

## **Ministry of Public Security**

The Ministry of Public Security is technically directly subordinate to the DPRK Cabinet (formerly the State Administration Council) and is tasked with domestic and border security in the DPRK. It is the primary State organ with responsibility for internal security and population control. It also has regulatory and administrative powers in that it administers the North Korean census, enforces environmental laws and issues pertinent citizen identification documents. The MPS also has within it a coordinating umbrella organization that is tasked with managing Provincial, County/Municipal and Town level bureaus for public security which are tasked with investigation, law enforcement and the power to grant permits and State-issued documentation.

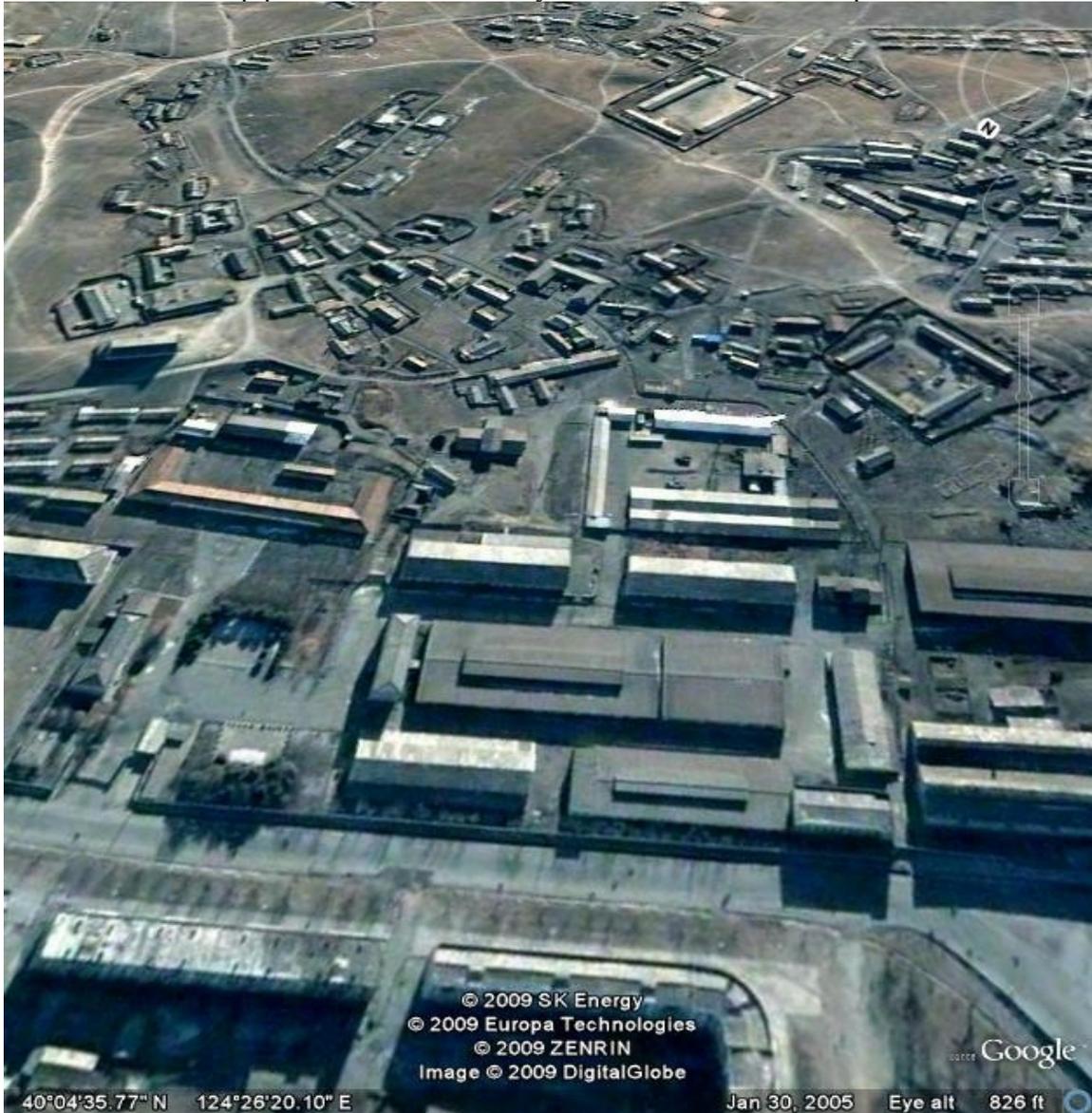
There are an estimated thirty (30) subordinate bureaus within the Ministry of Public Security, not all of which are known to external observers or will be discussed in this entry. There are eight (8) Vice Ministers of Public Security. The Vice Minister for Security directs the Security Bureau and is tasked with domestic law enforcement and manages coordinates Public Security bureaus. The Vice Minister for Surveillance has responsibility for maintaining background profiles and conducting some investigations on the North Korean population. These MPS reports are analyzed by the KWP Administration Department against reports prepared by the State Security Department. All political criminal cases are processed from MPS to the Security Department.

The MPS Protection Bureau coordinates national and local fire departments, regulates public health inspections and permits and is the key State agency with jurisdiction over customs inspection and paperwork. The Border Guards bureau is a paramilitary organization that is tasked with monitoring the traffic of human and goods, particularly at the DPRK-China border in the north of the country. The Natural Resources Bureau is an environmental regulation and protection body. The MPS Registration Bureau conducts the country's census, issues passports, internal and external travel permits, and residency permits, and maintains the DPRK's records on births, marriages and deaths.

