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<b>FROM:</b> (Name, org. symbol, Agency/Post)  Senior Review Panel	<b>Room No.—Bldg.</b>
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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

Senior Review Panel

NIC-00598-88  
9 March 1988MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
Deputy Director of Central IntelligenceSUBJECT: Senior Review Panel Comments on Draft  
NIE 14.2-88: North Korea: Prospects  
for the Succession and Internal Stability,  
internally dated 22 February 1988

1. The Panel finds this draft both commendable and worrisome. The author is to be commended for organizing the material in such a way as to make clear the strange character of the socialist dynasty in North Korea and to explore the range of succession problems.

Probably the first Key Judgment should be that the US needs to devote new energies to our collection efforts on the DPRK.

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2. The draft Estimate is remarkably compact--sufficiently so that we do not believe an "Executive Summary" is really necessary. The four Box Texts provide useful elaboration. We do have a few comments on them:

a. Kim Il-Song's Health. Are we sure that the ageing despot suffers from all the illnesses listed, or is it that various reports have from time to time mentioned these maladies?

b. Kim Chong-Il: What Makes Him Tick. This sketch is especially well done. The main Discussion refers to his "mercurial behavior" (paragraph 18) and Box 3 might also be referenced in that connection. Aspects of his strange behavior might even deserve an additional paragraph in the Box, including his very frank discussion of having a movie actress and her director husband kidnapped from Hong Kong. Incidentally, it might also help to indicate the exact age of the "dear leader."

c. Who Are the Players? Box 4 discusses groupings--hawks vs. doves, technocrats vs. militarists, etc., yet not a

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single name is mentioned. Given the recent purge of Defense Minister O Kuk-Yol, the activities of Foreign Minister Kim Yong-Nam, or the records of who travels with Kim the elder and Kim the younger, we believe it would be helpful to have a listing of the key players immediately under them. Or is the absence of any names in this box merely a reflection of our intelligence gap?

3. Economic Problems. In both the text and in Box 2 there is general reference to North Korea's stumbling economy. It would help the reader of this admirable NIE to have a few illustrations of current problems: the extent of debt default, trends in production and foreign trade, and especially current energy shortages. These would help to portray the magnitude of the challenges Kim Chong-Il will face. Even if the younger Kim were to face up to his economic problems, what is the likelihood he could do something about them without putting his political controls at risk?


4. Tension Reduction. The draft argues (paragraph 14) that Kim Il-Song may opt for tension reduction in order to smooth the transition. We wonder whether the opposite might also be the case; he could feel that heightened tension would help bring the older cadres, the fractious family-members, and the military into line. The Panel also feels that the description of the DPRK "peace offensive" since 1984 might be a bit overplayed. The forward deployment of second and third echelon military units (1984-85), the intensity of the anti-Team Spirit campaigns (1985, 1986, and 1987, and now especially strident in 1988), and other activities are hardly reassuring.



Courtland D. Perkins



John B. McPherson



Richard L. Walker

STAT

cc: AC/NIC (Mr. Hutchinson)  
VC/NIC (Mr. Gries)  
NIO for East Asia