



KIM JONG II

Born February 16, 1941, though official accounts place birth a year later. Some mystery surrounds when and where Kim Jong Il was born. Official North Korean biographies state that his birth occurred on February 16, 1942, in a secret camp on Mount Paekdu along the Chinese border, in Samjiyon County, Ryanggang Province, in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). Other reports indicate he was born a year later in Vyatskoye in the former Soviet Union.

During World War II, his father commanded the 1st Battalion of the Soviet 88th Brigade, composed of Chinese and Korean exiles battling the Japanese Army. Kim Jong Il's mother was Kim Jong Suk, his father's first wife. Official accounts indicate that Kim Jong Il comes from a family of nationalists who actively resisted imperialism from the Japanese in the early 20th century.

His official government biography claims Kim Jong Il completed his general education between September 1950 and August 1960 in Pyongyang, the current capital city of North Korea. But scholars point out that the first few years of this period were during the Korean War and contend his early education took place in the People's Republic of China, where it was safer to live. Official accounts claim that throughout his schooling, Kim was involved in politics. While attending the Namsan Higher Middle School in Pyongyang, he was active in the Children's Union—a youth organization that promotes the concept of Juche, or the spirit of self-reliance—and the Democratic Youth League (DYL), taking part in the study of Marxist political theory. During his youth, Kim Jong Il showed an interest in a wide range of subjects including agriculture, music, and mechanics. In high school, he took classes in automotive repair and participated in trips to farms and factories. Official accounts of his early schooling also point out his leadership capabilities; as vice chairman of his school's DYL branch, he encouraged younger classmates to pursue greater ideological education and organized academic competitions and seminars as well as field trips.

Kim Jong Il graduated from Namsan Higher Middle School in 1960 and enrolled the same year in Kim Il Sung University. He majored in Marxist political economy and minored in philosophy and military science. While at the university, Kim trained as an apprentice in a textile machine factory and took classes in building TV broadcast equipment. During this time, he also accompanied his father on tours of field guidance in several of North Korea's province

Kim Jong Il joined the Workers' Party, the official ruling party of North Korea, in July 1961. Most political experts believe the party follows the traditions of Stalinist politics even though North Korea began distancing itself from Soviet domination in 1956. The Workers' Party claims to have its own ideology, steeped in the philosophy of Juche. However, in the late 1960s, the party instituted a policy of "burning loyalty" to the "Great Leader" (Kim Il Sung). This practice of personality cult is reminiscent of Stalinist Russia but was taken to new heights with Kim Il Sung and would continue with Kim Jong Il.

Soon after his 1964 graduation from the university, Kim Jong Il began his rise through the ranks of the Korean Workers' Party. The 1960s were a time of high tension between many Communist countries. China and the Soviet Union were clashing over ideological differences that resulted in several border skirmishes, Soviet satellite nations in Eastern Europe were simmering with dissent, and North Korea was pulling away from both Soviet and Chinese influence. Within North Korea, internal forces were attempting to revise the party's revolutionary message. Kim Jong Il was appointed to the Workers' Party Central Committee to lead the offensive against the revisionists and ensure the party did not deviate from the ideological line set by his father. He also led efforts to expose dissidents and deviant policies to ensure strict enforcement of the party's ideological system. In addition, he took on major military reform to strengthen the party's control of the military and expelled disloyal officers.

Kim Jong Il oversaw the Propaganda and Agitation department, the government agency responsible for media control and censorship. Kim gave firm instructions that the party's monolithic ideological message be communicated constantly by writers, artists, and officials in the media. According to

official accounts, he revolutionized Korean fine arts by encouraging the production of new works in new media. This included the art of film and cinema. Mixing history, political ideology, and movie-making, Kim encouraged the production of several epic films, which glorified works written by his father. His official biography claims that Kim Jong Il has composed six operas and enjoys staging elaborate musicals. Kim is reported to be an avid film buff who owns more than 20,000 movies, including the entire series of James Bond films, for his personal enjoyment.

Kim Il Sung began preparing his son to lead North Korea in the early 1970s. Between 1971 and 1980, Kim Jong Il was appointed to increasingly important positions in the Korean Workers' Party. During this time, he instituted policies to bring party officials closer to the people by forcing bureaucrats to work among subordinates for one month a year. He launched the Three-Revolution Team Movement, in which teams of political, technical, and scientific technicians traveled around the country to provide training. He was also involved in economic planning to develop certain sectors of the economy.

