

# **Regime Leadership and Human Rights in North Korea**

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## **Abstract**

Influencing North Korean leadership and their performance on human rights should include an understanding of how power is developed, projected and maintained within the North Korean political structure. Within that context, loyalty to the “*suryong*” – supreme leader – in North Korea is the most critical factor in assessing how decisions are made during policy-making. The Kim regime has hundreds of power elite and other elite that are identifiable, contribute directly to the centralization of political power, and who each individually contribute in some way to human rights denial. These elite dominate North Korea’s structure and function in policy-making and implementation. In North Korea, all policy is vetted politically by the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) Organization and Guidance Department (OGD) and then final approval is given by the Supreme Leader, Kim Jong-un. Within North Korea, this process includes the Kim regime policy of human rights denial. Generally, those associated with any power-elite ranking are the same individuals who serve to ensure that North Korea’s human rights policy remains as it is. This paper will address individual North Korean leaders and their role as advisers on human rights

Keywords: North Korea, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, DPRK, North Korean leadership, human rights denial, regime elite, Korean Workers’ Party, politburo, Central Military Committee, National Defense Commission

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea.

## ***Introduction***

The leadership within North Korea provides the Kim family regime with a structure that ensures policy-making serves the interests of the *suryong*, “supreme leader,” at the exclusion of consideration of the

interests of all others.<sup>1</sup> They do so in return for privilege and position in a patronage system that rewards loyalty to the *suryong* first and foremost. As in any nation-state, a country's power elite recommend policy, supervise implementation of policy, evaluate the success of the implementation, and makes recommendations on adjustments to policy. In North Korea, all policy is vetted politically by the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) Organization and Guidance Department (OGD) and then final approval is given by the Supreme Leader, Kim Jong-un. Within North Korea, this process includes the Kim regime policy of human rights denial. Generally, those associated with any power-elite ranking are the same individuals who serve to ensure the North Korea's human rights policy remains as it is.<sup>2</sup>

An in-depth analysis of North Korean society reveals that there are socio-political gradations of the elite. Where social stratification is a critical component of judging not only the elite versus the common, it is also a component of determining levels within the elite. While it is critical to be a party member to become an elite,<sup>3</sup> what is clear in the Kim regime is that there are three levels of elite: the power elite, the cadre elite, and the lesser elite. This is generally true for the rest of the North Korea also, although the percentages of elite in the provinces are far, far less than in Pyongyang. Those vetted by socio-political background investigations, particularly the descendants of anti-Japan partisans, dominate the leadership of party, military, and state institutions as well as the policy recommendations that go forward to the Supreme Leader. Because political terror impacts the elite as much as the lower classes, if not more so, policy recommendations are as much shaped by fear of political misstep as they are for necessity of acceptable solutions to policy issues. The most powerful are the most monitored by the internal security services.

For the purposes of this report, the North Korean "power elite" are defined as those individuals in key positions who directly impact political decision-making of national significance. Except for the action officers of the KWP OGD, the power elite does not include those staff action officers who generally prepare base documents for policy formulation consideration by their supervisors who in turn offer policy recommendations to decision-makers. "Cadre elite" are those professional high-to-middle-grade leaders within the KWP, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) government, military, economic enterprises, and social organizations that implement party policy at the

action level or serve as immediate supervisors of those that do. The power elite are also referred to in North Korean terminology as cadre. The lesser elite are those party members that serve in Pyongyang society within party, government, military, and socio-economic positions, albeit at a marginalized level, such as everyday menial labor positions, factory, and agricultural positions, and as office workers.

### ***North Korea's Power Elite***

The regime's power elite – also identified as the upper class of North Korea – are based on political power rather than wealth. In fact, the greatest benefit of good *songbun*'s socio-political background is political influence. These privileged elite devote greater effort to protecting the regime than other citizens because if they do not, they do not progress within the system and experience a sense of loss. Contrarily, ordinary North Koreans cannot expect much advancement opportunity and therefore do not put in the same kind of effort. This creates a significant amount of resentment between the classes.<sup>4</sup>

The Supreme Leader's closest associates have the privilege of authority and thus political power. This privileged class has access to the Supreme Leader giving them opportunity to convey their opinions directly to him. However, they must be very careful what they say and how they say it. Their status of power and privilege is passed on to their children, but the wrong word could sentence their children to death. Within a dictatorial regime, it is common for those with political power to manipulate the political system to accumulate wealth and privilege, both through the influence of their decisions and corruption. This upper class is referred to by the Kim regime as the core class and it provides leadership for the regime at all levels – the party, the government, the military, the security agencies, and socio-cultural organizations.<sup>5</sup> The core class consists of those with the highest socio-political rating and is synonymous with political authority and influence, economic dominance, and privilege. To further the stability of the Kim regime, these individuals control all public distribution, including food and daily necessities.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, resource and privilege distribution is not about balance or fairness, but about politics.

The Korean War had a major impact on the establishment of the North Korean elite and the population of Pyongyang. As much as 25~30 percent of the North Korean population suffered some sort of casualty during the Korean War.<sup>7</sup> The descendants of this group make up the

majority of the core workers that support the regime.<sup>8</sup> After Kim Il-sung's extended family, North Korea's elite are led by these Korean War veterans and their surviving family members as well as families tied to anti-Japanese partisans and other historical revolutionaries. There is a significant history of these individuals being treated with exception rather than the socio-political norm of North Korea's strict social stratification. As long as these individuals from historically elite families demonstrate complete loyalty to regime leadership, they are rewarded with the most significant of privileges in housing, education, food, health care, and occupational assignments.

Although all cadre are party members, not all party members are cadre. Since entrance into the party is only the first step towards becoming a cadre, there is a direct correlation between being a party member and being an elite.<sup>9</sup> KWP membership stands at approximately 3.2 million, comprised of approximately 210,000 party cells.<sup>10</sup> Standing at approximately one-eighth of the population, KWP membership is the highest percentage of the population of any communist country in history. Kim Il-sung referred to the party as "those workers, agri-workers, working intellectuals that give their lives to the victory of socialism and communism and become a revolutionary organization for the advancement of the people."<sup>11</sup> KWP membership is spread out over the entire country and provides leadership to every community at every level in North Korea, including the government and military. All core government leaders and military officers are party members. The majority of North Koreans want to be a member of the party because it is the direct route to a better life, not political advantage. The majority of KWP members are not elite, much less power elite. For example, the number of paid party workers is only in the tens of thousands.<sup>12</sup>

North Korea's power elite are generally those members and candidate members of the KWP Central Committee (CC) and military and security service generals. Leadership positions are KWP CC department directors, provincial party responsible secretaries, 4- and 5-star generals, and government ministers. North Korean terminology frequently refers to core leadership cadre as KWP CC responsible workers.<sup>13</sup> The most elite of the Kim regime elite are the members of the KWP Politburo, the KWP Central Military Committee (CMC), and the DPRK National Defense Commission (NDC). All of the aforementioned serve in the KWP CC which has 124 full members and 105 alternate (candidate) members.<sup>14</sup> The KWP CC should not be viewed as an exact

list of the power elite as many of its members are there in honorary status for work over decades, but are too old to serve competently within the regime and are members of the CC for reward rather than power and influence. When assessing who the core leaders within the regime are, membership in the CC should be seen in relation to membership in other influential party, military, or government organizations.

According to the KWP Charter's Article 23, "The Party Central Committee directs the work of the party between party congresses. The Party Central Committee firmly establishes the monolithic ideological system for the entire party, organizes and directs the Party to carry out party policies, strengthens the rank and file of the Party, directs and supervises the administrative and economic work of the Party committees at every level, organizes revolutionary armed forces and enhances their fighting capabilities, represents the Party in its external relations with other political parties within and outside the country and manages the finances of the Party."

