



**Directorate of
Intelligence**

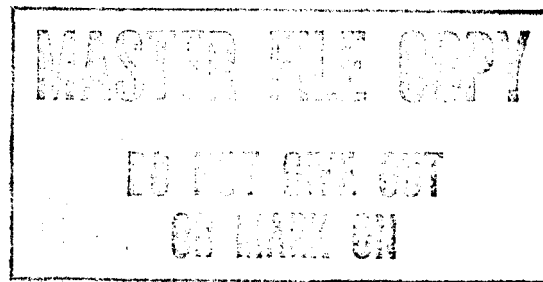
Confidential

The North Korean Succession



25X1

An Intelligence Assessment



Confidential

*EA 82-10032
March 1982*

Copy **304**

Page Denied



**Directorate of
Intelligence**

Confidential

The North Korean Succession


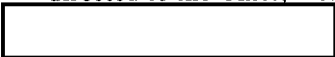


25X1

An Intelligence Assessment

*Information available as of 16 February 1982
has been used in the preparation of this report.*

25X1

The author of this report is  Northeast
Asia Division, Office of East Asian Analysis.
Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, Northeast Asia Division, on


25X1

Confidential
EA 82-10032
March 1982

Confidential**The North Korean Succession**

25X1

Key Judgments

President Kim Il-song has ruled North Korea since 1945, and his inevitable passing will introduce major uncertainty into the Korean scene. To minimize that uncertainty, he intends for his eldest son, Kim Chong-il, to succeed him.

Kim Chong-il, at age 40, is exercising increasing control over day-to-day affairs, especially in domestic political and economic matters. The father-to-son succession has no precedent in the Communist world, but special circumstances in North Korea make the succession likely. Indeed, the image of father and son is being craftily projected in an effort to make the eventual transfer of power appear both natural and ordained.

The deliberate manner in which the son is being groomed indicates that an early succession is not anticipated. Kim Il-song, who will be 70 in April, continues to be very active and retains ultimate authority over the decisionmaking process. While the Soviets and Chinese have avoided endorsing the succession scheme, there is no evidence that the succession issue has adversely affected North Korean foreign policy.

Kim Chong-il's accession to power is by no means assured, however. While we have not been able to observe any active opposition, other senior North Korean leaders presumably have ambitions and may view the son as an upstart. Kim Chong-il's position would be uncertain if Kim Il-song died or was incapacitated before the son solidified his alliances within the critical military and security services.

Over the years Kim Il-song, by dint of one-man rule and a pervasive personality cult, has kept North Korean resources almost totally mobilized toward the goal of a reunified Korea under P'yongyang's control. A North Korean regime headed by anyone other than Kim Chong-il probably would be less reluctant to begin dismantling the elder Kim's cult and his policies. A prolonged and debilitating succession struggle, in particular, would seriously dilute P'yongyang's ability to sustain the reunification drive and the strict, authoritarian controls that have reinforced Kim Il-song's long reign. This worrisome prospect may explain in large part the great effort Kim Il-song has undertaken to ensure an orderly transfer of power to his son.

Confidential

Because the son's claim to legitimacy is closely tied to loyalty to his father's vision, a regime led by Kim Chong-il would be likely to present a large measure of continuity characterized by:

- Hostility toward South Korea and the United States.
- Strong commitment to reunification on P'yongyang's terms.
- Military strength at the expense of social and economic development.
- Stress on self-reliance (*chuche*).

We know little about Kim Chong-il's personal traits. In view of his youth and lack of experience he may be prone to act impulsively when, for example, he is faced with a shooting incident along the Demilitarized Zone. Kim Chong-il, in any event, could not automatically wield the absolute power his father has, and this would reduce his own freedom of action in forging North Korea's foreign and domestic policy.



25X1

Confidential

Confidential

The North Korean Succession

25X1

The Son Goes Public

The problems that North Korea's tightly closed society present to the intelligence analyst are nowhere better illustrated than in Kim Il-song's nearly 10-year, behind-the-scenes campaign to groom his eldest son as his successor. During that campaign the son, Kim Chong-il, was never identified at public gatherings, the media did not mention his name, and he did not meet with foreigners.

The regime nonetheless kept the North Korean populace apprised of the younger Kim's activities by the use of special honorific expressions. The most prominent codeword for the son was—and still is—the “party center.” Through local indoctrination sessions, the people were made to understand that these codewords were, in fact, describing the son's activities.

