## Kim Jong Un Executes 10 Officials for Watching Soaps, Graft

## October 28, 2014

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## Bloomberg

http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-10-28/kim-jong-un-purges-10-officials-for-watching-soaps-yonhap-says.html?hootPostID=fab435d32e3b378986548ed654cddd39

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is seeking to erase the remaining influence of his dead uncle, executing about 10 senior Workers’ Party officials on charges from graft to watching South Korean soap operas, according to an aide to a South Korean lawmaker.

The deaths by shooting are part of Kim’s latest round of purges, said Lim Dae Sung, a secretary to ruling Saenuri Party lawmaker Lee Cheol Woo who attended a briefing at the National Intelligence Service yesterday in [**Seoul**](http://topics.bloomberg.com/seoul/). Kim had Jang Song Thaek, his uncle and de facto deputy, killed in December last year. Lee didn’t say when the executions took place, or who the officials were.

Kim, who returned to the public gaze with a cane this month after six weeks out of view, had a cyst removed from his right ankle in September or October, Lim said today. A foreign doctor invited to the isolated nation performed the surgery, Lim said by phone, adding the condition could recur due to Kim’s obesity.

Kim, believed to be about 30, exercises dynastic control over [**North Korea**](http://topics.bloomberg.com/north-korea/)’s 1.2 million troops and nuclear arms program, having taken over the 24 million-strong nation after his father [**Kim Jong Il**](http://topics.bloomberg.com/kim-jong-il/) died in December 2011. His period of seclusion prompted speculation about his health and grip on power.

“Kim Jong Un is trying to establish absolute power and strengthen his regime with public punishments,” Yang Moo Jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said by phone. “However, frequent purges can create side effects.”

**Gulag Expansion**

North Korea has expanded prison camps and increased public executions, creating angst among military commanders, Lim said. In a bid to maintain order, Kim demoted an army commander, blaming him for the low accuracy rate of the nation’s artillery, he said.

Kim has consolidated his power through purges, including the removal in July 2012 of Chief of General Staff Ri Yong Ho, who guided him in the succession process. In December he had Jang killed over charges of factionalism, graft and sexual misconduct.

He has also replaced military leaders. Army General Hyon Yong Chol took over from Jang Jong Nam as Minister of the People’s Armed Forces in June, Yonhap reported.

The same month, North Korea pledged to “mercilessly destroy” anyone associated with an unidentified Western action-comedy movie that depicts an attempt to assassinate Kim. The plot matches “The Interview,” starring [**Seth Rogen**](http://topics.bloomberg.com/seth-rogen/) and [**James Franco**](http://topics.bloomberg.com/james-franco/), which tells the story of two celebrity journalists who secure an interview with Kim, prompting the Central Intelligence Agency to recruit them as assassins.

**Minnie Mouse**

Kim is a fan of some western culture. In 2012, state television showed him with a crew of clapping generals watching a performance by a band dressed as Winnie the Pooh, Tigger, Minnie Mouse and other characters. The nation put on an [**international film festival**](http://pyongyanginternationalfilmfestival.com/) in Pyongyang in September.

Kim has also made clear his enthusiasm for sports. In February last year, when his country conducted its third nuclear test, he invited former U.S. basketball star Dennis Rodman to watch a basketball game together.

Early this month, Kim sent Vice Marshal Hwang Pyong So and two other members of his inner circle to attend the closing ceremony of the Asian Games in Incheon, near Seoul. The visit produced an agreement with South Korean President Park Geun Hye’s chief security adviser to hold another round of high-level talks between the two countries in late October or early November.

North Korea then threatened to cancel the talks after South Korean activists flew balloons containing anti-Kim leaflets over the border. [**South Korea**](http://topics.bloomberg.com/south-korea/) asked the administration in Pyongyang to respond by today to its proposal to hold the talks tomorrow, Seoul’s Unification Ministry said in an e-mail.