

NKSC

**Examining North Korean Government's Response to
the Inflow of External Information Based on
Documents from The Korean People's Internal Affairs**

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction.....1
- II. North Korean government's response to the inflow of external information based on internal documents from The Korean People's Internal Affairs3
 - 1. Crime status in North Korea3
 - 2. Reviewing the cause of crime6
 - 3. Kim Jong Un's Orders and Countermeasure Against Crime7
- III. Conclusion..... 10

I. Introduction

Starting from 2007, NKSC has worked to have an inflow of varying external information into North Korea in order to raise the public's consciousness on democratic freedom and rights. Specifically, NKSC distributed videos related to freedom, human rights, market economy, democracy, etc. through USBs, DVDs, radios, etc. and delivering them across North Korea. At the onset of this information inflow project, the North Korean government lacked awareness about the far-reaching power of USBs and it was unable to systematically restrict the inflow of new information. However, as the inflow of external information expanded through the increasing supply of USBs in North Korea, the government is seemingly reinforcing control.

Recently, NKSC conducted research on the status of telecommunications within North Korea. Through this, it was possible to examine the North Korean government's response to the inflow of external information.¹ The leading group in charge of inspecting the inflow of external information into North Korea is the 109 Group. The 109 Group is an organization based on associations between members of the Central Party Agency, the National Security Agency, the People's Safety Agency, etc. and it seems that this group conducts house investigations, street inspections, etc. once a month. Besides the 109 Group, the People's Safety Agency, the National Security Agency, the Propaganda Department of cities and provinces, the Youth Confederation, the Publication Censorship Bureau, etc. are also presented to be in charge of inspection. The 1118 Group, which conducts stricter inspection than the 109 Group, was found to be in existence according to in-depth interviews.

The North Korean government's regulations regarding accessing external information can be largely categorized into house investigations, class inspections, street inspections, etc. Inspector groups, including the 109 Group, conduct periodic or surprise inspections on citizens for any possession of illegal information. They not only check hardware such as computers or cellphones but also inspect storage devices such as USBs or SD card. They occasionally detach the hardware of computers to track its record. An organization specially dedicated to inspecting college students, the Youth Confederation, has conducted surprise searches during classes and at school.

It is said that there have been cases where investigators were bribed to grant pardon. During in-depth interviews, respondents who were admittedly economically privileged said they were able to bribe their way with large sums of money out of punishment after being caught watching Korean soap operas. However, normally people have to pay a fine or become sent to labor or concentration camps for watching foreign content, such as Korean soap operas. One respondent answered that a college

1 From January through April 2015, NKSC conducted surveys and in-depth interviews about the status of telecommunications within North Korea on defectors who have escaped North Korea in the past 5 years.

student from Chungjin was assassinated for watching a Korean soap opera around October 2013.

Like this, there are various ways and agencies utilized by the North Korean government to enforce and control the inflow of external information. Levels of punishment for the same kind of crimes have been different between the agencies. NKSC primarily aims to examine the response of the North Korean People's Safety Agency, with respect to the Korean Police, to this inflow of external information by focusing on internal documents obtained from The Korean People's Internal Affairs sole by the NKSC.

II. North Korean government's response to the inflow of external information based on internal documents from The Korean People's Internal Affairs

The document NKSC obtained is a new commentary published by the Korean People's Internal Affairs publisher in September 2014. The Korean People's Internal Affairs is similar to the Korean combat police and is a part of the People's Safety Agency. Therefore, it is fair to say that this resource was published for the members of the People's Safety Agency.

The People's Safety Agency is an advisory body of the National Defense Commission and part of the 3 major security agencies, alongside the National Security Agency and the People's Armed Forces. Its most important duty to the government is to conduct surveillance for any anti-state and counterrevolution behavior and it also maintains and transports classified documents because it is in charge of the party and nation's security. In addition, it performs the basic duties of retaining order for security purposes and carries out activities such as prevention measures and investigations on crime and uncovering non-socialist elements. It generally keeps an eye on the trend of ideas amongst citizens, and other duties including classifying citizens, controlling residential movement, issuing citizenship cards, etc.²

The internal document is constructed in this order respectively: crime status in North Korea, review of the causes, guidelines delivered by Kim Jung Un. It also contains an abundance of examples. NKSC extracted content specifically related to the inflow of external information and will present analysis according to the order of the document.

