

## Death of Kim Jong Il raises concern over N. Korean successor

By Haejin Song  
STAFF WRITER

Ear piercing cries, Kimjungilia flowers, and a teary, younger version of an infamous dictator — this was the scene that filled the chaotic city of Pyongyang on the day of Kim Jong Il's funeral.

On Dec. 17, 2011, the "Dear Leader" of North Korea, Kim Jong Il, died from a heart attack that ended his prominent rule of the isolated nation.

On Dec. 19, an emotional anchor on North Korean state television informed its citizens of their leader's death. The North Korean leader's frail health had been presumed for some time by North Korean analysts after he failed to attend a parade celebrating North Korea's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary back in 2008, AFP reported. After circulating reports of his search for a successor, the international community began to focus on one young man who was suddenly appointed as a four-star general and vice chairman of the Central Military Commission of the Workers' Party.

This was none other than Kim Jong Un, the third son of Kim Jong Il and the currently recognized successor of his father.

Very little is known of Kim Jong Un, who is in his late twenties. According to ABC News, he attended an international school in Switzerland using the name "Pak Un" where he was a quiet and unassuming young man. His former classmates recollect the leader's penchant for basketball, his collection of

expensive Nike shoes, and photos of himself taken with Toni Kukoc and Kobe Bryant, reported The Korea Times.

Having been abruptly taken back to Pyongyang without a trace, it was not long before he publicly reappeared beside the military generals and his father.

Dubbed the "Great Successor" and the "Supreme Leader," Kim Jong Un has been meticulously portrayed as a genius by the North Korean media. A documentary presented on Kim Jong Un's birthday exalts the young leader by stating he wrote a military strategy thesis at the age of 16 and often skipped meals to study. With North Korea's history of political propaganda, it is no surprise to other nations that the North Korean media carefully continues to build upon the Kim dynasty's image and paint an acclaimed portrait of their "Dear Leader's" son.

Many, such as Nicholas Miller '07, question Kim Jong Un's supposed experiences in the military. Miller, an analyst with the Center for Strategic Research and Analysis, mentioned in The Diplomat, that due to Kim Jong Un's "lack of experience and apparent inability to consolidate power ... he will need to look towards his guardians to assist him in securing a stable transition and running the country."

On the contrary, North Korea emphasizes its sole trust and confidence in the highly qualified young leader. According to the Associated Press, Yang Hyong Sop, a North



Kim Jong Un, the third son of former North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, recently took his deceased father's title as supreme leader of North Korea.

Korean official, said, "We are not worried a bit ... we know that we are being led by comrade Kim Jong Un, who is fully prepared to carry on the heritage created by the great Gen. Kim Jong Il."

North Korea continues to emphasize their country's stability and tries to shift away from any uncertainty by boasting that it was "at the epochal point of opening the gates of a thriving country," reports CBS News.

Whilesomeareoptimisticaboutcooperative

talks under North Korea's new leadership, others remain highly dubious of any reform and any hope of transformation.

"Kim Jong Un is a big question mark," said Robert Duncan, visiting assistant professor of political science. "He's had a pampered and sheltered life. He's under the influence of his family, the elites in power, and the military. They are not going to let him do anything wild and crazy."

In regards to the hysteria of citizens reacting to Kim Jong Il's death, Duncan does not think we should wholly believe what we see.

"It's all staged," he explained. "It's just like FOX news in this country. They are projecting the image they want everybody to believe and it has no bearing to reality. It's all propaganda from (North Korea's) point."

When asked about the possible reunification of South and North Korea in the future, George Guo, associate professor of political science, expressed similar skepticism.

"I don't see any kind of possibility in the imminent future," Guo said. "North Korea's relation with South Korea has been very strained in the last two years and they have completely different political systems ... It would be extremely difficult to find a common ground."

## Tensions escalate in the conflict between Iran and the West

By Keyla Beebe  
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Another nuclear scientist killed. An Iranian-American sentenced to death. A second uranium enrichment site. Threats to block Western oil access. These are some of the recent factors that have contributed to the escalation of tensions between Iran and the West.

### An American sentenced to death

On Jan. 9, a 28-year-old Iranian-American was accused of spying for the CIA, and sentenced to death by Iran's Revolutionary Court, according to The Wall Street Journal.