Kim Il-song, we judge, saw a number of advantages in keeping the succession scheme under wraps:

- It provided an opportunity for the son to be tested, while keeping the elder Kim's options open if the son failed to measure up.
- It enabled Kim Il-song to avoid lameduck status.
- It shielded North Korea from possibly embarrassing foreign commentary.

The regime used the Sixth Congress of the Korean Workers Party—North Korea's ruling Communist party—to introduce Kim Chong-il officially to the rest of the world. At the congress, held in October 1980, Kim Chong-il was named fourth-ranking member of the party's 19-member Political Bureau. His name had never before appeared in a public leadership listing. As one of the top five in the party hierarchy, Kim Chong-il became a member of the newly instituted “Presidium” or standing committee of the Political Bureau.

He was also designated a secretary on the party's Secretariat, ranking behind only his father, who is the “General Secretary.” As the ranking secretary, Kim Chong-il is now charged with the day-to-day political

Kim Chong-il: Personality Cult Unfolds

The World Revolutionary People highly praise the dear leader comrade Kim Chong-il, the only successor to the great leader comrade Kim Il-song, and express boundless reverence for him. . . .

Dear comrade Kim Chong-il is an outstanding thinker and theoretician. . . .

We should actively introduce and propagandize the greatness of the dear leader comrade Kim Chong-il, his ideas and theories and his precious exploits. . . .

The Korean people hold dear comrade Kim Chong-il in high esteem as the leader of the revolution and construction who translates and embodies the lofty intentions and the chuche idea of President Kim Il-song.

Excerpts from a broadcast by the North Korean official news agency on 19 November 1981 claiming to report foreign praise of Kim Chong-il.

25X1

work of the party. He also was appointed a member of the party's prestigious Military Committee, ranking after his father and Defense Minister O Chin-u. The younger Kim is the only official other than his father to serve on both the Secretariat and the Military Committee.

The party congress stopped short of formally designating Kim Chong-il as successor to his father. Even so, Kim Il-song's decision to “go public” with his son and, by extension, the succession scheme was not taken lightly. As long as the son remained behind the

Confidential

Confidential



Korea Today

The two Kims at the Sixth Party Congress, October 1980.

25X1

scenes it was possible for the elder Kim to abandon the scheme, as in the early 1970s he had abandoned a similar effort to groom his own younger brother, Kim Yong-chu.

Heightened Profile

Since the party congress, the buildup of Kim Chong-il has intensified. Early in 1981, P'yongyang began to encourage foreigners to offer toasts to Kim Chong-il's health at diplomatic functions. By late spring, North Korea began publicizing these greetings as well as longer stories and commentaries hailing the son's exploits. In some cases P'yongyang has attributed to foreigners favorable comments on Kim Chong-il, when in fact no such comments were made.

In May 1981, North Korea started selectively publicizing Kim Chong-il's activities in the official media, focusing on his duties in domestic political and economic affairs. Kim Chong-il's appearances at about 10 functions in 1981 served to keep him in the limelight, but the attention paid to him does not begin to rival that given to his father, whose appearances were publicized on at least 130 occasions during 1981.

North Korean newspapers now treat Kim Chong-il more extensively than they do any other leader with the exception of Kim Il-song. In the party daily:

- Articles on Kim Chong-il appear on page 1 in the lead position on the upper right-hand side.
- Kim Chong-il's name is printed in boldface type.
- The sizes of the headline and the type font have increased, although they are still somewhat smaller than those used for Kim Il-song.

The major duties that Kim Chong-il is now openly performing closely parallel those attributed to the "party center" before the party congress. He is charged with ensuring that party members remain loyal to Kim Il-song, a task that is enshrined in the slogan "dyeing the whole of society" with Kim Il-song's thoughts. His role as chief interpreter, protector, and propagandizer of Kim Il-song's thoughts not only provides the younger Kim with a potent political weapon against would-be challengers, but also buttresses his supporters' claim that he is the logical choice to carry on his father's achievements.