By the 1980s, preparations were being made for Kim to succeed his father as the leader of North Korea. At this time, the government began building a personality cult around Kim Jong Il patterned after that of his father. Just as Kim Il Sung was known as the "Great Leader," Kim Jong Il was hailed in the North Korean media as the "fearless leader" and "the great successor to the revolutionary cause." His portraits appeared in public buildings along with his father's. He also initiated a series of drop-in inspections of businesses, factories, and government offices. At the Sixth Party Congress in 1980, Kim Jong Il was given senior posts in the Politburo (the policy committee of the Korean Workers' Party), the Military Commission, and the Secretariat (the executive department charged with carrying out policy). Thus, Kim was positioned to control all aspects of the government.

The one area of leadership in which Kim Jong Il might have had a perceived weakness was the military. The army was the foundation of power in North Korea, and Kim had no military service experience. With the assistance of allies in the military, Kim was able to gain acceptance by the army officials as the next leader of North Korea. By 1991, he was designated as the supreme commander of the Korean People's Army, thus giving him the tool he needed to maintain complete control of the government once he took power.

Following the death of Kim Il Sung in July 1994, Kim Jong Il took total control of the country. This transition of power from father to son had never been seen before in a communist regime. In deference to his father, the office of president was abolished, and Kim Jong Il took the titles of general secretary of the Workers' Party and chairman of the National Defense Commission, which was declared the highest office of the state.

It is important to understand that much of Kim Jong Il's persona is based on a cult of personality, meaning that legend and official North Korean government accounts describe his life, character, and actions in ways that promote and legitimize his leadership. Examples include his family's nationalist revolutionary roots and claims that his birth was foretold by a swallow, the appearance of a double rainbow over Mount Paekdu, and a new star in the heavens. He is known to personally manage the country's affairs and sets operational guidelines for individual industries. He is said to be arrogant and self-centered in policy decisions, openly rejecting criticism or opinions that differ from his. He is suspicious of nearly all of those who surround him and volatile in his emotions. There are many stories of his eccentricities, his playboy lifestyle, the lifts in his shoes and pompadour hairstyle that make him appear taller, and his fear of flying. Some stories can be verified while others are most likely exaggerated, possibly circulated by foreign operatives from hostile countries.

In the 1990s, North Korea went through a series of devastating and debilitating economic episodes. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, North Korea lost its main trading partner. Strained relations with China following China's normalization with South Korea in 1992 further limited North Korea's trade options. Record-breaking floods in 1995 and 1996 followed by drought in 1997 crippled North Korea's food production. With only 18 percent of its land suitable for farming in the best of times, North Korea began experiencing a devastating famine. Worried about his position in power, Kim Jong Il instituted the Military First policy, which prioritized national resources to the military. Thus, the military would be pacified and remain in his control. Kim could defend himself from threats domestic and foreign, while economic conditions worsened. The policy did produce some economic growth and along with some socialist-type market practices—characterized as a "flirtation with capitalism"—North Korea has been able to remain operational despite being heavily dependent on foreign aid for food.

In 1994, the Clinton administration and North Korea agreed to a framework designed to freeze and eventually dismantle North Korea's nuclear weapons program. In exchange, the United States would provide assistance in producing two power-generating nuclear reactors and supplying fuel oil and other economic aid. In 2000, the presidents of North Korea and South Korea met for diplomatic talks and agreed to promote reconciliation and economic cooperation between the two countries. The agreement allowed families from both countries to reunite and signaled a move toward increased trade and investment. For a time, it appeared that North Korea was reentering the international community.

Then in 2002, U.S. intelligence agencies suspected North Korea was enriching uranium or building the facilities to do so, presumably for making nuclear weapons. In his 2002 State of the Union address, President George W. Bush identified North Korea as one of the countries in the "axis of evil" (along with Iraq and Iran). The Bush administration soon revoked the 1994 treaty designed to eliminate North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Finally, in 2003, Kim Jong Il's government admitted to having produced nuclear weapons for security purposes, citing tensions with President Bush. Late in 2003, the Central Intelligence Agency issued a report that North Korea possessed one and possibly two nuclear bombs. The Chinese government stepped in to try to mediate a settlement, but President Bush refused to meet with Kim Jong Il one-on-one and instead insisted on multilateral negotiations. China was able to gather Russia, Japan, South Korea, and the United States for negotiations with North Korea. Talks were held in 2003, 2004, and twice in 2005. All through the meetings, the Bush administration demanded North Korea eliminate its nuclear weapons program. It adamantly maintained any normalcy of relations between North Korea and the United States would come about only if North Korea changed its human rights policies, eliminated all chemical and biological weapons programs, and ended missile technology proliferation. North Korea continually rejected the proposal. In 2006, North Korea's Central News Agency announced North Korea had successfully conducted an underground nuclear bomb test.