The Obama Administration issued a public statement denying that Amir Mirzaei Hekmati, a former U.S. Marine, was a spy.

"We strongly condemn the death sentence verdict given to Mr. Hekmati," said State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland to The Wall Street Journal. "We've conveyed our condemnation to the Iranian government through the Swiss protecting power. We maintain, as we have from the beginning, that these charges against him are a fabrication."

The Wall Street Journal reports that because Hekmati holds an Iranian passport, he will be charged as a citizen and has the traditional 20 days to appeal the court's verdict. His charges include the highest crime in Islamic law, being an enemy of God, or Moharebe, which results in the death penalty.

"Iranians are concerned about American involvement," said Max Carter, director of the Friends Center and campus ministry coordinator. "Think about American tourists. How are they (the Iranians) to know they (the tourists) aren't American spies?"

### Iranian nuclear chemist killed

In the midst of mounting tensions about Iran's nuclear program, Iranian chemist Mostafa Ahmadi-Roshan, 32, was killed on Jan. 11. The scientist was a director of the countries

primary uranium enrichment plan in central Iran.

A passing motorcyclist attached explosive bombs to his car in morning traffic, according to the Guardian. His driver was also killed.

The Guardian reports that three other Iranian nuclear scientists have been killed in similar manners over the last two years.

The Iranian government primarily suspects the U.S. and Israel, despite the fact that the U.S. has denied involvement in the attacks. However, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told BBC that the U.S. has "some ideas as to who might be involved."

The Guardian reports that on Jan. 16, Iran arrested suspects over the killing. The number of people arrested and their nationalities remain unknown.

### Second nuclear development site discovered

Nuclear development has also been an acute point of conflict between the U.S. and Iran for many years.

After an initial announcement that Iran had been actively pursuing nuclear technology in one part of the country, new reports reveal that Iran has begun enriching uranium at a second location, reports the Guardian. The Fordo facilities, south of Tehran, are underground and protected from air strikes.

According to BBC, the U.S. views this second site as "further escalation" of its violation of U.N. resolutions. U.N. sanctions against Iran include banning the supply of nuclear-related materials and technology, an arms embargo and close monitoring of all individuals and companies working with the nuclear program.

Iran has stated the uranium enrichment is not for weapons but for peaceful purposes and will be used to treat cancer patients. At 20 percent enrichment, the uranium is not weapons grade (90 percent) but can be easily converted.

The French Foreign Ministry said to BBC that Iran's lack of cooperation "leaves us with no other choice but to reinforce international sanctions and to adopt, with our European partners and all willing countries, measures of an intensity

and severity without precedent."

### Sanctions and Iranian threats to close the Strait of Hormuz

For years the international community of the U.S., EU, and U.N. have imposed sanctions on Iran, limiting access to nuclear weapons. With recent developments, the U.S. is proposing many new sanctions, targeting oil sales and the Central Bank.

"It's very much the policy of the United States to change Iran's behavior through our sanctions and through isolation, not to change the Iranian regime," said White House Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes to Reuters.

Countries in the EU have also agreed to decrease import of Iranian oil, according to Reuters.

These sanctions increase pressure on the Iranian government, reports BBC, but as long as nations such as China, Turkey, and India continue to buy Iran's oil and sell it exports, the country will be able to survive.

When Senate returns to Washington later this month, they will continue discussions on Iran's sanctions, reports Reuters.

Iran has responded negatively to the most recent sanctions, and according to BBC, Tehran is threatening to close the Strait of Hormuz, an important oil access route, if sanctions widen.

Linking the Gulf to the Indian Ocean, almost 20 percent of the world's oil is transported through the Strait of Hormuz, reports BBC.

According to an analysis by Brad Plumer in The Economist, closing the Strait could cause an increase in global oil prices as well as a long-lasting negative impact on the global economy.

U.K. and U.S. forces would stop the closure, said U.S. Defense Secretary Phillip Hammond to BBC. U.S. naval forces are stationed nearby, but Iran has told the U.S. to keep their aircraft carriers out of the Strait.

With a number of threats and sanctions up in the air at the moment, the next few months could have serious implications for all sides involved.