1. Crime status in North Korea

The internal document's starts off as follows: **"Reinforce the noble duties of the citizens and completely eliminate all crimes and accidents including violent crime."** It was recently clarified that this internal document was written by "an order [from Kim Jong Un] to investigate the how the nation's political stability and lives of the people are threatened by possibilities of internal collapse, and to bring the issue to security agencies' attention and resolve to eliminate all related crimes and accidents."

The first type of crime related with the inflow of external information listed in the document is the spread of 'the balloon operation' and 'erotic pornography'. The North Korean government thinks that this type of external information was distributed by "America and its South Korean puppets viciously plotting a psychological plan to perpetuate capitalist culture into North Korea to create chaos."

As North Korea's power has grown under the direction of our venerable marshal, America and South Korean puppets who are afraid are frantically

² Unification education institute (2013). 「 North Korea knowledge dictionary 』, 477~478p

trying to suppress its power on an international stage. They are viciously plotting schemes to psychologically create chaos in our republic from within through its capitalist culture. Having reinitiated the dirty balloon operation that had failed due to our efforts last period, America and South Korea are intent on publishing false propaganda and smuggling in drugs as well as smuggling out important equipment, materials, raw materials, and accessories strongly needed for building our strong nation and improving our people's lives.

Furthermore, the document shows detailed examples of forms of violent crimes occurring in North Korea. The examples show specific motivations behind crimes, ways of crime, etc. of murder, drugs, and sexual assaults. After listing the examples, it discusses the situation regarding the inflow of external information, specifically regarding the media and its methods. The People's Safety Agency views the inflow of external information as one of the enemy's intellectual culture infiltration maneuvers. One of the examples of medium was cellphones, which indicates that the penetration of cellphones has recently become an easier and an important way of accessing external information in North Korea. In addition, the government has become increasingly cautious regarding the supply and distribution of storage media such as USBs and SD cards. The government concluded the following activities as crimes: watching videos of inappropriate content such as sex scenes, singing in a 'puppet singing technique', reading fictions or listening to private records and recordings that are forbidden by the government. Even in terms of content legally broadcasted in North Korean movies and television, the nation makes it illegal to copy the contents on a large scale for commercial purposes.

What is even more problematic is that the act of spreading inappropriate recordings and propaganda publications, which had covered for a while, is on a rise gain and assisting the enemy's intellectual culture infiltration maneuvers.

They utilize storage media such as cellphones to store and spread movies or fictions with inappropriate content, granting access to the enemy's broadcasts or television. They also distribute and install mini satellite antennas to allow watching movies, listening to music, accessing nasty sex scenes, and encourages trafficking by copying or recording songs sang in 'puppet singing technique'. Inappropriate external content refers to private records, recordings, books, fictions published in foreign countries, and the government also frowns upon actions such as using computers, multi-copiers, and printing equipment to copy literature broadcasted in our country's movies and television in large quantities onto CDs and even illegally labeling them.

Some interesting points could be noted from examining the document in respect to how the People's Safety Agency classified accessing external information as a crime. It is seen to be classified in a similar group with murder, drugs, and sexual assault. Also,

from the way it emphasized the imminent need to stricken control over the inflow of external information', it can be interpreted that the government sees it as a crime even more alerting than violent crime. As well, in the aforementioned introduction, crimes were listed potentially in order of their significance, and "balloon operation" and erotic publications were listed prior to drugs, smuggling, and other crimes. These two crimes are specifically related to obtaining foreign information.

Second, the ways North Korean citizens take in and share external information have diversified. Ways of doing so include streaming foreign broadcasts by using cellphones, secretly getting into contact with suppliers of foreign broadcasts, installing mini satellite antennas, moving external information between computers, trafficking contents by creating and copying them, making money by distributing through the use of computers/multi-copiers/printers, etc. Mini satellite antennas seem to have many similarities with a revolutionary method of allowing an inflow of external information that won first place in the Hackathon competition; it is necessary to further confirm and explain how people actually watch external information through satellites.

Third, it is a crime to distribute contents in an illegal way even if the content per se may be government approved or had been internally produced in North Korea. To be specific, it extends to making copies of money and adding labels to North Korea movies, literature or television broadcasts. This means that even if the content is certified by the government, it is a crime similar to distributing external information if they are distributed for the purpose of personal profit.

