

Analysis of Organizational System of NK  
People's Army in Kim Jong Un's Era  
(Mutual Relationship between the Ministry of  
People's Armed Forces, the General Staff, and the  
General Political Bureau)

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# Analysis of Organizational System of NK People's Army in Kim Jong Un's Era (Mutual Relationship between the Ministry of People's Armed Forces, the General Staff, and the General Political Bureau)

## I. Concept of the North Korean Army

We should approach to the North Korean military with the concept of political and military organization rather than pure military organization. The highest leading organ of the Korean People's Army is the party committee of the Korean People's Army of the Workers' Party of Korea. Party committees and political organizations are organized in the General Political Bureau, the Ministry of People's Armed Forces, and General Staff including each corps, division, regiment, battalion, and company. (There is the political department until the regiment. There is the political officer in the battalion with two members of the political officials and there is a political officer in company.)

The General Political Bureau is the separate organization that does not directly receive orders from the General Staff and the Ministry of People's Armed Forces, and has the same character as one department of the Workers' Party Korea. Party and political institutions within the military are tasked with helping and pushing military commanders and military administrations to execute orders and instructions well from Kim Jong-un and the

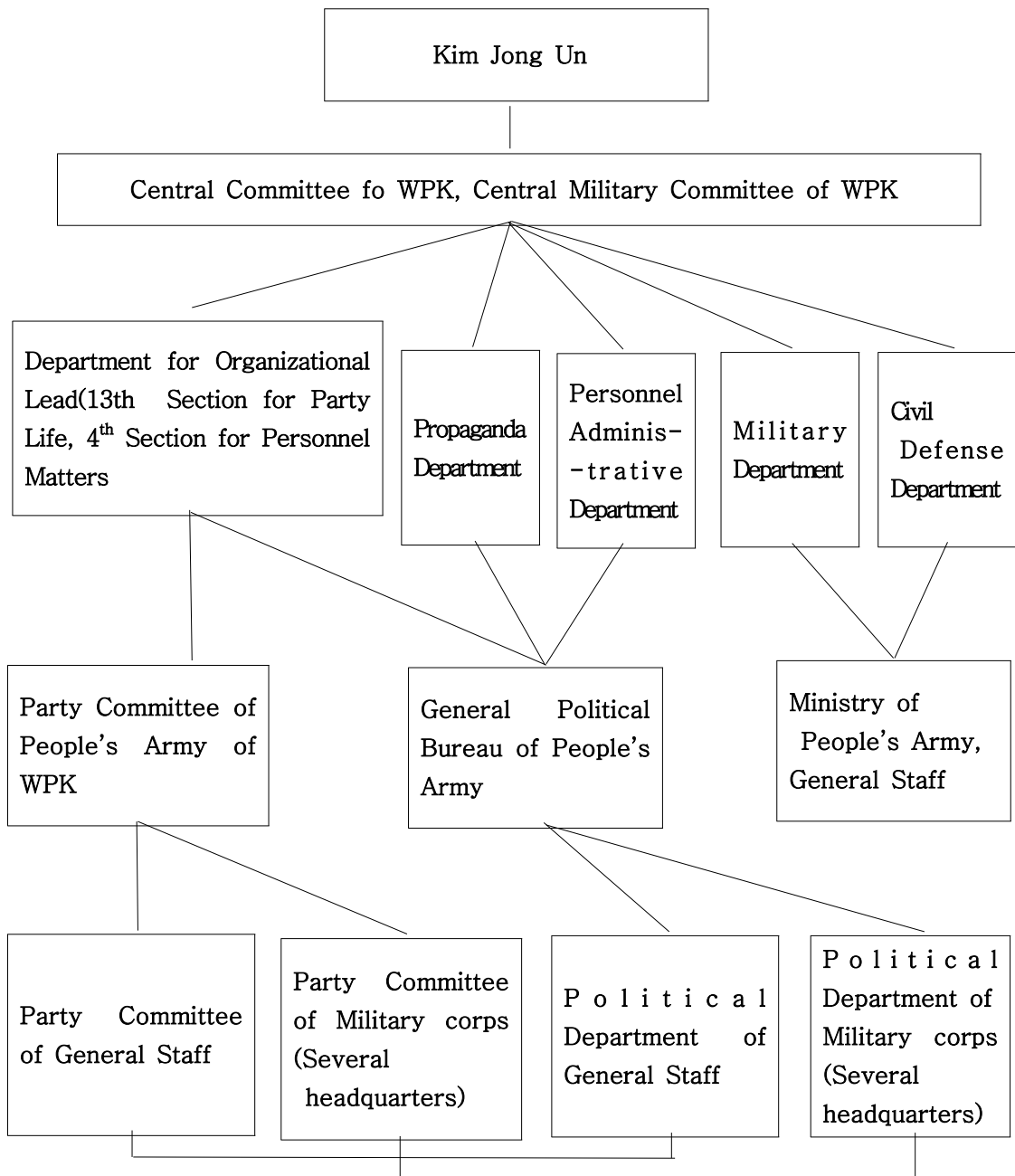
Workers' Party of Korea. The General Political Bureau is supposed to provide party and political guidance to all the bureaux and corps (various kinds of military groups and commanders) in the General Staff and the People's Armed Forces.

