

Kim breaks with his flight-phobic father, travels by plane

By Hyung-Jin Kim
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — Unlike his dictator father, who famously shunned air travel, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un jetted off to the northeastern Chinese city of Dalian this month, becoming the first North Korean ruler to fly abroad in 32 years.

Since taking office in late 2011, Kim has occasionally flown inside North Korea. The recent foreign trip, albeit not far from the North Korean border, comes ahead of his expected summit with President Donald Trump aimed at ending the North Korean nuclear problem.

Was Kim trying to test his jet's flight capacity because his summit with Trump would happen in Singapore? Did he simply want to show that he's different from his flight-averse father? Or perhaps he had urgent matters to discuss with Chinese President Xi Jinping that precluded the time-consuming train he took in March to Beijing to meet Xi.

Some things to know about the Kim family's travel habits:

The goshawk

Kim's official plane is a remodelled version of the Soviet-made IL-62. North Korea calls it "Chammae-1," named after the goshawk, North Korea's national bird.

South Korean media say the plane can fly at a maximum speed of 560 miles per hour and carry about 200 people. Its maximum flight range is about 5,720 miles, but it has reportedly never flown that far.

Some experts say one reason why North Korea apparently wanted to have a Kim-Trump summit in Pyongyang, the North's capital, is that Kim's plane might not be able to fly to faraway places like Switzerland, Sweden, or Washington.

Kim's younger sister, Kim Yo Jong, used "Chammae-2," the same kind of aircraft as her brother's, when she visited South Korea in February to attend the opening ceremony of the PyeongChang Winter Olympics. She became the first member of



North Korea's ruling Kim family to visit South Korea since the end of the 1950-1953 Korean War.

Previous air travel

Schooled for several years in Switzerland, Kim is believed to have travelled by air often as a teenager.

After he became North Korea's leader, state media said he was aboard "Chammae-1" when he reviewed air force planes taking part in combat aeronautics contests and inspected construction work in Pyongyang. North Korean media photos

also showed Kim looking out the windows of his plane, walking down the stairs from the plane, and walking with his wife, Ri Sol Ju, on a red carpet placed on an airstrip.

Other photos showed Kim in the cockpit of a fighter jet.

Different from his father

Before Kim's Dalian trip, no North Korean leader had publicly gone abroad by air since Kim's grandfather, North Korea founder Kim Il Sung, flew to the Soviet Union in 1986.

Kim Jong Il flew by plane to a conference

AIR TRAVEL. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, top photo, center, arrives at an airport in Dalian, China. Unlike his dictator father, who famously shunned air travel, Kim Jong Un jetted off to the northeastern Chinese city of Dalian, becoming the first North Korean ruler to travel abroad in that manner in 32 years. In the bottom photo, Kim Jong Un, center, is greeted by Chinese Communist Party members upon arrival at Beijing station in Beijing on March 26, 2018. On Kim's first trip to a foreign country since taking power in 2011, he travelled on a special armored train. Independent journalists were not given access to cover the events depicted in the images distributed by the North Korean government. The contents of the images are as provided and cannot be independently verified. The Korean language watermark on the images as provided by the source reads "KCNA," which is the abbreviation for the Korean Central News Agency. (Korean Central News Agency/Korea News Service via AP)

in Indonesia with Kim Il Sung, his father, in 1965. But after that, he reportedly never flew because of a fear of heights. During his 1994-2011 rule, Kim Jong Il made about a dozen known overseas trips, mostly to China, and conducted countless inspections of military posts, factories, and other places — all by train.

Analysts say Kim Jong Un's air travel may be aimed at showing he's a confident, normal leader who meets international standards.

South Korean media say Kim Jong Il had several luxurious trains equipped with reception halls, conference rooms, and high-tech communication facilities. To guard against possible attacks, his train reportedly travelled with two other trains, with one running ahead of his to check the safety of the rail line while another carried security agents and followed behind. According to state media, Kim Jong Il died of a heart attack during a train trip.

When Kim Jong Un visited Beijing, which is much farther than Dalian, in March for talks with Xi in his first overseas trip since his inauguration, he took a deep green special train reminiscent of his father's. In April, he took a black Mercedes limousine to return home after a meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in at a village along the Koreas' border.

Cambodia makes first arrest on charges of insulting monarchy

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — A Cambodian school director has become the first person to be arrested on charges of insulting the monarchy after posting comments on Facebook critical of the authoritarian government.

The law protecting the monarchy was passed in February. Critics say it further erodes freedom of speech and political activities, already under stress from Prime Minister Hun Sen's government.

Police said Khieng Navy was arrested at his home and could face five years in prison if convicted.

He is accused of posting comments online that allegedly insulted King Norodom Sihamoni by suggesting he was behind the November court decision to disband the main opposition party to benefit Cambodia's enemies. Sihamoni is a constitutional monarch with a minimal role in public affairs, while Hun Sen exercises almost absolute control over politics.

The Kampong Thom provincial court formally charged Khieng Navy with "insulting of the monarch," said a statement released by the investigating judge, Khorn Kosal. Offenders of the law on lese majeste, or insulting the monarch, could be punished by one to five years in prison with a fine of up to \$2,500.

Man imprisoned for post on Facebook

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — A court in Vietnam has sentenced a Facebook user to 4 1/2 years in jail for posts the court said distorted the political situation in the country and opposed the ruling Communist Party and the state.

A state-run newspaper said Bui Hieu Vo, 56, was convicted of conducting anti-state propaganda at the one-day trial in the People's Court in Ho Chi Minh City.

Tuoi Tre newspaper said authorities found 57 posts on Vo's Facebook page that opposed the Communist Party and instigated people to engage in terrorist activities. He was arrested in March last year.

The newspaper also reported that police in the northern province of Thanh Hoa had detained Nguyen Duy Son for Facebook posts that defamed the country's leaders.



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