The KWP Politburo is ostensibly the highest body of decision-making within the Kim regime outside of the Supreme Leader's personal decisions. Members of this body are the most successful within the highly competitive field of domestic politics which encompasses all professional fields. Members generally have access to Kim Jong-un as needed, some more than others. Membership includes representatives from the military, government, security agencies and the party. All are party members. Most, if not all, are key advisers to Kim Jong-un. KWP Politburo members are the KWP First Secretary, Kim Jong-un, specific members of the KWP CMC and the NDC (the exact number varies depending on purges, natural deaths, and new assignments); deputy directors of various KWP departments; as well as KWP Secretariat secretaries, directors and deputy directors.<sup>15</sup>

Kim Jong-un, Kim Yong-nam (Chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly Standing Committee), and Vice Marshal Hwang Byong-so (Director of the Korean People's Army [KPA] General Political Bureau) are the three members of the KWP Politburo Standing Committee. Full Politburo members include Choe Ryong-hae (KWP Secretary for Social Organizations), Pak Pong-ju (DPRK Premier), Kim Kyong-hui (formerly Minister of Light Industry, though her health status and political position are unclear after the execution of her husband, Jang Song-taek), Choe

Tae-bok (Chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly), Kim Ki-nam (KWP Secretary for Propaganda), Pak To-chun (recently replaced as KWP Secretary for Machine Industries, but remains in lesser positions and the media speculates that he may have health issues), Yang Hyong-sop (Vice-chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly Standing Committee), Kang Sok-ju (DPRK Vice-Premier), Vice Marshal Ri Yong-mu (Vice-chairman of the DPRK NDC and distant in-law to Kim Jong-un), General O Kuk-ryol (Vice-chairman of DPRK NDC and historically close to the Kim family), and General Kim Won-hung (Director of the State Security Department). Politburo alternate members include General Ri Yong-gil (KPA Chief of the General Staff), Kim Yang-kon (State councilor), Kim Pyong-hae (KWP Secretary for Cadre Affairs), Kwak Pyong-ki (Director, KWP Planning and Finance Department), Major General Choe Bu-il (Minister of People's Security), Ro Tu-chol (DPRK Vice-Premier), Cho Yon-jun (First Vice-Director, KWP OGD), Tae Jong-su (Responsible Secretary, Hamkyong South Province KWP Committee), Choe Yong-rim (Honorary Vice-President of the Supreme People's Assembly Standing Committee), and O Su-yong (Responsible Secretary, Hamkyong North Province KWP Committee). Politburo members who have been purged and/or executed include Jang Song-taek (Kim Jong-un's uncle and presumed former regent) and General Hyon Yong-chol (former DPRK Minister of People's Armed Forces [MPAF]). General Kim Kyok-sik recently died of natural causes. Most of these elite serve in multiple positions in the party or state; however, all of them have a direct impact on the Kim regime's implementation of human rights policy.<sup>16</sup>

The KWP CMC is the party's highest decision-making body addressing military policy issues and the military-industrial complex. According to KWP Charter Article 27, the KWP CMC leads party efforts in deciding military lines and policy, fortifying the revolutionary armed forces, and developing military industries.<sup>17</sup> It is chaired by the KWP First Secretary. It is not a command organization. Its directives are followed by party, military and government agencies alike. The KWP CMC's influence on national budget expenditures ensures there are sufficient funds to service military requirements.

Most members, if not all, are key advisers to Kim Jong-un who, as the KWP First Secretary, automatically serves as the CMC Chairman. General Hwang Byong-so serves as the Vice-Chairman. Members include Vice Marshal Kim Yong-chun (former Minister of People's

Armed Forces and current Director of the KWP Military Department), General Kim Kyong-ok (first Vice-Director in KWP OGD in charge of regional parties), General Kim Won-hong, General Ri Pyong-chol (KWP OGD First Vice-Director for Military Affairs), Major General Choe Bu-il, General Kim Yong-chol (Director of the KPA Reconnaissance General Bureau), Colonel General Yun Jong Rin (Commander, Guards Command), Chu Kyu-chang (Director, KWP Machine Industries Department), Colonel General Choe Kyong-song (Commander, KPA 11<sup>th</sup> Corps), Vice Marshal Hyon Chol-hae (Director, MPAF Rear Services Bureau), Lieutenant Kim Rak-gyom (Commander, Strategic Rocket Forces), General Ri Yong-gil (KPA Chief of General Staff), and Colonel General Chang Jong-nam (Commander, KPA 5<sup>th</sup> Corps). Former CMC members Jang Song-taek and General Kim Kyok-sik have recently died, the former executed and the latter of natural causes. Vice-Marshal Choe Ryong-hae (KWP Secretary for Social Organizations) was formerly the CMC Vice-Chairman, but his current status on the CMC is not clear.

According to Article 106 of the DPRK Constitution, the NDC is the supreme national defense guidance organ of state sovereignty. Article 100 states that the NDC Chairman is the Supreme Leader of the DPRK. Article 109 states the duties and authority of the NDC are to establish important policies of the state for carrying out the military-first revolutionary line; guide the overall armed forces and defense-building work of the state; supervise the status of executing the orders of the chairman of the DPRK NDC and the decisions and directives of the NDC, and establish relevant measures; rescind the decisions and directives of state organs that run counter to the orders of the chairman of the DPRK NDC and to the decisions and directives of the NDC; establish or abolish central organs of the national defense sector; and institute military titles and confer military titles above the general grade officer rank.<sup>18</sup>

Each NDC member represents a specialized field and advises Kim Jong-un accordingly. NDC members include NDC Chairman Kim Jong-un, NDC Vice-Chairman General Hwang Byong-so, NDC Vice-Chairman Vice Marshal Ri Yong-mu, NDC Vice-Chairman General O Kuk-ryol, and NDC members KWP Secretary Kim Chun-sop (who recently replaced Pak To-chun), General Kim Won-hong, Major General Choe Bu-il, Cho Chun-ryong (Director of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Economic Committee), and General Ri Pyong-chol. Again, former NDC member, General Hyon Yong-chol, has been purged and is presumed executed.

At the KWP department level, other primary political organizations within the military include the KPA General Political Bureau, the KWP Military Department, and the KWP Civil Defense Department.

There are approximately 1400 general and flag-grade officers in the North Korean military.<sup>19</sup> Most of these officers do not live in Pyongyang because they are stationed with their individual units across the country, most of them near the Korean Demilitarized Zone.

Numerous scholars have attempted to estimate the number of elite. There are several numbers one can site, many lacking explanation. However, there are several statistics that contribute to an understanding of how many elite there are in North Korea, particularly if one breaks down the details of each individual organizationally.

There are no dominant social characteristics of the KWP CC such as regional origin, alma mater, age (which ranges from the thirties to the nineties), or blood ties. Less than five percent are female. Most KWP CC members are over 70 years old and witnessed the North Korean revolution first hand, as well as the regime from Kim Il-sung to Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un. Kim Jong-un is the youngest member of the KWP CC.<sup>20</sup>

Historically, protocol rankings in North Korea have given the outside world a window into who is among the most influential and who is not within the Kim regime power structure. These rankings have been a tool of the Supreme Leader, prepared by the KWP OGD, to identify publicly senior leaders and their relation to the Supreme Leader over the years. The rankings have been identified at state and party functions and anniversaries, Kim Il-sung birth and death anniversaries, as well as the funeral committees of deceased senior leaders and other public gatherings. Under Kim Il-sung, this ranking was dominated at the top by members of the KWP Politburo at positions 1-13, candidate members of the Politburo at positions 14-23, and KWP secretaries at positions 24-29. After Kim Il-sung passed away in 1994, membership in the National Defense Commission became dominant criteria in the ranking as well.<sup>21</sup> Generally, those associated with this power elite ranking are the same individuals who serve to ensure the North Korea's human rights policy of denial remains intact.

Another measurement of influence is observing who stands with the Supreme Leader during political events. These individuals are invariably Politburo members, party secretaries, National Defense Commission cadre and senior military generals (mostly vice-marshals), all of who



maintain some significant degree of power and influence within the Kim regime. Of these, the Republic of Korea's (ROK) Korea Institute for National Unification assesses that there are 30-50 individuals who are considered the regime's "brain trust of the revolution."<sup>22</sup>

Another study from the Korea Institute for National Unification puts power elites at more than 680, all assigned to critical positions in the KWP OGD, the KWP Propaganda and Agitation Department, KWP United Front Department, the KWP Foreign Relations Department (likely the KWP International Department), the military's General Political Bureau, and the Korean People's Army General Staff Department.<sup>23</sup> This figure does not seem adequate as it does not include all of the members of the KWP Politburo, the KWP Central Military Committee, or the National Defense Commission. However, such an estimate would be demonstrative of who can "make things happen" within the North Korean power structure.