Lastly, the government is on alert against the inflow of external information through cellphones. The supply rate of cellphones in North Korea has been increasing recently, and the trend presumably coincides with the increasing inflow of external information through the device. It is noteworthy that cellphones were mentioned first among other mediums of accessing external information.

North Korea's specific apprehension regarding the use of cellphones was also evident in a defector's interview conducted by NKSC. The interviewee in his/her 20s who had defected from Hwaeryoung, North Korea in 2014 said the North Korean government created a policy to restrict Bluetooth function in cellphones. The interviewee explained that upon its implementation, citizens were required to bring their registered cellphones to post offices or security sockets by the end of 2014 to change the operating system of the cellphones, hence disabling their cellphones to transmit files to South Korea or other foreign countries.

The Bluetooth function is popular - many used it often, but starting from March or April of 2014, Bluetooth became forbidden. It is because many have been transmitting music and other files through Bluetooth. [...] So they implemented some type of system so that people can't share materials with each other. As you

know, you use Bluetooth by connecting two phones, but even when they are connected using Bluetooth, it became impossible to transmit Korean songs or other foreign files.

This policy perfectly aligns with the impression we get from the internal document, that cellphones were the most popular medium of conveying external information.

2. Reviewing the cause of crime

In the same document, after discussing variations of crimes within North Korea, the People's Safety Agency moves onto explaining reasons behind such crimes and concludes that there are three principal causes. It concluded that the first reason mainly has to do with their inconsistent effort to combat the enemies' vicious and persistent effort to psychologically bring down North Korea and infiltrate it with democratic movements. Last time, the enemies declared that there will be a "sudden change" in or a "demise" of our regime. As a response, they have been putting effort into completely eliminating any ground for cultural and psychological penetration. However, selective individuals who pretend to smile and accept our policies have been fulfilling their self-interests and perverted ambitions behind closed doors. This has significantly contributed to fueling more violent crimes like murder, robbery, rape and drugs. Failure to completely eliminate the weeds of crimes have led them to prosper yet again.

The second reason is lack of 'people's revolutionary conviction', and they 'easily waver to difficulties and obstacles presented by the enemies'. It can be noted that both the first and second reasons attribute the rise in crimes to external causes other than the faults of People's Safety Agency. According to the document, 'enemies have been spreading false rumors and creating chaos and conflict to impede North Korea's economic growth.' It is claiming that all economic hardships, murder, robbery and rape are results of the enemies' plans. The enemies have allegedly taken the opportunity during the current economically difficult times to spread rumors about bad things happening next year due to lack of food, never being able to recover from the current situation, etc. It has led to chaos in many societal aspects and encouraged crime, and negatively impact major economic industries such as the electricity sector.

The third reason is that people do not connect to the endeavors of People's Safety Agency and see their countermeasures against crime as a project only at the government level, and do not assist by reporting the aforementioned crimes. Their responses had stopped at worrying why these crimes wouldn't stop and not many took initiatives to combat these crimes and actively accommodate People's Safety Agency's efforts. It firmly believes that people's negligence has greatly contributed in bringing up the crime rate.

To summarize, the People's Safety Agency concluded that the cause of all sorts of crimes is rooted in the enemies' (Korea and USA) scheme and North Korean citizens who failed to report the crimes on time. Their fault only extends so far as to not being persistent with their countermeasures against crime.

3. Kim Jong Un's Orders and Countermeasure Against Crime

Next, People's Safety Agency delivers Kim's orders to counteract crimes in North Korea. According to the document, he has investigated into the schemes of the enemies and the realities of the government's existing countermeasures against crime. Kim is concerned about the increasing prevalence of drugs, violent crimes, superstition and circulation of illegal content. He emphasized the need for the People's Safety Agency to immediately and strictly confront the issue.

Honorable comrade Kim Jong Un has said the following:

Recently production and trafficking of drugs, violent crimes, circulating or watching inappropriate content, superstitions have been on a rise. People's Safety Agency must immediately discuss appropriate countermeasures to fight the trend.

Accordingly, People's Safety Agency has come up with four policies, which are to be carried at institutional levels. To be specific, first step is to ensure that there is not anyone who deserts their workplaces. Because North Korea claims to have full employment, every citizen belongs to an institution or a factory. However, as economic difficulties have persisted, some have started to superficially mark attendance and carry out individual commercial activities. People's Safety Agency refer to this phenomenon as a result of citizens who have failed to receive proper education and thus are easily tempted to succumb to self-interests.

