife and speak in English, which he surely must be able to do."

Peskov said about 30 foreign leaders would attend anniversary events but not all would attend a military parade on Red Square on May 9. These include German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is expected to be in Moscow only on May 10.

Many Western leaders are shunning the anniversary events in a show of displeasure over Russia's actions during the crisis in Ukraine, where pro-Russian separatists are fighting Ukrainian government forces.

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