The Republic of Korea's leading newspaper, *The Chosun Ilbo*, quoted a South Korean government official who stated that the South Korean government believes there are 500,000 core members of the Pyongyang elite that are "the North Korean regime's last bastion of power." The interview cited the official as saying these 500,000 were comprised of high-ranking members of the KWP, the military, and the government. The article made the point that the destiny of these individuals was tied directly to the Kim dynasty because of their special housing and rations privileges.<sup>24</sup>

A special class in North Korea is the Kim Il-sung – Kim Jong-il – Kim Jong-un family and extended family; those with close contact with the Kim family due to political, governmental, or military positions; and Chosen Soren leaders. Other elites are primarily made up of family members of anti-Japanese partisans, revolutionaries that set up the party and government after liberation, Korean War survivors, and anti-South Korean spies and related South Korean revolutionaries. These individuals and their families receive the best privileges with respect to education, housing, food rations, employment, promotions, and all the rest of the party-sponsored positions. The leadership of this group of families at the very top is comprised of 10,000 - 20,000 personnel. Including collateral family links makes that number 40,000 - 80,000 and at maximum this would be 200,000 persons.<sup>25</sup> Special families at the top of the social pyramid make up about 0.8 - 1.2 percent of the North Korean population.<sup>26</sup> Revolutionaries' and patriots' families make up

about 1-2 percent of the North Korean population.<sup>27</sup>

The myriad of numbers above indicate a variety of qualifications for the determining who the actual elite are within the regime. The differences lie in who has access to the Supreme Leader, who are the most privileged because of current or past positions and loyalties, who makes and implements policy, and who does the everyday work of regime maintenance. Each of these differences is complemented by privilege that is tempered by both the carrot and the stick of the *suryong*'s patronage system.

### ***Maintaining Support of the Power Elite***

The standard by which the elite is judged and thus the degree of privilege received is loyalty to the Supreme Leader. This loyalty is the coin of the realm. Political accountability in North Korea is created by a wall of inculcation, indoctrination, political terror, privilege-granting, and ideological study. Political accountability offers rewards and punishment, the degree of which depends on the depth of commitment or severity of disloyalty. North Korea's power elite understand that with the granting of bigger and better privilege comes greater expectations of their loyalty to the *suryong* and the party. For example, party cadre were recently ordered to earn 1,000 Chinese yuan by April 15, 2014 in order to support celebrations for Kim Il-sung's birthday.<sup>28</sup> This dynamic plays a significant role in human rights denial as party practices and policy with respect to human rights denial are more vigorously enforced if not supported by the privileged. In a country that is rated the least economically free country in the world,<sup>29</sup> the elite are offered privileges that nobody outside Pyongyang are allowed, except for high-ranking party, military, and science leaders. The privileges awarded the power elite are of far greater concern to those elite than the rights of a common citizen. Many of the elite in Pyongyang have been receiving food produced at farms within political prison camps.<sup>30</sup> Corruption and bribery may save an individual from the denial of his rights momentarily, or for a specific infraction, but human rights denial in North Korea is the standing norm and every North Korean citizen understands this. The testimony of thousands of defectors to South Korea bears witness to this concept.

To maintain the required balance, the party and military are the two pillars of support for upholding "Supreme Leader-ism." Kim Il-sung used the party tool to enforce *suryongjuui* while Kim Jong-il used the

military more.<sup>31</sup> That was and is the high end of political enforcement but the street end of enforcement has always been the internal security agencies. Furthermore, every member of the elite, whether in the party, government, military, economic enterprise, or social organizations, is judged daily on this dynamic through party organizations embedded in every agency and organization at every level in North Korea.<sup>32</sup> In that vein, the elite of the Kim regime live very controlled lives where their daily professional performance, daily political performance, and personal lives are evaluated by KWP and security agency officials dedicated to judging individual loyalty to the Supreme Leader.<sup>33</sup> This personal evaluation process is a critical component of North Korea's human rights policies as these evaluations have the effect of compelling North Korean officials to uphold party policies, practices, and procedures relevant to human rights denial. Self-protection on these issues is standard operating procedure for those elite who want to retain their position, privilege, and the safety of their family.<sup>34</sup>

However, loyalty to the regime and the awarding of privileges does not necessarily guarantee that all the needs of the family will be met. Beyond their professional position, those elite who are not at the bureau head level or above are concerned with making money for individual and family survival through corrupt practices. Even in Pyongyang, food supplies are not adequate for every Pyongyang resident. Misappropriation and the acceptance of bribes are the norm to keep up necessary standards of survival. Manipulation of the ever-growing market place is also a common practice. Most party, state, and military institutions, almost all headquartered in Pyongyang, run foreign currency operations and the elite falsify records to embezzle profits.<sup>35</sup> The elite are party cadre and they are able to conduct foreign currency earning operations. They are not well liked, but they are respected. They are seen as exploiters.<sup>36</sup>

Life among the elite, particularly the power elite, is not a model of stability. Political loyalty issues, corruption, economic failures, succession, and associational preference all have an impact on their position and how they are perceived. The power elite do not receive particular leniency for remarks criticizing the regime. In the past, political offenders from the power elite usually ended up in political prison camp #22 in Hoeryong City, North Hamgyeong Province,<sup>37</sup> or dead.

Survival is as key today in the Kim regime as ever. As people do in

all societies, North Koreans network to advance their personal or professional lifestyles. Personal networking and the use of “*inmaek*,” or personal lines, in personal power and influence is significant within the Kim regime where factions are a daily target of investigation and destruction by the regime’s internal security agencies. These “*inmaek*” are made up of contacts that the individual has known or worked with over the years and include individuals that are considered friends, work associates, or other close personal affiliates. This type of networking creates coherence within the elite, which is important during external crisis or internal political strife. Gaining personal reciprocity within these links is critical to survival.<sup>38</sup> During his time in college, Kim Jong-il formed an “*inmaek*” among his fellow college students that came to known as the “Yongnamsan Line,” named after Mt. Yongnam behind Kim Il Sung University. This line experienced favor from Kim Jong-il during his rise to power. This is a far lesser version of Kim Il Sung’s “Paekdusan Line” which initially reflected the association of Kim Il-sung and his anti-Japanese partisans but later became associated with the Kim family itself.<sup>39</sup>

Another issue that impacts the power elite is generational difference. While nearly all first-generation revolutionaries have passed away, second and third generation elites compete for positions of power. While third generation elites increasingly assume higher and more influential positions under North Korea’s third generation Supreme Leader, second generation leaders – those with more experience – are being pushed aside.<sup>40</sup> In 1998, the power elite went through a significant reformation. Kim Jong-il changed out the cadre of the government and mass organizations, and made as some changes to the party and military as well.<sup>41</sup> Generational change took place in the Organization and Guidance Department from 2009 to 2011. KWP inspections to determine who left and who entered were done by the KWP Inspections Committee<sup>42</sup> and likely the OGD Inspections Section.<sup>43</sup> Kim Jong-un has also made significant changes in all leadership areas among the power elite since succeeding his father. Kim Jong-un’s execution of his uncle, Jang Song-taek, is a prime example of the way in which nobody is immune to changes seen as necessary to maintain power. Indeed, the numerous and brutal executions of a number of power elite since Kim Jong-un took power are apparently being used by the regime to cause as much fear as possible when dealing with the young Supreme Leader.<sup>44</sup> Including the young, there are four generations of revolutionaries.<sup>45</sup>

Recruitment of the elite begins with revolutionary lineage, socio-political classification, and membership in the Korean Workers' Party. In the North Korean version of being born with a silver spoon in one's mouth, birth into the right political family has the greatest impact on whether one is eligible to be chosen to support the regime. Beyond lineage, a family's political performance is near-equally important to this process. The combination of those two politically-oriented factors can easily propel one into the elite class and personal performance and demonstrated loyalty to the regime will enable promotion within the regime. Such performance and promotion aggregates personal power and influence.

Training the elite is critical to the success of the party in its dominance over the North Korean domain and concentrating power within Pyongyang. The supreme currency of the land is loyalty to the Supreme Leader. Self-sacrifice among those that are successful in North Korea includes willingness to report on friends, associates, and even family. Loyalty to the Supreme Leader provides the building blocks of success – better housing, better food, better jobs, and better opportunity for one's family. Disloyalty by the power elite is the greatest threat to the regime and the act which draws the greatest retribution. The case of Kim Jong-un's uncle, Jang Song-taek, and his execution is the greatest example of this.

At the provincial level, human rights denial is carried out by the provincial party committee. The committee is led by a secretariat of five secretaries: the responsible secretary (which is the title for local party leaders), the organizational secretary (who ensures party member compliance with party policy and member commitment and to loyalty to the Supreme Leader), the propaganda and agitation secretary (responsible for information dissemination), the economic secretary (responsible for the oversight of party's economic policy implementation), and the secretary for workers' organizations (responsible for local manpower mobilization). They exist in every province, city, county, and village party committee. These secretaries oversee all functions of regime control over North Korea within their jurisdiction. The size of a provincial party committee depends on the population size of the province. For example, the North Hamgyeong Province party committee is approximately 1,000 personnel who operate out of 5-6 buildings, each 3-5 stories high.<sup>46</sup> Privilege is given to these individuals commensurate with their level of responsibility. An example

would be greater privilege for the party chairman of Jagang Province, the heart of North Korea's defense industry, than to the party chairman of South Hwanghae Province, the North's bread basket. Far more Jagang Province party chairmen have gone on to higher positions within the government or party than from South Hwanghae Province.