5 things the world hated most about Kim Jong Il

After 17 years of tumultuous rule, North Korean leader Kim Jong Il died Saturday at the age of 69. The mercurial, enigmatic dictator — who came to power when his father, who founded North Korea, died in 1994 — was one of the most combative and colorful despots in modern history. As the world debates what's next for the isolated, poverty-stricken North Korea, here's a look at five things that defined Kim Jong Il's rule:

1. His unquestioned, absolute authority

"There is, perhaps, no totalitarianism in the world that is as all-embracing as North Korea's," says Michael Hirsh at National Journal. "Something like it hasn't existed since Stalin died." The secretive communist nation is remarkable for its apparent lack of dissidents. Though most North Koreans' quality of life is terrible, no detectable undercurrent is pushing for a democratic uprising. In that sense, Kim Jong Il was "the most successful dictator in modern history."

2. His habit of blatantly antagonizing South Korea

Before succeeding his father in 1994, Kim reportedly ordered a 1983 bombing in Myanmar that killed 17 senior South Korean officials, and the 1987 bombing of a Korean Air flight that killed 115 passengers, says Reuters. Kim is also suspected of ordering the March 2010 sinking of a South Korean military ship and, in November of that same year, the bombing of a South Korea-controlled island, says Barbara Demick and John M. Glionna at the Los Angeles Times. Immediately following Kim's death, South Korean President Lee Myung-bak put the country's military on high alert.

3. His willingness to ignore famine and poverty

When Kim first took power, communist North Korea's economy was in a shambles following the end of the Cold War and the ensuing loss of its trading partners. Then a devastating famine in the 1990s led to the death of about one million North Koreans. Even as the population suffered from poverty and famine, Kim continued his father's "military first" mandate, says the Associated Press, and devoted nearly all of the country's scarce resources to building "the world's fifth-largest military."

4. His nuclear obsession

North Korea's "Dear Leader" frustrated the U.S. and other global powers with his "on-again, off-again approach to talks on giving up nuclear arms for energy and other assistance," says the Associated Press. Meanwhile, North Korea detonated a nuclear device in 2006, conducting a second nuclear test in 2009. Now, the world is rightfully terrified about the future of North Korea's half-dozen or so nuclear weapons, says Joby Warrick at The Washington Post. The nukes are "both a matter of immense pride and an insurance policy for a regime that sees itself threatened by much larger countries, including the United States." So don't expect Kim's successor to abandon "his obsessive pursuit of nuclear weapons.

5. His narcissistic personality

"Kim Jong Il was a real-life Dr. Evil, intent on being taken seriously and yet almost unfailingly laughed at," says Hirsh. "[He was] strutting and pouf-haired, a self-described connoisseur of fine wine and cigars as well as (according to North Korea's ever-inventive media) a brilliant inventor who shot 38 under par his first time playing golf." He was quite the cinephile as well, says the U.K.'s Telegraph. The "near-obsessive film buff" boasted a reported collection of more than 20,000 video tapes. And he spared no expense: Kim drank about £450,000 (roughly \$700,000) worth of premium cognac each year.

During his often oppressive reign over North Korea, Kim Jong Il cultivated a personal mythology that included some outlandish claims. Global Post compiled 10 bizarre bits of reported fact and propaganda from the life of "Dear Leader."

1. Divine birth

Legend has it that a double rainbow and a glowing new star appeared in the heavens to herald the birth of Kim Jong Il, in 1942, on North Korea's cherished Baekdu Mountain. Soviet records, however, indicate he was born in the Siberian village of Vyatskoye, in 1941. The people of North Korea, many of whom are reportedly battling famine, are apparently told that Kim's birthday is celebrated throughout the world.

2. Fear of flying

Perhaps one of the reasons the North Korean leader was so reclusive was his fear of flying, which he inherited from his father, Kim Il Sung. Kim rarely traveled abroad, and when he did it was by train - once taking a luxury rail car all the way to Moscow. In August GlobalPost reported that Kim visited Russia for talks with President Dmitry Medvedev, in an effort to shore up support for a transfer of power to his third son Kim Jong Un. Kim's preference for rail travel is poignant because his death reportedly occurred during a train journey to a region outside of the capital, Pyongyang.

3. Wanted to breed giant rabbits

German media reported in 2007 that Kim hoped to solve the famine in his country by breeding giant rabbits. An east German farmer who bred rabbits the size of dogs was apparently asked by North Korea to help set up a big bunny farm to alleviate food shortages. To get things going, he sent a batch of 12 giant rabbits to North Korea, but was shocked to hear they were eaten at Kim's birthday banquet that year.