The General Political Bureau does not have direct orders or directives for military operations and administration, but has the authority to supervise and control them. The General Political Bureau has the power to reprimand, punish and replace military commanders when they judge themselves to be disloyal or incapable of performing their duties. Military commanders can not handle the important military operations, training, or administration alone without consultation with the relevant unit's political agencies or political managers.

## II. Interrelationships

### 1. Relationship Between the Departments of the Party Central Committee and the Party Organizations, Political Agencies, and the Military Administrative Agencies in the People's Army

Diagram 1. Relationship Between the Departments of the Party Central Committee and the Party Organizations, Political Agencies, and the Military Administrative Agencies in the People's Army



As shown in Table 1, party organizations, political institutions, and military administrative organizations in the Army are subjects to the instructions, supervision, and control of the relevant departments of the Central Committee of the Party. The People's Army Party Committee and the General Political Bureau are directed and controlled by the Departments of Organization, Propaganda, and Administration of Party Central Committee. The relevant departments of the Army in Central Party provide guidance on the preparation and progress of all parties and administrative meetings conducted by the People's Army, including the plenary session of the People's Army. The Party Life Guidance Division of the Organizational Department( 13th Section)are frequently reported and establishes countermeasures for all military works(military operations and administration, party, security projects, capabilities and ideological trends, etc.) through the Organizational Division of the General Political Bureau. The Propaganda Department controls the works of the propaganda department of the General Political Bureau and organizes ideological study, lectures, and political events. All generals in the General Political Bureau, the General Staff, and the Armed Forces are subject to Group 1 of the Central Party's lecture, while the lower officers are subject to Group 2 of the Central Party's lecture. The executive department of the Organizational Leading Division (Section 4) shall have the authority to conduct final deliberations on personnel affairs for military officials of division leadership (brigade commander, brigade political committee member) or higher. Personnel works related to foreign trips by members of military delegations and military generals are handled by the central party's Personnel Department. The Organizational Leading Department will organize party lectures on senior military officials with division

leaders for 15 days, accompanied by ideological struggles.

The General Staff and the Ministry of Armed Forces are controlled by the Central Party's military department in military administration. According to its own plan, the Department of military affairs establishes censorship and countermeasures for military operations and military administration against the corps and divisions. They join the Department of Party's Central Committee, as a member of the inspection team. They are dispatched to divisions and corps as a military representative of the Korean Workers' Party during the war. Military high officials and members of the military department have active military titles and uniforms, with the head of the military department being the general, and the deputy head of the department being the lieutenant general and the head of the department.

\* The highest inspection of the military is the inspection of the Party Central Committee's Organizational Department.

