

North Korea

## Reports of Kim Jong-un's Imminent Demise 'Exaggerated'

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South Korea on Tuesday denied reports that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is at death's door after cardiovascular surgery.

The Daily NK website here had reported Monday that Kim is in critical condition after emergency surgery for a heart condition, and the story was later picked up by (

The rumors were fueled by Kim's conspicuous absence from a ceremony on April 15 marking the birthday of nation founder Kim Il-sung at the Kumsusan Palace of t where he lies embalmed.



Kim Jong-un

But the government here said there are no unusual movements backing up the speculation. A senior Cheong Wa Dae "Kim is believed to be staying outside of Pyongyang with his close advisers and appears to be performing his duties as

The National Intelligence Service here believes Kim is in Wonsan in the east.

The U.S. only said it has no information about Kim's health. President Donald Trump said he doesn't know whether Kim is reports that came out, and we don't know," he said at a White House press briefing on Tuesday. "I can only say this well."

White House National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien said, "We're monitoring these reports very closely."

The last public appearance Kim made was about 10 days ago.

Kim, who is obese and has a family history of heart disease, took power after the sudden death of his father Kim Jong-il died of a heart attack. If Kim Jong-un remains out of public sight for a lengthy period, it would be hard to quell further

Some North Korea experts speculate that his sister Kim Yo-jong's recent rise in the North's hierarchy would be related to Kim Jong-un's ill health, but power is now completely in his hands that any struggle over his succession could bring the whole house of cards down.