4. Liked to eat roast donkey

While Kim was on his famous 2001 train trip to Moscow, a Russian envoy who traveled with him said roast donkey and fresh lobsters were flown to the train every day. Kim also reportedly ate the food with silver chopsticks, and washed it down with French wine and Champagne. Kim was also said to be one of the world's biggest buyers of Hennessy cognac.

5. High achiever

Official records reportedly show that Kim learned to walk at the age of three weeks, and was talking at eight weeks. While at Kim Il Sung University, he apparently wrote 1,500 books over a period of three years, along with six full operas. According to his official biography, all of his operas are "better than any in the history of music." Then there's his sporting prowess. In 1994, Pyongyang media reported that the first time Kim picked up a golf club, he shot a 38-under par round on North Korea's only golf course, including 11 holes-in-one. Reports say each of his 17 bodyguards verified the record-breaking feat. He then decided to retire from the sport forever.

6. Built a city for propaganda

In the 1950s Kim built an entire city called Kijong-Dong, also known in North Korea as the Peace Village, which was designed only for propaganda. It is situated in the North's half of the Korean Demilitarized Zone, and to this day it has no residents. Western media, particularly in South Korea, refer to it as Propaganda Village.

7. Fashion icon

Standing at at 5-foot-3, Kim was a curious figure with his bouffant hairdo, platform shoes and collection of jumpsuits. And let's not forget those sunglasses. But nevertheless, Rodong Sinmun, a communist party newspaper, reported that Kim Jong Il's suits had become a global fashion phenomenon. His "fashion icon" status has also reportedly been transferred to son and successor, Kim Jong Un. Word is that the slick, trimmed haircut of Kim the younger, who may have had plastic surgery to look more like his father, is being mimicked by countless youths on the streets of Pyongyang

8. Film buff

According to Shin Sang Ok, (considered the "Godfather of South Korean cinema" and who was kidnapped by the North Koreans) Kim Jong Il is a big fan of the Bond movies and Rambo. Kim was said to be an avid film collector, amassing more than 20,000 video tapes and DVDs. His favourite flicks reportedly included Friday the 13th, Rambo, Godzilla, Hong Kong action films, and anything starring Elizabeth Taylor. In 1978, he ordered the kidnapping of South Korean film director Shin Sang-ok and his actress wife Choi Eun-hee so they could build a North Korean film industry. A decade later, they reportedly escaped while on a trip to Austria, and have since been granted refuge in the United States.

9. Child killer?

When Kim was aged five or six, his younger brother Shura Kim drowned in the family's swimming pool. Unconfirmed Soviet reports said that Kim was responsible for the accident. His mother died in childbirth the following year.

10. Didn't defecate

It is reported that Kim's official biography on the North Korean state web site, which has since been taken down, claimed that Kim did not defecate. Enough said.

Some fascinating facts

1 According to his biography, he first picked up a golf club in 1994, at North Korea's only golf course, and shot a 38-under par round that included no fewer than 11 holes in one. Satisfied with his performance, he reportedly immediately declared his retirement from the sport.

2 He was a near-obsessive film buff with a reported collection of 20,000 plus video tapes.

5 He was born on Feb. 16, 1942 aged 69, in a secret military camp on Baekdu Mountain, on the North Korean border, his official biography says. But Soviet records claim he was born on February 16, 1941 in the village of Watskoye, in Russia, where his parents were in exile during the Japanese occupation of Korea.

6 North Korea has one of the largest armies in the world. According to the US State Department, it has an estimated active duty military force of up to 1.2 million personnel, compared to about 680,000 in the South, with about one in five of men aged 17-54 in the regular armed forces.

7 In 1960, he began to study at the politics and economics department of Kim Il-sung University and graduated four years later.

8 His survivors are believed to include five children. The youngest, Kim Jong-un, is expected to eventually succeed him.

9 His eldest son, Kim Jong-nam, once believed to be the designated heir, appeared to have fallen out of favors after being arrested in Tokyo in 2001 while travelling to Disneyland on a forged passport.

11 Kim was eight when his mother, Kim Jong-suk, died in childbirth, according to his official biography, although there are suggestions that his mother died of gunshot wounds.

12 He was known by more than 50 names including Dear Leader, Supreme Leader, Our Father, The General, Generalissimo.

13 He is said to have broadcast once in his country - in 1992, during a military parade in Pyongyang, he said into a microphone at the grandstand: "Glory to the heroic soldiers of the Korean People's Army!" Applause broke out in the crowds and the parade participants cheered.

