

## **Kim Jong-il's Personal Secretariat**

Kim Jong-il's Personal Secretariat (which is known in its rare mentions in the North Korean press as "the secretarial office of the Central Committee") is his executive office within the Korean Workers' Party. Personal Secretariat finds its Western equivalents in the US Secret Service and the White House Office.<sup>1</sup> It manages the flow of paperwork to and from Kim Jong-il, as well as coordinating his schedule, security, logistical and domestic arrangements.

Kim Jong-il prohibits the Personal Secretariat from initiating and formulating policy. While it has a staff of advisers with whom Kim Jong-il deliberates on policies they are not active participants in the DPRK's policy process. The Personal Secretariat's Consolidation Division is Kim Jong-il's gatekeeper, managing the reports, documents and policies Kim Jong-il reviews. The Consolidation Division links to the Documents 120 Office and the KWP General Affairs Department which manage paperwork and document delivery in the Central Party.

The Personal Secretariat's Main Office of Secretaries manages foreign affairs. It is responsible for the reports and communications submitted from DPRK diplomatic representatives. It also collects and manages Kim Jong-il's unofficial overseas network that submits information and procures items for him.

The Office of Adjutants manages the bodyguard corps and links to the Guard Command, tasked with Kim Jong-il's and the Kim Family's personal security. The Personal Secretariat also links to the Guard Command's Security Department to manage his telephone, fax and internet requirements for issuing orders and receiving communications

Another Personal Secretariat subunit is the Cadres' 5<sup>th</sup> Section which recruits, trains and staffs ensembles of female singers, musicians and dancers (such as Wangjaesan Dance

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<sup>1</sup> The White House Office is a subunit of the Executive Office of the President which provides the US President with policy advice and scheduling, advance (security and event management), clerical/administrative and household support.

Troupe) who entertain to Kim Jong-il. The Cadres 5<sup>th</sup> Section also contains the so-called Joy Brigade who, among other interactions, provide massages and witty conversation.

The Personal Secretariat is also comprised of other departments and offices which manage Kim Jong-il's residential and domestic life (chefs, food, and housekeeping). Several offices, such as Office #99 manage Kim Jong-il's (and Kim Family) personal financial holdings and expenditures, as well as purchase goods (food, furnishings, and appliances/technology) in Europe and East Asia. The Personal Secretariat links to the Third Floor (also known as Offices #38 and #39). The Third Floor manages legitimate and illicit overseas businesses, and ensures other revenues from State and Party owned enterprises are tithed to Kim Jong-il. These monies are used, in part, to finance Kim Jong-il's and the Kim Family's private and household life.

Personal Secretariat employees tend to enjoy lengthy job tenure—senior staff has worked in this capacity for Kim Jong-il for over twenty (20) years. There are also several hundred administrative, technical and domestic staff dispersed at several of his residential complexes. Other Personal Secretariat managers and staff reside in designated apartment housing on Changwang Street in the Central District of Pyongyang, across the street from Kim Jong-il's official residence and office. Many Personal Secretariat employees have direct, multi-generational ties to the Kim Family.

The top six Personal Secretariat Employees hold the rank of deputy director in Organization and Guidance Department. Some subordinate employees, such as the women of the Cadres 5<sup>th</sup> Section) have a junior officers' rank in the KPA while other administrative and technical personnel have a ranking in the KWP hierarchy. The ranking of Personal Secretariat employees serves as a cover allowing them access to income and benefits, such as medical treatment at the Ponghwa Clinic, the Central Military Hospital, or Namsan Clinic.

Notable among Personal Secretariat employees with a diplomatic title is Ri Chol. Ri Chol is a roving DPRK Ambassador, as well as the Ambassador to Switzerland.

Ambassador Ri is also Kim Jong-il's personal representative in Europe, and also acted in loco parentis for his sons when they attended school in Switzerland. Kang Sok-ju, the Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Kim Kye-kwan, the DPRK's representative at the Six Party Talks are other MOFA officials with personal ties to Kim Jong-il.

The Personal Secretariat's last-known managing director was Kang Sang-chun. Kim Ok, Kim Jong-il's last-known consort, was his technical secretary.<sup>2</sup> Kim Jong-il's private secretary is Kim Kang-chol. Former DPRK diplomat Kim Jung-il manages the Main Office of Secretaries. Former KCNA Editor Ri Myong-je serves as an adviser on policy, manages Kim Jong-il's residences and routinely accompanies him on his inspection tours. One of Kim Jong-il's closest and most trusted aides is Kim Chang-son, previously a military attaché and director of the KWP Administration Department from 1984 to 1992. Two of Kim Jong-il's older children work in various capacities for the Personal Secretariat. Daughter Kim Sol-song is identified as the director of Office #99, but has been identified as managing some of Kim Jong-il's scheduling and security arrangements, as well regularly traveling with him on his inspection tours. His expatriate eldest son Kim Jong-nam resides part time in Macau and Beijing where he manages some of Kim Jong-il's financial accounts and attends to personal errands on his behalf.

See also:

Gause, K.E. "The North Korean Leadership: Systemic Dynamics and Fault Lines" in *North Korean Policy Elites* (Kongdan Oh Hassig, ed.) Alexandria, VA: Institute For Defense Analyses, 2004.

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<sup>2</sup> Several reports identified Kim Ok as having assumed daily management of Kim Jong-il's schedule. She was also rumored to have coordinated reporting and paper traffic following his August 2008 stroke. Another report alleges that Ms. Kim no longer works for the Personal Secretariat.