The roles of the power elite in the provinces include those of leadership within the party, military industry and major military units, lead scientists (in particular WMD program lead scientists), and regional internal security agency leaders. One of the most important roles of these regional leaders is to ensure that party policy is implemented by all organizations and personnel. Within his jurisdiction, a provincial party committee chairman and his committee organization secretary are the most influential individuals. All county party chairmen and their organization secretary work directly for the provincial secretaries. It is these two individuals who oversee the policies, procedures, and practices that ensure human rights denial in their area of responsibility.<sup>47</sup> Each of these leadership reports directly to the KWP Organization and Guidance Department.

Provincial party chairmen are frequently promoted to critical positions in Pyongyang. The best current example is Cho Yon-jun, formerly the South Hamgyong Province party committee chairman, currently a first vice-director of the KWP Organization and Guidance Department, and arguably the second most influential man in the KWP behind the KWP first secretary, Kim Jong-un. Cho also led the purge of Kim Jong-un's uncle, Jang Song-taek, a feat not so small or intimidating for any bureaucrat. The expectation and intent to carry out party policies within their area of responsibility equates to the suppression of human rights enabling promotion to a better position in Pyongyang with higher-grade privileges.

Provincial, county, and city party chairmen have direct responsibility for implementation of human rights denial within their jurisdiction and are thus as guilty of international human rights abuses as anyone in North Korea. Though political prison camps come under a different chain of command and control than that of the local provincial party chairman, that provincial party chairman remains responsible for all external support to that camp. The local courts, prosecutors, police, and internal security agencies within those jurisdictions are all under the direct influence of the local committee chairman and ultimately report to the KWP OGD regional parties' first vice-director who maintains authority

over all supervisors involved.<sup>48</sup>

For the regional power elite, there is inevitably a degradation of privileges that they enjoy in the provinces compared to what they would enjoy in Pyongyang.<sup>49</sup> But there are entire organizations, particularly military and WMD-related ones that are isolated from the local community in terms of housing, food security, and even education.<sup>50</sup> Provincial party leaders and senior party personnel do not maintain dual residences in Pyongyang and the work site.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, it is interesting to note that United Kingdom's former ambassador to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, John Everard, employs the term "outer elite"<sup>52</sup> for those individuals in Pyongyang who are members of the party, but do not hold high-ranking positions of influence or true political power. It is these people who do the everyday work for the party and the state government and receive minimal privileges for their work. Without their contributions to maintaining the regime as the *suryong* sees fit, human rights conditions would not and could not exist as they do because there would be nobody to carry out the Supreme Leader's, party or regime orders. Everard estimates these outer elite make up about one million of Pyongyang's population.<sup>53</sup>

### ***Individual Kim Regime Leaders and Their Role in Human Rights Denial***

Through lifelong indoctrination, the Kim regime shapes every North Korean from peasant to Politburo member regarding their loyalty to the leader, the party, the socialist system, and the revolution. Leaders of every organization in North Korean society receive increased indoctrination and individual surveillance while being subject to increased political expectations. Conforming to the unique elements of political power is a key component of personal success within the Kim regime, as it is in any state political system. To ensure compliance with directives and policies, all security agencies and party organizations regularly assess every North Korean leader's (military one-star and the civilian equivalent) loyalty to the Supreme Leader. Compliance with the "ten great principles of monolithic leadership" shapes the everyday lives of every North Korean leader. Adherence to these principles serves as the basis for evaluation reports for all North Korean supervisors, regardless of institution.

Career success within the Kim family regime is highly competitive, and based on demonstrated loyalty to the Supreme Leader. This dynamic

was created under Kim Il-sung and highly refined under Kim Jong-il who centralized political authority, centralized leadership evaluations and promotions based on loyalty, and centralized reporting on all political-economic-military-security issues. Any demonstration of self-interest over service to the Supreme Leader is met with severe punishment, and for these national leaders, immediate purge if not death, as demonstrated in not only the case of Jang Song-taek, but numerous other cases also.

This assessment of North Korean leadership is based on an understanding of how power is developed, projected, and maintained within the North Korean political-military-economic system. Within that context, loyalty to the “*suryong*” – supreme leader – is the starting point in assessing how and why decisions are made and policy determined. Loyalty to the supreme leader is measured by one’s compliance with the aforementioned ten principles. These “ten principles” and the words of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il<sup>54</sup> are the law of the land and creed of the Kim regime – not the constitution, not even the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) charter.



**Kim Jong-un:** Upon assuming the position of leader of the Kim family regime, Kim Jong-un inherited all of the responsibility for North Korea’s totalitarian dictatorship and its policies and strategies, including the processes that establish human rights denial and the Pyongyang Republic. Indeed, he has invested significantly in solidifying both dynamics. Kim’s youth and inexperience make him unpredictable in decision-making situations. More significantly, Kim’s closest advisers, those that brief him on the regime’s preeminent operating principle of loyalty to Kim and the regime, are mostly non-military men or foreign affairs experts, they are political commissars who focus on regime continuity on the domestic front. These domestic political advisers would brief those can be trusted and they would control whoever would have the most frequent access. Since his succession to the position of Supreme Leader in December 2011, Kim has focused on purging high-ranking officials of whom he is suspicious,<sup>55</sup> securing the border with China to reduce defections,<sup>56</sup> and generational change.<sup>57</sup>

The following personnel are Kim Jong-un’s most senior advisers. All advisers are members or candidate members of the Korean Workers’



Party Central Committee. All have proven their loyalty to the North Korean supreme leader countless times. All receive the highest privileges available. There are other advisers by echelon or specific expertise. They cover a variety of expertise areas, but all are involved in advising the North Korean leader during times of domestic crisis. All top advisers belong to major committees in the party, military, and government.



**Cho Yong-jun:** Cho serves in the extremely influential position of KWP Organization and Guidance Department (OGD) first vice-director. As with others that have held the position, Cho's access to Kim Jong-un is unsurpassed by any other adviser outside of Kim's personal secretariat because of the KWP OGD's mission of maintaining the superiority of the *suryong* system which keeps Kim Jong-un in power. All of Cho's predecessors have had this level of access since Kim Jong-il took over the KWP OGD in 1974. Cho serves as the OGD Cadre Division Director as well as the "commandant of the KWP headquarters." He is responsible for overseeing the political investigation and assessment of everyone in North Korea except the Supreme Leader and thus possesses the capability to demote, hire, and transfer all high-ranking personnel except those whom Kim Jong-un must approve. Even then, Cho presents the case for or against such a person. It is Cho who led the purge of Jang Song-taek at the Politburo meeting where Jang was arrested, as displayed across most international media outlets. Cho also led the purge of former State Security Department (North Korea's Gestapo-like secret police) leader Ryu Kyong in 2012. Cho is a KWP Politburo member and formerly was the KWP Committee Responsible Secretary (chairman) of South Hamgyong Province. He is a life-long OGD official who has worked his way up from the bottom to the top.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Cho's role will to ensure all advisers and leaders maintain absolute loyalty to Kim Jong-un. Discreditation of any of Kim Jong-un's advisers will cause Cho to thoroughly investigate that individual without any consideration of due process, which does not exist in North Korea's legal system. No other person in the North Korean political system other than the Supreme Leader can turn the career of a subject matter expert into ruin faster than Cho. In this service, Cho ensures that all policies, practices, and procedures ensure the security of Pyongyang and that there are no

changes to the Kim regime's policy of human rights denial



**Vice Marshal Hwang Byong-so:** Recently promoted to Vice Marshal (VM) and appointed to replace Choi Ryong-hae as the Director of the Korean People's Army General Political Bureau, Hwang serves as the military's senior political commissar. He also recently replaced Choi Ryong-hae as a member of the Politburo Standing Committee, one of the regime's three top positions. Hwang is responsible for not only the

military security of the regime and the performance of every soldier in accomplishing this mission, he is also responsible for upholding all party doctrine and political life within the military. Hwang formerly oversaw all reporting concerning the military and maintains commanding influence on all of the military leaders' personal lives through evaluation and reporting on the professional, personal, and political aspects of the life of every officer in the KPA.

**Assessment:** As a member of the KWP Politburo Standing Committee, during a domestic crisis, Hwang will uphold all decisions that secure the regime and Pyongyang's integrity first, as well as ensuring there are no changes to the policy of human rights denial.