Most importantly, devising preventative measures to protect the citizens from deserting their workplaces and committing crimes is critical. Deserters and unemployed are not restricted by the community's rules and hence lack appropriate education which weakens their resolve and tempt them into pursuing self-interests and crimes.

Second step is to intensify cultural education and restrictions for citizens at schools and local governments. People's Safety Agency has identified that it is a crime to stay at home as a mere dependent. Most dependent individuals refer to women who rely on the head of the family's income. Therefore, this step aims to refine the culture of these individuals through female leads in schools committed to her group and community.

Cultural education and its restrictions must be intensified. Many of those who commit crimes today are dependents at home. The problem is that they are easily

lured into earning even a small amount of money at the face of today's small struggles, and eventually become criminals.

Third, institutions, factories, local bureaucracies and schools must reinforce the "self-guarding and reporting system" to prevent crimes. The document gives a detailed account of success stories of this system and encourages its implementation by every community. One local school devised a system in which every resident recorded everyday any suspicious activity from what they saw, heard and felt, and submitted them to the leader who then reported it to the People's Safety Agency. Through this method, the school was able to expose crimes like illegal trades of electricity, watching and circulating illegal content, and fraud. People's Safety Agency introduces this case as an exemplary incident and encourages its imitation.

It is necessary for institutions, factories, local bureaucracies and schools to uncover crimes through self-reports. One local school successfully prevented a fraud from violating with the residents' property through strictly enforcing self-reporting system. It highlighted the importance of self-reporting to its residents and conducted daily self-reports on which every resident was required to write anything suspicious from what they saw, heard or felt. This system has constantly proved to be efficient, especially as of current. The same school utilized the self-reporting system to expose a significant number of criminals who attempted to sell electricity by cutting cords, watched or circulated illegal content, or committed fraud. All other institutions, factories, local bureaucracies and schools must equally have sense of duty and implement self-reporting systems. They may utilize messengers, phones, letters and other reporting methods to send their message. Such self-guarding method will not allow even a single individual from engaging with his/her school.

Fourth, everyone must be involved in prosecuting criminals. People's Safety Agency emphasizes that any "family, relative or friend" of criminals who are hiding must cooperate with the government. It also stated one must report any incident of any unknown visitor gifting and/or spending money for them. It went onto highlight the need for everyone to study pictures of and information about the criminals to speedily report a fitting individual.

Next, everyone must fully participate in the project to prosecute criminals who escape exposure. [...] In order to uncover every single one of them, their families, relatives or friends must step up to lead them into the right direction. [...] Especially in cases where an unknown person offers to give gifts or money, one must look into his work and residence to readily report on any suspicious behavior. Alongside this, one must peruse and remember pictures and profiles of criminals to efficiently and privately report any fitting individual.

Lastly, People's Safety Agency concluded by saying these countermeasures against crime are not mere efforts to pick out a couple criminals and remove certain problems, but to protect the regime from the 'enemies' vicious attacks on the republic' and its supreme leader.

As it was already emphasized, the current fight is not against a few criminals or problems, but in resistance to the enemies' vicious attacks on the republic and to protect the supreme leader. All fellow citizens, residents, and workers must bear this purpose in mind and fulfill their duties of a proper member of the Chosun community by collectively putting in effort to prevent and eliminate violent crimes, drugs and accidents.

III. Conclusion

In all, we examined the North Korean government's response to the influx of outside information from the People's Safety Agency's internal document. The Agency recognizes trafficking of outside information as serious as violent crimes, and is concerned about the increasingly diverse ways of accessing and circulating outside information. Also, they see the root of the problem to lie within enemies like Korea and USA and their plot to psychologically and culturally invade North Korea with the help of some of its own citizens. Therefore, they stressed the importance of regulating deserters, enforcing stricter culture educations, and implementing self-reporting systems to prosecute the criminals.

It can be concluded that People's Safety Agency did not present any revolutionary countermeasure other than strengthening its internal regulations. There is an evident need for organizations which work to smuggle external information into North Korea to address its rising caution against cell phones and other storage media as well as its restriction of individuals' economic activity upon discovery, and strategize accordingly.