Confidential

Confidential

4 June 1981

조선로동당 중앙위원회 정치국 상무위원회
위원이며 당중앙위원회 비서인 김정일동지가
표향산지구를 실무시찰하였다

조선로동당 중앙위원회 정치국 상무위원회 위원이며 당중앙위원회 비서인 김정일동지는 5월 8일부터 22일까지 조선로동당 중앙위원회 정치국 상무위원회 위원이며 인민무력부장인 오	는에서 제기되는 일련의 문제들을 직접 료해하였으며 그 집행을 위한 구체적인 과업들을 제시하였다.	김정일동지는 국제원전전람관을 돌아보면서 전람관을 당원들	구리라고 하신 경애하는 김일성동지의 교시를 철저히 실천하기 위하여 상원암, 만폭하미로를 비롯한 명승지등산을 일일이 직접 답사하면서 로운 등산길과 참관자들을
---	---	--------------------------------	--

17 August 1981

조선로동당 중앙위원회 정치국 상무위원회
위원이며 당중앙위원회 비서인
김정일동지가 완공단계에
들어선 빙상관과 천석식당
건설사업을 실무지도하였다

22 December 1981

조선로동당 중앙위원회 정
위원회 위원이며 당중앙위원
**김정일동지가 모란봉경기
공사와 조선예술영화출**

Heightened emphasis on Kim Chong-il in the party daily Nodong Sinmun is seen in the gradually increasing size of type used in headlines about Kim Chong-il's guidance activities in the June, August, and December newspapers. [redacted]

25X1

Confidential

Confidential

Kim Chong-il appears deeply involved in both formulating and supervising the implementation of North Korea's economic policies and plans. One of his more publicized contributions is the so-called speed battle—mobilizing all available manpower and resources to achieve a specific goal in a relatively short time. The concept is patterned after the *Chollima*, or winged-horse, campaign—a labor-intensive production campaign Kim Il-song instituted in the late 1950s. The two techniques have been coupled in a single slogan—the “spirit of *Chollima* spurred on by the speed campaign.” This slogan elevates the son's contribution in directing the national economy to the same level as that of his father.

Perhaps Kim Chong-il's most celebrated innovation is the “three-revolution team” movement, a nationwide campaign initiated in 1973. Such teams, made up of technicians, students, and representatives from the party, are sent to factories and farms to check on the performance of local party and administrative leaders. The teams are credited with eradicating all sorts of bureaucratic evils and outmoded concepts. In practical terms, the movement provides the younger Kim with a separate and powerful institutional arm to purge or demote veteran functionaries and replace them with handpicked representatives.

A Long Apprenticeship

North Korea, through its official press, clearly is attempting to portray Kim Chong-il's activities in a manner that evokes the image of his father's activities over the past years. Kim Chong-il, for example, is now shown making periodic inspection trips in the provinces, accompanied by other senior North Korean leaders. He also is shown inspecting the progress on construction projects in P'yongyang. The younger Kim is credited with the decade-long campaign to modernize and beautify the capital city—the results of which have impressed even the harshest foreign critics of the North Korean regime.

The activities that the son has not engaged in are just as important, however, in gauging the overall pace of the succession:

- He has yet to make a publicized speech or publish an article under his own name.



A youthful Kim Chong-il looks on respectfully as his father visits a “three revolution” exhibit, probably in the early 1970s. Photos such as this one are appearing in current North Korean publications with increasing frequency as part of the effort to link the younger Kim historically with the achievements of his father.

DPRK

25X1

- He has not presided over a major national event.
- He has not met with foreign leaders.
- He has not traveled abroad in his capacity as a high-ranking official.

This pattern of activity suggests that the elder Kim is still moving at a deliberate pace on the succession scheme. In any event, the succession issue dominates North Korean domestic policy concerns. At every major domestic function the party sponsors, the publicized proceedings are focused almost exclusively on the campaign to ensure that party functionaries accept Kim Chong-il's instructions without fail.

The one development that obviously could cause the succession scenario to quicken would be a sudden deterioration in Kim Il-song's health. The elder Kim, who will be 70 in April, is overweight, a heavy smoker, and probably has high blood pressure. He has a large growth on the back of his neck, which is not life threatening but is too complex to remove for purely cosmetic reasons. In the past year or so North

Confidential

Confidential

Korea has permitted this growth, which is visible at the hairline from the left side, to appear in official photographs, a reminder of the elder Kim's mortality. This new candor reinforces the need for addressing the succession issue.

Kim Il-song nonetheless shows no sign of slowing down any time soon. He has remained extremely active since the party congress and has no hesitancy about meeting in long sessions with foreign visitors. In April, Kim Il-song will be receiving numerous foreign leaders who have been urged to attend gala celebrations marking his 70th birthday. Preparations for this demanding schedule would not be proceeding if Kim Il-song's health were questionable.

Foreign Reactions

Thus far, China and the USSR, P'yongyang's treaty allies, have avoided public commentary on Kim Chong-il. Among "fraternal" Communist countries, the issue of succession has long been viewed as an internal matter. North Korea, in developing its rationale for a planned succession, has not endeared itself to Beijing or Moscow, however. In thinly veiled terms, P'yongyang has argued that its method will help avoid the chaos that followed the deaths of Stalin and Mao.