**General Kim Kyong-ok:** General Kim is also a 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Director of the KWP Organization and Guidance Department. As a longtime political commissar within the Korean People's Army, he is not a military professional, but a career officer with the KPA General Political Bureau. He has powers similar to those of Cho

Yon-jun. His responsibility is maintaining party integrity within cities and provinces.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Kim will serve similar functions to Cho Yon-jun, but with a focus on how actions in the provinces secure Pyongyang and provide continuity to human rights denial.



**General Ri Pyong-chol:** General Ri came up through the KPA Air Force to become the Commander of the KPA Aviation and Air Defense Command. In January 2015, North Korea's main broadcasting medium, KCNA, stated General Ri had been appointed a 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Director of the KWP Organization and Guidance Department. He has both political and military combat arms experience, making him the most unique

adviser to Kim Jong-un, particularly in a crisis decision-making forum.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Ri will serve as the primary balancer between the need for a military decision and the need to protect Kim Jong-un and Pyongyang.



**Kim Ki-nam:** Kim is the primary propagandist for the Kim regime. In his role as Director of the KWP Propaganda and Agitation Department, it is his responsibility to inculcate the



masses with loyalty to the Supreme Leader and the party and dedication to the ten principles of monolithic ideology. He is a life-long member of the department, coming up through the ranks since the 1960's. He is also a KWP Secretary and member of the Politburo.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Kim will advise on images and messages to justify regime decisions to the North Korean populace.

**General Kim Won-hong:** As the Director (commander) of the extremely powerful State Security Department (North Korea's equivalent to the Gestapo), General Kim directs the 50,000-man



secret police charged with regime security. General Kim formerly served as the Commander of the Military Security Command and was the #3 man in the General Political Bureau prior to being promoted to the head of the SSD. As the leader of the Kim Regime's internal security, General Kim is the most experienced counterintelligence leader in North Korea. He is a full member of the KWP Politburo, the KWP Central Military Committee, and the KWP Central Committee. His role as a central figure in the Kim regime, as

demonstrated in all of these appointments, indicates his full support of the regime's objectives. General Kim is likely the most hated man in North Korea because of his role as the secret police leader.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, General Kim will advise on social stability and personnel reliability. He will also provide assessments of the advisers directly advising Kim Jong-un. He is responsible for upholding the policy of human rights denial and has the authority to apprehend, try, and execute anybody in North Korea outside the KWP Central Committee or specialized personnel such as scientists, military personnel, and senior government personnel, who he has the right to arrest.



**Major General Choe Pu Il:** A career military officer, Major General Choe is Minister of the People's Security (MPS) and is therefore North Korea's most senior policeman. He commands a force of 300,000 of which approximately 60% are beat policemen. This force serves as the front line of human rights denial in North Korea.

Major General Choe was the head of North Korea's Athletic League and ingratiated himself with Kim Jong-il's sons Kim Jong-chol and Kim Jong-un by ensuring they had the best training in basketball, something Kim Jong-un has proved to be one of his favorite pastimes. Based on a North Korea media (KCNA) photograph from July 2014, Choe was demoted from 4-star (a grade he made in 2010) to 2-star after the collapse of a newly constructed apartment building for MPS personnel. Construction of the apartment was by personnel under Choe's command. As an alternate member of the KWP Political Bureau, a full member of the KWP Central Military Committee and the KWP Central Committee, and the state's National Defense Commission, Major General Choe has demonstrated complete loyalty to the Supreme Leader.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Choe will be responsible for immediate action against violators of the Supreme Leader's directives and policies.



**Kim Yong-nam:** As the Chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly Standing Committee, Kim represents the highest government position in the land outside the Chairman of the National Defense Commission. More importantly, not only is he a 30+ year member of the KWP Politburo, he is a member of the KWP Politburo Standing Committee which makes Kim a top domestic adviser for Kim Jong-un. Kim also serves as the ceremonial lead for meeting foreign diplomats, a function for which he is very qualified due to his former position as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Kim would be advising the North Korean leadership on reactions from the international community and how it could impact North Korean actions. Kim's focus will be regime survival and all policies and actions that support that.



**Choe Tae-bok:** Choe is Chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly where he leads work on domestic and legal issues. Choe is a life-long educator and has contributed significantly to the national curriculum glorifying the Kim family regime. He is a full member of the KWP Politburo, the top political body in North Korea, and the KWP Central Committee.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Choe's input would be focused on legal and legislative support issues to regime security and adjusting North Korean criminal law to support regime decisions.



**Chang Pyong-kyu:** Chang is the Director of the State Prosecutor's Office. As such, he is the Kim regime's lead prosecutor in prosecuting those suspected of crimes against the state and, in particular, political crimes against the Supreme Leader's directives and policies. His duties, and the duties of all of the state prosecutors down to the county level including his seven vice-directors, are spelled out in the Criminal Procedures Act and the Prosecutor Supervision Law. Chang is also the Chairman of the SPA Legislation Committee. Chang is a key leader when it comes to human rights denial.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Chang's advice will be vital to the suppression of domestic resistance.



**Pak Myong Chol**: Pak was elected as president of the Supreme Court by the 1st Session of the 13th Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK. Little is known about Pak and a picture is not available.

**Assessment**: During a domestic crisis, Pak will be instrumental in enforcing Kim Jong-un's decisions on the domestic front through court decisions and policies.



**Choi Ryong-hae**: Choi is a KWP Secretary and a member of the KWP Politburo. Choi is North Korean royalty as his father, Choi Hyun, served alongside Kim Il-sung as an anti-Japanese partisan in the 1930's and 1940's and then served as North Korea's Defense Minister. A life-long party man, Choi was a friend of Kim Jong-il and serves in several key positions in the regime including the KWP Politburo. He spent much of his career as the chairman of the Socialist Labor Youth League, a party organization designed to ideologically indoctrinate and mobilize North Korean youth. He was one of only three members of the KWP Politburo Standing Committee, the top political body in North Korea, and the KWP Central Committee. However, he was replaced recently in that position by Vice Marshal Hwang Byong-so, who also replaced Choi as the Director of the KPA General Political Bureau. Choi's influence has recently decreased as a consequence.

**Assessment**: During a domestic crisis, Choi would likely provide advice on party mobilization issues as well as regime security.



**Yang Hyong-sop**: Yang is the Deputy Chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly Presidium, a titular number two who works on hard domestic issues and occasionally fills in hosting diplomatic delegations. Professionally, he spent most of his life as a legal counselor and spy chief. A longtime member of the KWP Central Committee, Yang has been a full member of the KWP Politburo for 20 years as well as a longer term as a Supreme People's Assembly member. At the advanced age of 89, he is still quite active on the political scene.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Yang would also be in the unique position of being able to advise on areas of correlation between North Korean domestic issues and sympathetic elements of ROK society. His lifelong commitment to the Kim family regime will likely lead him to promote the survivability of the regime at the sacrifice of the general population.



**Kim Yang-gon:** Kim is a KWP secretary and a personal counselor to Kim Jong-un. He has spent much of his career in the KWP International Department where he gained significant foreign affairs experience. He has been the KWP Unification Front Director since 2004 and is therefore in charge of overseeing all things South Korean for the Kim regime. He has been an alternate member of the Politburo since 2010 and is a delegate to the Supreme People's Assembly. He also serves as a counselor to the National Defense Commission.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Kim would serve as Kim Jong-un's lead adviser on South Korea, including sleeper agent operations taking orders from the North, assessing South Korean non-military vulnerabilities, and the South's public reaction to crisis.



**Pak Pong-ju:** Pak is the North Korean Premier, leading the North Korean state since 2013. He served in the same position from 2003-07. He is responsible for the North's general economy. Pak has worked his lifetime in economic management and as a party functionary. He is not an entrepreneur. He is a full member of the KWP Politburo, and the KWP Central Committee.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Pak would advise on economic sustainability and manpower issues to prioritize economic support to the Pyongyang Republic.