14 Nine years later, he was elected secretary of the committee before in becoming a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee in February 1974.

- 16** The dictator travelled by private train for state visits – a decision believed to be connected to his apparent fear of flying, a phobia he was believed to share with his father.
- 15** He was hailed as a demigod in North Korea while South Korea portrayed him as a vain playboy with a penchant for bouffant hair, jumpsuits and platform shoes designed to make him
- 17** In December 1992 he was Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army, First Vice-Chairman and later Chairman of the National Defence Commission before being re-appointed in April 1993.
- 18** On Oct. 8, 1997, Kim Jong-il was elected General Secretary of the WPK.
- 19** Kim Jong Il was given the honorary title "Hero of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea" in 1975 and then again seven years later.
- 20** In April 1992, he was given the title of Marshal of the DPRK. He has also received the Kim Il-sung Order three times and many others awards and honours.
- 21** After the death of his father Kim Il-sung in July 1994, it took three years for Kim to consolidate his power and finally take the title of General Secretary of the Workers' Party.
- 22** Because, at his death, his father was named "Eternal President," Kim never officially became president of North Korea.
- 23** Since October 1980, he has been a member of the Presidium of the Politburo and secretary of the Central Committee of the WPK and the Central Military Commission.
- 24** Between 1982 and 1998, he was deputy to every Supreme People's Assembly.
- 25** His private train journeys were as luxurious as befitted a leader of North Korea, despite the millions left behind starving due to famine: one Russian emissary who travelled across Russia by train with Kim described how live lobsters were airlifted daily to his train.
- 26** He started working for the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) in 1964.
- 27** At university it was claimed in his biography that he wrote no fewer than 1,500 books in three years
- 28** His all time favourites including Rambo, Friday the 13th, Godzilla and "The Eternal Bosom of Hot Love".
- 29** He was said to be a particular fan of Elizabeth Taylor, the late Hollywood actress.
- 30** Kim ordered the kidnapping of Shin Sang-ok, the South Korean film director, and his actress wife, Choi Eun-hee, in 1978 in order to build up North Korea's film industry. They made seven films before escaping to the West in 1986.
- 31** Kim apparently produced a patriotic 100-part documentary series on the history of his North Korean homeland as well as writing a book titled On the Art of Cinema.
- 32** Kim also apparently composed six operas and enjoyed staging musicals.
- 33** He was the main villain in Hollywood film, Team America.
- 34** He is said to have owned at least 17 opulent mansions
- 35** He reportedly spread the myth across North Korea that he could control the weather with his moods, as if by magic.
- 36** Kim had female staff inspect each grain of rice to check it adhered to standards of length, weight and colour.
- 37** He forced waitresses at restaurants frequented by foreigners in Pyongyang to have cosmetic surgery in order to appear more "western".
- 38** He reportedly drank £450,000 of cognac each year in a country where average income was about £580.
- 39** A recent new list of luxury imports now also reveals a penchant for Chinese dolphins, French poodles, and African aphrodisiacs and is said to have developed a palate for Donkey meat as well lobster and expensive French wine.
- 40** A personality evaluation report on him, compiled by psychiatrists suggested that the "big six" group of personality disorders - sadistic, paranoid, antisocial, narcissistic, schizoid and schizotypal - which were shared by dictators Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin and Saddam Hussein were also dominant in the late North Korean leader.
- 41** Minju Josa, a North Korean newspaper, reported once that Kim invented a product described as "double bread with meat" and created factories to produce them in order to feed his students and teachers. Some observers noted it was very similar to an American-hamburger.
- 42** **Satellite imagery** recently showed that he had installed a series of loopy waterslides.

43 The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is considered one of the most secretive countries in the world.

44 It is said to have acquired its nuclear programme from the Soviet Union in the 1980s

45 Estimates of the size of its nuclear weapons stockpile range from low single digits to just more than a dozen but there is no certainty the country has built a working bomb.

46 North Korea has faced a tightening international sanctions regime since 2009 after it conducted a series of illegal nuclear and ballistic missile tests, allegedly torpedoed a South Korea corvette and shelled a South Korean Island.

47 Its economy is reeling under the impact of UN sanctions and a series of natural disasters, according to data published South Korea's central bank.

48 Statistics showed North Korea's economy contracted for a second consecutive year in 2010 despite the North's leadership promising to deliver their country to the "gateway of a mighty and prosperous nation" by next year.

49 The 23.9 million North Korean citizens are not able to freely use mobile phones or the Internet (with the internet domain .kp) although Kim considers himself to be a communications expert.

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