China, for reasons of political expediency, would probably be more inclined than the Soviet Union to tolerate a family succession. Beijing wants to keep P'yongyang firmly in its camp and over the years has been willing to overlook Kim Il-song's cult. Beijing will find it difficult to accede to North Korean pressure for explicit endorsement of the succession, however, because of domestic Chinese political sensitivities. China's present top leaders used criticism of the personality cult of Mao Zedong and his successor Hua Guofeng to remove the latter from the party chairmanship in 1981.

China's desire to skirt the succession issue came to the fore during the visit of Premier Zhao Ziyang in December 1981. Not only did Zhao fail to acknowledge Kim Chong-il, but the North Korean hosts themselves refrained from making any mention of the son in connection with Zhao's five-day stay in North Korea. The omission was made all the more striking by a publicized appearance by the son at a separate event in P'yongyang during Zhao's visit.

The Soviets, for their part, are extremely distrustful of Kim Il-song and have been unwilling to endorse Kim's cult. They have not forgotten Kim's ingratitude for past assistance and his penchant for taking high-risk actions that jeopardize Soviet strategic interests. Moscow probably does not cherish the prospect of trying to cope with the younger Kim, who could be as irascible and unpredictable as his father.

Kim Chong-il's Assets

Historically, Communist states have had great difficulty arranging an orderly transfer of power. Moreover, Kim Il-song's father-son succession scheme has no precedent in the Communist world. Thus, by most standards, Kim Chong-il would seem to have more going against him than for him.

There are, however, some special conditions at work in North Korea that improve the son's chances. First, of course, is Kim Il-song's great personal power. Many of his senior lieutenants may be unenthusiastic about the younger Kim, but they are undoubtedly loyal to Kim Il-song—he has systematically eliminated his opponents over the years. Thus, resistance, if any, is likely to remain passive as long as the senior Kim is around.

There are no obvious challengers to Kim Chong-il. The older Kim's personal involvement in virtually every aspect of North Korea's development has created an enormous gap between Kim Il-song and his immediate subordinates. Only party veteran Kim Il has anything approaching an independent stature, and his health is poor.

Finally, North Korea is probably more of a closed society than any other country in the world. A generation has matured under virtually exclusive indoctrination in Kim Il-song's thought. To the people, Kim Il-song is both a political leader and a father figure. North Korean propaganda has sought to capitalize on and magnify this personal appeal in order to establish the legitimacy of the son's claim. Indeed, the image of the father and the son is being craftily projected in an effort to make the eventual transfer of power appear both natural and foreordained.

Confidential

Confidential

The Murky Background of Kim Chong-il



Korea Today

Kim Chong-il. [redacted]

25X1

Despite his heightened publicity, reliable information on Kim Chong-il's personal history remains meager. He was born on 16 February 1942, a date that P'yongyang finally confirmed on his 40th birthday. There is still uncertainty concerning where he was born.

and a staunch revolutionary in her own right. This program is also meant to lend support to Kim Chong-il's cause.

Most accounts suggest that Kim Il-song took refuge in the Soviet Union after Japanese forces moved against Korean Communist guerrillas in Manchuria in the late 1930s. North Korean hagiographers, however, put guerrilla leader Kim in the Korea-Manchuria border area. The issue has implications for the younger Kim. As successor, it is important that his birthplace be established on Korean soil or in territory under the operational control of Kim Il-song's partisan forces.

Kim Il-song remarried in the early 1950s. His second wife, Kim Song-ae, is a member of the party Central Committee and leader of the women's league. During her infrequent public appearances, she is identified as Kim Il-song's wife. Kim Il-song reportedly has a son and daughter by this second marriage, but neither has been mentioned by name in the press. [redacted]

25X1
25X1

Kim Chong-il's early family life is also obscure. His mother, Kim Chong-suk, died in 1949 at the age of 32. Since the mid-1970s, a campaign has been under way to depict her as a fervent follower of Kim Il-song

Kim Chong-il reportedly studied briefly in Eastern Europe and ultimately graduated from Kim Il-song University in P'yongyang. He apparently did not serve in the armed forces but moved directly into an important post in the central party apparatus. Kim Chong-il reportedly has a wife and children, but they have never been mentioned in the North Korean media.

[redacted]

25X1

Confidential

Page Denied

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Denied

8
1
1

7
1
1

Confidential