**General O Kuk-ryol.** General O is one of the most influential people in the Kim regime as a result of his very close family ties to the ruling Kim family and highly competent and diversified military career. He is the son of one of Kim Il-sung's co-partisans during the anti-Japanese resistance in the 1930-1940's. When Kim



Jong-il's mother died, Kim grew up in O Kuk-ryol's parents/ household and O became an older brother to Kim Jong-il, cementing their relationship. O graduated from the Soviet Union's Frunze Academy (Russia's command and staff college) and came up through the ranks as an air force officer, eventually becoming the KPA Air Force Commander. Subsequent to that he became the KPA Chief of General Staff in 1979 and while there he was responsible for the founding of the Mirim Electronic Warfare College, now North Korea's premier cyber warfare school. He was dismissed from the Chief of Staff position by Kim Il-sung in 1988 for arguing that the Kim regime should do away with political commissars in the military due to their inefficiency. After going through reeducation, Kim Jong-il assisted O in becoming the Director of the KWP Military Department in 1989 and then the Director of the KWP Operations Department in 1992. There, General O directed the Operations Department mission of infiltrating North Korean agents into South Korea. Operations Department defector testimony describes General O as a soldier's general who, despite being in his sixties at the time, would live and work under the same field conditions as the Operations Department infiltration personnel, surviving off of alternative food sources in natural surroundings. When the KWP Operations Department was folded into the KPA General Reconnaissance Bureau, General O was appointed one of the three vice-chairmen of the National Defense Commission. An expert on second front operations, electronic warfare, and air operations, General O is North Korea's foremost expert on hybrid warfare. Despite his advanced age (84), O is well known for his health routine.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, General O would be one of Kim Jong-un's most key advisors on the security of the regime and the draconian tactics used to protect Pyongyang and maintain the regime's status quo.



**General Ri Yong-gil:** As the fourth KPA Chief of General Staff under Kim Jong-un, General Ri was likely promoted more for his political loyalty than his combat arms expertise. He served as the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps Commander from 2007 to 2012.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, General Ri would likely be the primary briefer on military tactical courses of action to protect the regime and Pyongyang.





**Colonel General Cho Kyong-chol:** Colonel General Cho commands the Military Security Command and is directly responsible for personnel security within the military sector. He is General Kim Won-hong's counterpart within the military. Colonel General Cho served the majority of his career within the political commissar field. His last assignment was as the Air

Force Political Officer. Cho is primarily responsible for human rights denial within North Korea's military-industrial complex.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Cho would advise Kim Jong-un directly of the political reliability of senior military personnel and unit reliability.



**Colonel General Yun Jong Rin:** Since 2003, Col Gen Yun has been the commanding officer and director of the Guard Command, which is responsible for personal security of Kim Jong-un and core DPRK elites. Yun directs and manages the most powerful and technologically advanced of all of the country's security services or military branches. Colonel General Yun was promoted to full general in 2010 but was demoted to

three-star (Colonel General) in 2014 for reasons unexplained. Yun served as close protection escort (bodyguard) to the DPRK's late leader Kim Jong-il and held various command positions in the bodyguard corps. He was elected to membership in the KWP Central Committee and the Central Military Committee in September 2010.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Yun would advise on Kim Jong-un's personal security and therefore the "when and where" of Kim's physical positioning within country.



**General Kim Yong-choi:** General Kim has been the director of the Reconnaissance General Bureau since 2009 and reports to General O Kuk-ryol. He has also been a member of both the KWP CMC and KWP CC since 2010. Kim has worked in the intelligence field for more than twenty years. General Kim has also served as one of the public faces of the Korean People's

Army in state media and the country's foreign relations. Born in 1945, General Kim attended the Mangyongdae Revolutionary School and Kim

Il-sung Military College. He came up through the Guards command where he served as a bodyguard for Kim Jong-il. He is a former negotiator with South Korea.

**Assessment:** During a crisis, Kim would advise on intelligence issues such as ROK and US capabilities and strategy.<sup>58</sup>



**Kim Su-gil:** Kim is the Chairman of the Pyongyang KWP Committee. In this capacity, he is responsible for political events in the Pyongyang Republic and the loyalty of the Pyongyang populace.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Kim would advise on the stability of Pyongyang and supervise efforts to maintain the loyalty of Pyongyang residents, including those efforts cooperation with internal security agencies towards resistance suppression.

**Cha Hui-rim:**



Cha is the Chairman of the Pyongyang People's Committee. In this capacity, he is responsible for everyday events in support of the Pyongyang Republic. Those duties would include following local party guidance channeled through Kim Su-gil, distribution of resources prioritized to Pyongyang, and support of KWP and regime internal security agency personnel and families, thereby indirectly supporting human

rights denial.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Cha would advise on the stability of Pyongyang and supervise efforts to secure the loyalty of Pyongyang residents.

**Other Key Advisers**



**Kim Kye-Kwan:** Kim is First Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was and is North Korea's lead negotiator in discussions with the United States on the North's nuclear program. Due to this, he has more experience in dealing with American diplomats than any other North Korean.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Kim would advise on negotiations with the United States and interpret U.S. moves from that standpoint.



**Ri Su-yong**: The current DPRK foreign minister has held three ambassadorial positions, two of which were tours as the DPRK's ambassador to Switzerland. That position is responsible for Kim regime funds in Swiss banks and for overseeing the education and security of the Kim family regime's children. He also served an earlier tour in Switzerland. Before that he served in Kim Jong-il's personal secretariat. He has also served in senior economic positions which indicate his talent in economics and thus his credentials for managing Kim regime funds in Switzerland. He supervised Kim Jong-un's lifestyle and security during Kim's education in Switzerland.

**Assessment**: During a domestic crisis, Ri's advice will focus on the personal consequences for the Kim family. Ri will not likely have much influence in negotiations with the US or the ROK due to superior experience by Kim Kye-kwan. However, he is likely to voice caution with respect to Kim family funds and opportunities in the face of disaster.



**Kang Sok-ju**: Kang has been the DPRK Vice-Premier since 2010. He is a fourth cousin to Kim Jong-un and one of Kim's most trusted and experienced advisers. Well known to American diplomats, Kang has spent his career in the Foreign Ministry or positions in the KWP International Department. As the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, he is the person who "admitted" that North Korea had a uranium program for nuclear weapons to then U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia Jim Kelly in 2002. Kang is concurrently a party secretary and Director of the KWP International Affairs Department. Kang served for three decades as Kim Yong Nam's deputy. Born in 1939 in South Pyongan Province, Kang began his career as a cadre at the KWP International Department around 1972. In 2007 Kang was appointed a councilor of the National Defense Commission, a concurrent position. He is a full member of the KWP Politburo, the top political body in North Korea, and the KWP Central Committee.

**Assessment**: During a domestic crisis, Kang is likely the first non-military man outside the KWP Organization and Guidance Department to whom Kim Jong-un would turn. Kang would be the lead adviser on

how to deal with the international backlash of resource prioritization to Pyongyang and human rights issues.



**Cho Chun-ryong:** Cho is the Director of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Economic Committee which serves as the head of the North Korean military industrial complex and administratively oversees all WMD R&D facilities. His young age for such a significant position of leadership indicates both demonstrated loyalty to the regime leadership and managerial capability. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Economic

Committee is responsible for resource allocation and expenditures of the North's military resources. Prioritization of those resources directly contributes to the plight of the average North Korean in terms of food security, healthcare, and utilities effectiveness throughout the country.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Cho would likely advise on the preparedness of and requirements for wartime production.



**Kim Chun-sop:** Kim is the newest member of the National Defense Commission, voted or appointed in through an April 9, 2015 meeting of the 13<sup>th</sup> Supreme People's Assembly's 3<sup>rd</sup> Session. Formerly the KWP Committee Responsible Secretary (chairman) of Jagang Province (which is the heart of North Korea's defense industry), Kim appears to have replaced Pak

To-chun as the KWP Secretary for Machine Industries, which politically oversees all weapons, including WMDs, research, development, and production. As much as any program in North Korea, WMD sourcing directly impacts the general welfare of every North Korean through the denial of funds. Kim also replaced Pak To-chun as a member of the National Defense Commission.

**Assessment:** During a domestic crisis, Kim will have little advice to offer outside that concerning the security of WMD facilities.



**Chu Kyu-chang:** Working under the political supervision of KWP Secretary for Machine Industries, Kim Chun-sop, Chu is the Director of the KWP Machine Industry Department which oversees WMD and weapons development. He is the senior scientist in North Korea's WMD program. Chu has survived in a

field where failures in technical advancement are harshly dealt with, implying he manages to shield himself politically from blame. However, his advanced age (84) likely indicates that he is not deeply involved in the scientific aspects of the weapons program so much as he is in administration.

**Assessment:** During a crisis, Chu would likely advise on the overall preparedness of the WMD programs; however, he would likely not testify to the technical aspects of those programs.

**Vulnerability:** Kim Jong-un would likely find difficulty in relating to someone nearly three times his age and likely would not take Chu's advice seriously.

### ***Conclusion***

Human rights in North Korea cannot advance towards the standard established in the United Nations' Universal Declaration on Human Rights if the current political system of the Kim regime remains the ruling system. Dependence on loyalty to the Supreme Leader and its enforcement through ideological indoctrination and political terror carried out by the party and internal security agencies create what is essentially a strategy of human rights denial.