The MPS Registration Bureau works in coordination with the MPS Railway Security Bureau in regulating, permitting and monitoring the travel activities of North Korean citizens, who are required to apply to travel within the country through their local Public Security Bureau (and usually after having their travel permit application approved by their work supervisor and residential/Party Cell secretary/guidance officer). The Railway Security Bureau also inspects, permits and regulates trains incoming into the DPRK. It also links with the Ministry of Railways and has jurisdiction over North Korean train cars that travel through the Russian Federation on the Moscow-Pyongyang route. Of the half-dozen DPRK train conductors/personnel, at least one (1) or two (2) are employees of the Ministry of Public Security and they regulate goods purchased by DPRK ex-patriates in Russia which are sent home via the train.

Of especial interest to external observers, however, is the Penal Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Public Security. The Penal Affairs Bureau is responsible for County and

Provincial jails and detention centers. The Penal Affairs Bureau also manages the DPRK's notorious labor camp/political re-education system. The North Korean prison



**The South Sinuiju Detention Center in North Pyongan Province. This is a standard Provincial/Municipal jail complex for criminals on remand and those accused of crimes against the State prior to being transferred to labor camps or so-called “total control” zones.**

system has been scaled back since Kim Jong-il's succession in the mid-1990's, though this does not make it any less austere. Labor camps have been shuttered and merged into larger facilities and the length of incarceration has decreased. General-Secretary Kim's regime has utilized forced relocation for common and minor political crimes, which is to say that KWP cadres or others are located to mountainous rural areas with few material resources. Labor camps tend to be located around Korean People's Army mining complexes where inmates work up to eighteen (18) hours per day in mines with little safety protection and meager food rations. These differ from “total dictatorship” or “total control” re-education facilities where inmates accused of political crimes are incarcerated with their immediate

families. The populations in these facilities are usually members of the Korean Workers' Party (including senior cadres) or former State officials. Inmates at these facilities remain in their cells and have little to no hope of release or clemency.

The current Minister of Public Security since 2004 is General Ju Sang-song, former commanding officer of the KPA's 4<sup>th</sup> Army Corps. The MPS has estimated personnel of about 150,000 drawn from the Korean People's Army as well as civilian officers and managers. The MPS central office complex is located on the border of Hyongjesan and Taesong Districts (*kuyoks*) in Pyongyang. The office campus includes the MPS' University and training facilities and the MPS Hospital. There is a report that one of the few statues of General-Secretary Kim Jong-il is located on the campus of the MPS University. The MPS maintains local Public Security Bureaus at the provincial/municipal and country levels. The Railway Security Bureau has offices and bureaus at all North Korean passenger railway stations.

The Ministry of Public Security refers criminal cases and investigations to the Central Public Prosecutor's Office (at each administrative level). The Central Public Prosecutor also initiated its own investigations and can liaison with the MPS for such matters. Matters concerning citizen documentation and marriages may be referred to or by the Central Court (at each administrative level). The MPS links directly to the State Security Department to which it refers political criminal cases. The MPS also links with the Guard Command during declarations of national crisis or for the purposes of providing an outer layer of security around Kim Jong-il. While institutionally subordinate to the DPRK Cabinet, the Ministry of Public Security reports directly to the KWP Administration Department Director and the Organization and Guidance Department, although the Administration Department is its ultimate managing body as it reports directly to General-Secretary Kim.

Two final notes about the Ministry of Public Security. First, the MPS contends with significant degrees of corruption at the Provincial, County and local levels. In enforcing edicts and regulations of the Central Party, local Public Security officials, either realizing some of these policies may not be realistic or simply susceptible to bribery and co-opting, have found themselves investigated and dismissed by investigators dispatched from Pyongyang. Even in the "revolution's center" in Pyongyang, there was a report that local Pyongyang MPS officers colluded with a petty theft ring; a Central Public Prosecutor's investigation dismissed the MPS officers and tried them with the petty criminals. The Ministry of Public Security is constantly under policy pressure to stem the flow of migrants leaving the DPRK for China, and has occasionally found this role temporarily transferred to the State Security Department.

The second note relates to which of the DPRK's internal security organs has more power or eminence. The MPS has frequently had conflict with the State Security Department. During the 1970's the late DPRK President Kim Il-sung placed the MPS into a kind of bureaucratic trusteeship, franchising many of MPS' powers to SSD (which was and is under the Suryong's direct control). SSD and MPS find their jurisdictions and controls intersecting. In the late 1990's the State Security Department engaged in a turf war with the Ministry of Public Security, and General-Secretary Kim sided with the MPS.

As General-Secretary Kim has tightened his control and reporting channels through the National Defense Commission and the re-establishment of the KWP Administration Department, it is highly likely that these turf wars are least minimized. General Ju Sang-song has certainly vested the MPS with more prestige. General Ju is seen as a loyalist to Jang Song-thaek (despite having replaced Director Jang's beneficiaries). General Ju is chair of the Legislation Committee of the 12<sup>th</sup> Supreme People's Assembly, was a member of the Central Election Committee, and in April 2009 joined the National Defense Commission. If General Ju avoids the pitfall of his Ministry's predecessors he is well positioned as a rising star in the next generation of DPRK leaders.