Future endeavors to improve human rights conditions in North Korea must attack this strategy by including sanctions against not only the party and internal security agencies, but the KWP's role in overseeing this denial strategy. This must include sanctioning the internal security and legal systems that report to the party for guidance, as well as sanctioning those leaders, identified above, who directly support human rights denial. Targeting those leaders, who are the regime's second tier leadership, is a critical component of any international strategy designed to improve human rights in the North. Holding them accountable is key to that strategy.

Also key is sanctioning the control tower of the Kim regime, the KWP OGD. No other agency or party department is more influential politically than the OGD when it comes to maintaining systems that deny human rights. The OGD lays the foundation for such denial through ideological indoctrination, maintaining a reporting system that ensures the Supreme Leader knows when second and third tier leadership abide or fail to abide by relevant requirements, and rewards leaders with privileges in the areas of opportunity, education, housing, food, health

care, and occupation preferences. Until this system of ideology, political terror, and privilege is negatively impacted, human rights improvement will be extremely difficult.

## Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> Seong-il Hyun, *북한의 국가전략과 파워 엘리트: 간부정책을 중심으로* (*North Korea's National Security Strategy and Power Elite: Focus on Cadre Policy*) (Seoul: Sonin Publishing, 2007), p.400-403; see also Kyo-Duk Lee, Soon-Hee Lim, Jeong-Ah Cho, Joung-Ho Song, "Study on the Power Elite of the Kim Jong Un Regime," *Korea Institute for National Unification*, July 29, 2013, [http://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/pub\\_02\\_01.jsp?bid=DATA05&page=1&num=157&mode=view&category=](http://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/pub_02_01.jsp?bid=DATA05&page=1&num=157&mode=view&category=).

<sup>2</sup> Naver.com 21<sup>st</sup> Century Political Dictionary, "북한의 권력서열 (North Korea's Authority Ranking)," *Korea Dictionary Research Publishing*, accessed April 3, 2014, <http://terms.naver.com/entry.nhn?docId=727469&cid=485&categoryId=485>.

<sup>3</sup> Hyun, *북한의 국가전략과 파워 엘리트: 간부정책을 중심으로* (*North Korea's National Security Strategy and Power Elite: Focus on Cadre Policy*), p.20.

<sup>4</sup> Byong-ro Kim and Song-chol, Kim *북한사회의 불평등 구조와 정치사회적 함의* (*North Korean Society's Inequality Structure and the Political-Socio Implications*) (Seoul: Korean Institute of National Unification, Research Report 98-01, 1998); p.92-93.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.92.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>9</sup> Hyun, *북한의 국가전략과 파워 엘리트: 간부정책을 중심으로* (*North Korea's National Security Strategy and Power Elite: Focus on Cadre Policy*), p.21.

<sup>10</sup> Information Center on North Korea, "Korean Workers' Party," *Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification*, 2010, [http://unibook.unikorea.go.kr/?cate=1&sub\\_num=51&pageNo=2&recom=0&ord=2009&state=view&idx=75](http://unibook.unikorea.go.kr/?cate=1&sub_num=51&pageNo=2&recom=0&ord=2009&state=view&idx=75).

<sup>11</sup> Hyun, *북한의 국가전략과 파워 엘리트: 간부정책을 중심으로* (*North Korea's National Security Strategy and Power Elite: Focus on Cadre Policy*), p.21.

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<sup>12</sup> Happy Campus, “인권문제 어떻게 해결할 것인가?? (How To Resolved The Human Rights Problem??),” 2006. [http://mybox.happycampus.com/goods1111/704465/?agent\\_type=naver](http://mybox.happycampus.com/goods1111/704465/?agent_type=naver).

<sup>13</sup> Hyong-jung Pak et al., “김정일 시대 북한의 정치체제: 통치이데올로기, 권력엘리트, 권력구조의 지속성과 변화 (*North Korea's Political System in the Kim Jong-il Era: Ruling Ideology, Power Elite, and Power Structure's Continuity and Change*)” Korea Institute for National Unification, 2004, p.52.

<sup>14</sup> Again, the exact number depends on deaths, purges, and new appointments. See “북한 주요기관 단체 인명록 (North Korea's Key Organizations and Groups: Name Roster),” Korea Institute for National Unification, January 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Kyong-sop O, “정치엘리트 응집력과 김정은 정권안정성 (Political Elite Cohesion and Kim Jong-un Regime's Stability),” *Sejong Policy Studies* 2013-11, Sejong Institute, (2011). [http://www.sejong.org/board/bd\\_news/1/egoread.php?bd=7&itm=&pg=1&seq=1421&txt=](http://www.sejong.org/board/bd_news/1/egoread.php?bd=7&itm=&pg=1&seq=1421&txt=).

<sup>16</sup> See Michael Madden, *North Korea Leadership Watch* (blog), <https://nkleaderwatch.wordpress.com/>.

<sup>17</sup> Article 27 of the Korean Workers' Party Charter, 2010, <http://world.moleg.go.kr/KP/law/24980?astSeq=580>.

<sup>18</sup> See North Korean Constitution at: <http://asiamatters.blogspot.com/2009/10/north-korean-constitution-april-2009.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Chol-sun Chong, “北병력한국2배인데...장성수 北1400명 > 南450명 (North Korea Military Strength Twice That of South Korea...North Korean Generals Number 1400 and South Korean Generals Number 450),” *Munhwa News*, June 18, 2014 <http://www.munhwa.com/news/view.html?no=2014061801031523173002>.

<sup>20</sup> Kyo-Duk Lee, Soon-Hee Lim, Jeong-Ah Cho, Joung-Ho Song, *Study on the Power Elite of the Kim Jong Un Regime*, Korea Institute for National Unification, July 29, 2013, p.26-29, [http://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/pub\\_02\\_01.jsp?bid=DATA05&page=1&num=157&mode=view&category=](http://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/pub_02_01.jsp?bid=DATA05&page=1&num=157&mode=view&category=).

<sup>21</sup> Naver.com 21<sup>st</sup> Century Political Dictionary, “북한의 권력서열 (North Korea's Authority Ranking),” Korea Dictionary Research Publishing, accessed April 3, 2014, <http://terms.naver.com/entry.nhn?docId=727469&cid=485&categoryId=485>.

<sup>22</sup> Hyeong-Jung Pak, Kyo-Duk Lee, Chang-hyun Chong, Ki-dong Lee, “김정일 시대 북한의 정치체제 (North Korean Political System in the Kim Jong-il Era),” Korea Institute of National Unification, 2004, p.52, <http://www.kinu.or.kr/>



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<sup>23</sup> Jeong-ah Cho et al., “The Everyday Lives of the Power Elites: Parasites of the System,” Korea Institute for National Unification, July 2009, p.25, [http://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/pub\\_02\\_01.jsp?page=3&num=64&mode=view&field=&text=&order=&dir=&bid=DATA05&ses=](http://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/pub_02_01.jsp?page=3&num=64&mode=view&field=&text=&order=&dir=&bid=DATA05&ses=).

<sup>24</sup> “Pyongyang Elite Key to Regime's Survival,” *Chosun Daily*, January 4, 2012, [http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2012/01/04/2012010400633.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/01/04/2012010400633.html).

<sup>25</sup> Byong-ro Kim and Song-chol Kim, *북한사회의 불평등 구조와 정치사회적 함의* (*North Korean Society's Inequality Structure and the Political-Socio Implications*) (Seoul: Korean Institute of National Unification, Research Report 98-01, 1998), p.29.

<sup>26</sup> Kim and Kim, *북한사회의 불평등 구조와 정치사회적 함의* (*North Korean Society's Inequality Structure and the Political-Socio Implications*), p.30.

<sup>27</sup> Testimony of NK defector Lee Sun-ok, as cited in Kim and Kim, *북한사회의 불평등 구조와 정치사회적 함의* (*North Korean Society's Inequality Structure and the Political-Socio Implications*), p.29.

<sup>28</sup> Ta-mi Choi, “北, 당원들에게 '천 위안 벌기 운동' 지시 (North Korea's Party Cadre Ordered to Earn One Thousand Yuan),” *News Focus International*, March 6, 2014, <http://www.newfocus.co.kr/client/news/viw.asp?cate=C01&mcate=M1003&nNewsNum=20140312423>

<sup>29</sup> The Heritage Foundation rated North Korea 178<sup>th</sup> out of 178 countries, extremely high levels of corruption primarily to blame. See Oliver Hotham, “DPRK Least Economically Free Country In World, Says Think Tank,” *NK News*, January 15, 2014, <http://www.nknews.org/2014/01/dprk-least-economically-free-country-in-world-says-think-tank/>.

<sup>30</sup> “Political Prison Camps in North Korea Today,” Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, *North Korean Human Rights Archives*, 2011, p.335-349, [http://nkdb.org/bbs1/data/publication/Political\\_Prison\\_Camp\\_in\\_North\\_Korea\\_Today.pdf](http://nkdb.org/bbs1/data/publication/Political_Prison_Camp_in_North_Korea_Today.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> Happy Campus, “인권문제 어떻게 해결할 것인가?? (How To Resolve The Human Rights Problem??),” 2006., [http://mybox.happycampus.com/goods/1111/704465/?agent\\_type=naver](http://mybox.happycampus.com/goods/1111/704465/?agent_type=naver).

<sup>32</sup> Jae-Cheon Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p.68-69.



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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Jeong-Ah Cho, Jae Jean Suh, Soon-Hee Lim, Bo-Geun Kim, and Young-Ja Park, “The Everyday Lives of North Koreans,” *Korea Institute for National Unification*, July 2009, [http://www.kinu.or.kr/report/report\\_04\\_01.jsp?page=1&num=64&mode=view&field=&text=&order=&dir=&bid=DATA05&ses=&category=2676](http://www.kinu.or.kr/report/report_04_01.jsp?page=1&num=64&mode=view&field=&text=&order=&dir=&bid=DATA05&ses=&category=2676).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Author interviews with medium and high-level defectors from Pyongyang.

<sup>37</sup> “Political Prison Camps in North Korea Today,” Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, North Korean Human Rights Archives, 2011; p.131-2.

<sup>38</sup> Lee Kyo-Duk, Lim Soon-Hee, Cho Jeong-Ah, Song Joung-Ho, *Study on the Power Elite of the Kim Jong Un Regime*, Korea Institute for National Unification, July 29, 2013, p.45. URL: [http://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/pub\\_02\\_01.jsp?bid=DATA05&page=1&num=157&mode=view&category=](http://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/pub_02_01.jsp?bid=DATA05&page=1&num=157&mode=view&category=).

<sup>39</sup> Testimony from Mr. K. See also Enha Wiki, “Kim Jong-il,” URL: <https://mirror.enha.kr/wiki/%EA%B9%80%EC%A0%95%EC%9D%BC>.

<sup>40</sup> Cho, Suh, Lim, Kim, and Park, “The Everyday Lives of North Koreans”

<sup>41</sup> Hyong-jung Pak et al, *김정일 시대 북한의 정치체제: 통치이데올로기, 권력엘리트, 권력구조의 지속성과 변화 (North Korean Politics in the Kim Jong-il Era: Continuity and Changes in Ruling Ideology, Power Elite, and Power Structures)*, p.60.

<sup>42</sup> Kyo-Duk Lee, Soon-Hee Lim, Jeong-Ah Cho, Joung-Ho Song, “Study on the Power Elite of the Kim Jong Un Regime,” *Korea Institute for National Unification*, July 29, 2013, p.56, [http://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/pub\\_02\\_01.jsp?bid=DATA05&page=1&num=157&mode=view&category=](http://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/pub_02_01.jsp?bid=DATA05&page=1&num=157&mode=view&category=).

<sup>43</sup> Inspections of senior leaders are done by the OGD Inspections Section, not the party’s Inspection Committee.

<sup>44</sup> See discussion at Tim Macfarlan, “Brutally executed, banished or 'disappeared': The grim fate of top North Korean officials purged by Kim Jong-un four years after they were pallbearers at his father's funeral,” *Mail Online*, May 14, 2015. URL: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3080427/Brutally-executed-banished-disappeared-grim-fate-North-Korean-officials-purged-Kim-Jong-four-years-acted-pallbearers-father-s-funeral.html>. See also Yu-sop Yom, “장성택·리영호 지고 김여정·황병서 핵심 부상 (Chang Song-taek, Ri Yong-ho Lose, Kim Yo-jong, Hwang Byong-so Become Core),” *Segye Ilbo*, May 13, 2015, <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD>

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<sup>45</sup> Lee, Lim, Cho, and Song, *Study on the Power Elite of the Kim Jong Un Regime*, p.26-29.

<sup>46</sup> Seong-chang Cheong, *The Contemporary North Korean Politics: History, Ideology and Power System*, (Seoul: Hanul Publishing, 2011), pp.222-227.

<sup>47</sup> For example, the party secretary for South Pyongan Province is Hong In-bom. There are two political prison camps in this province. The party committee secretary for Pukchang County in is Han Chong-chol. He is directly responsible for support to political prison camp #18 in Pukchang County. Also, the party secretary for Kaechon City in is Pak Dong-sam. He is directly responsible for support to political prison camp #14 in Kaechon County Therefore, along with their organization secretaries, these three individuals should be identified as among the biggest offenders of human rights abuses in the province and in those counties. Organization secretaries for South Pyongan Province are Pak Bong-hyun, Pae Yoon-sun, Shin Ki-chan and Han Bong-un.

<sup>48</sup> See chapter on power institutions.

<sup>49</sup> Author interview with former Pyongyang resident party member and defector Mr. R.

<sup>50</sup> So-jong Kim, “Puk Haek Kaebal Algoboni ‘101 Haek Mulli Yonguso’ Chudo (Finding Later That North Korea’s Nuclear Development Is Led By the ‘101 Nuclear Physics Research Institute’),” *Dallian News*, February 6, 2013, [http://www.dailian.co.kr/news/news\\_view.htm?id=325240](http://www.dailian.co.kr/news/news_view.htm?id=325240).

<sup>51</sup> Author interviews with medium and high-level defectors from Pyongyang.

<sup>52</sup> John Everard, *Only Beautiful, Please* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2012), p.xvii. Ambassador Everard served in Pyongyang from February 2006 to July 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Sung-dong Han, “영국 외교관, 평양에서 보낸 900일 (United Kingdom Diplomat’s 900 Days in Pyongyang),” *Hangyore News*, August 17, 2014, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/culture/book/651538.html>.

<sup>54</sup> Seong-il Hyun, *북한의 국가 전략과 파워엘리트: 간부 정책을 중심으로 (North Korean National Strategy and Power Elite: Focus on Cadre Policy)*, (Seoul: Seoin Publishers, 2007), in Korean; Young-hun Lee, *북한을 움직이는*

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힘, 군부의 패권경쟁 (*The Strength That Moves North Korea, Competition For Supremacy in the Military*) (Seoul: Sallim Publishing Company, 2012) in Korean; Seong-chang Cheong, *북한군 총정치국의 위상 및 역할과 권력승계 문제* (*Issues on the Rise of the North Korean Military's General Political Bureau and Its Role and Authority Succession*) (Seoul: Sejong Institute, Policy Research 2013-8, 2013), in Korean; author interviews with former KWP members, Mr. Ri, Mr. Hyun, and Colonel Choi.

<sup>55</sup> There is considerable reporting on this issue. A good synopsis of purges since 2011 are at Cho Song-un, “김정은의 숙청 (Kim Jong-un’s Purges),” Naver Blog Series, May 14, 2015, <http://blog.naver.com/zenerius/220359130066>. See also “장군님 고사포 쓰신다...김정은 처형 3대 특징 (General Uses Anti-aircraft Guns...Kim Jong-un Death Sentence Characteristics),” *Herald Economics*, May 23, 2015, [http://news.heraldcorp.com/view.php?ud=20150522000533&md=20150523091112\\_BL\\_](http://news.heraldcorp.com/view.php?ud=20150522000533&md=20150523091112_BL_).

<sup>56</sup> See for example Ju-Min Park and James Pearson, “Bugged phones and double barbed wire: far fewer North Koreans defect,” Reuters, May 21, 2015. URL: [http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/21/us-northkorea-defectors-idUSKBN0062OD20150521\\_](http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/21/us-northkorea-defectors-idUSKBN0062OD20150521_).

<sup>57</sup> Lee Kyo-Duk, Lim Soon-Hee, Cho Jeong-Ah, Song Joung-Ho, *Study on the Power Elite of the Kim Jong Un Regime*, Korea Institute for National Unification, July 29, 2013, p.56. URL: [http://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/pub\\_02\\_01.jsp?bid=DATA05&page=1&num=157&mode=view&category=](http://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/pub_02_01.jsp?bid=DATA05&page=1&num=157&mode=view&category=).

<sup>58</sup> See *North Korea Leadership Watch* (blog),: <https://nkleadershipwatch.wordpress.com/leadership-biographies/lt-gen-kim-yong-chol/>.