## 2. Party organization and political organ's operating system in the military

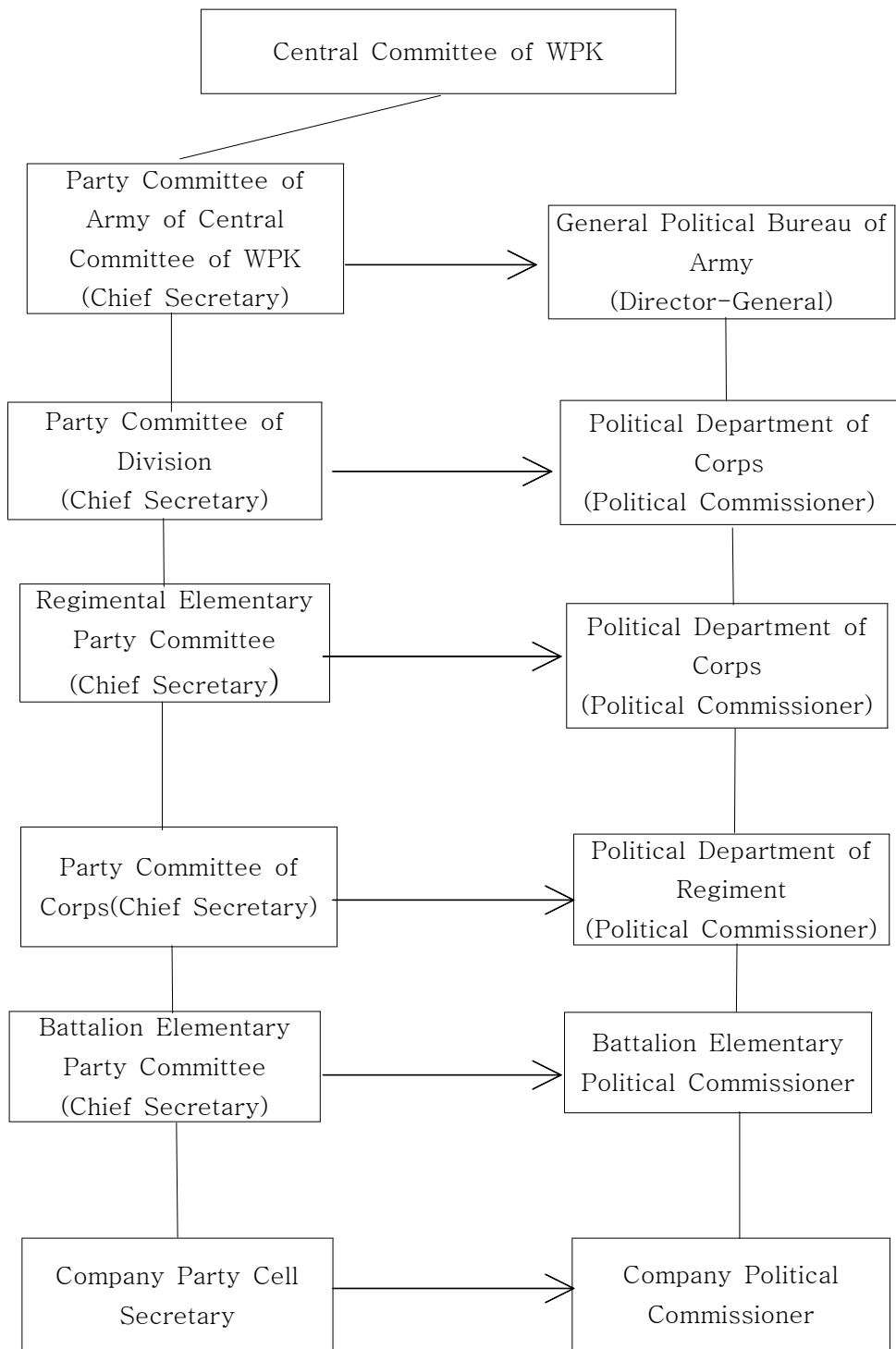


Table 2. (Party Organization and Organizational System of Political Organs of the Korean People's Army.

**① Party organization management system**

Article 47 of the Party Organization in the Korean People's Army, Chapter 7 of the Korean Workers' Party Protocol, states that the party organization is formed at various levels within the Korean People's Army and that the party committee is organized, including all party organizations of the Korean People's Army. The Party Committee of the People's Army is a higher organization of party organizations in the military, and party committees are organized in each corps, division, regiment, and battalion. The Party Committee is the collective leading body of the unit.

**② Political Institution Management System**

The highest political institution in the military is the General Political Bureau of the Korean People's Army, and political departments are organized in each corps, division, and regiment, and there are political officers in the battalion and company. The General Political Bureau and political departments are working-level departments for the implementation of decision-making of the Party Committee of the People's Army, the Corps and other party committees of each unit.

**③ The position and role of party leaders and political officers**

In the army, party officers refers to the responsible chief secretaries or elementary party secretaries who are in charge of party organizations organized in units of various levels.(The



cell secretary is not a full-time party official.) Political Officer: They are the political commissioners of Union units above regiments, political members of the Grand Union Unit, and political officers in battalions and companies. Political Officers: Military officers working in the General Political Bureau, Corps, Division, and Solidarity Political Department. In a statement released in January 1969, Kim Jong-il emphasized that “the political commissioner is the representative of the party dispatched to the army unit”. As the party and political leaders of the army unit, political commissioners are tasked to support the military leaders politically with party organizations. In addition, when a military commander makes a conclusion or order that goes against the party's line and policy, he has the power to reject and stop it.

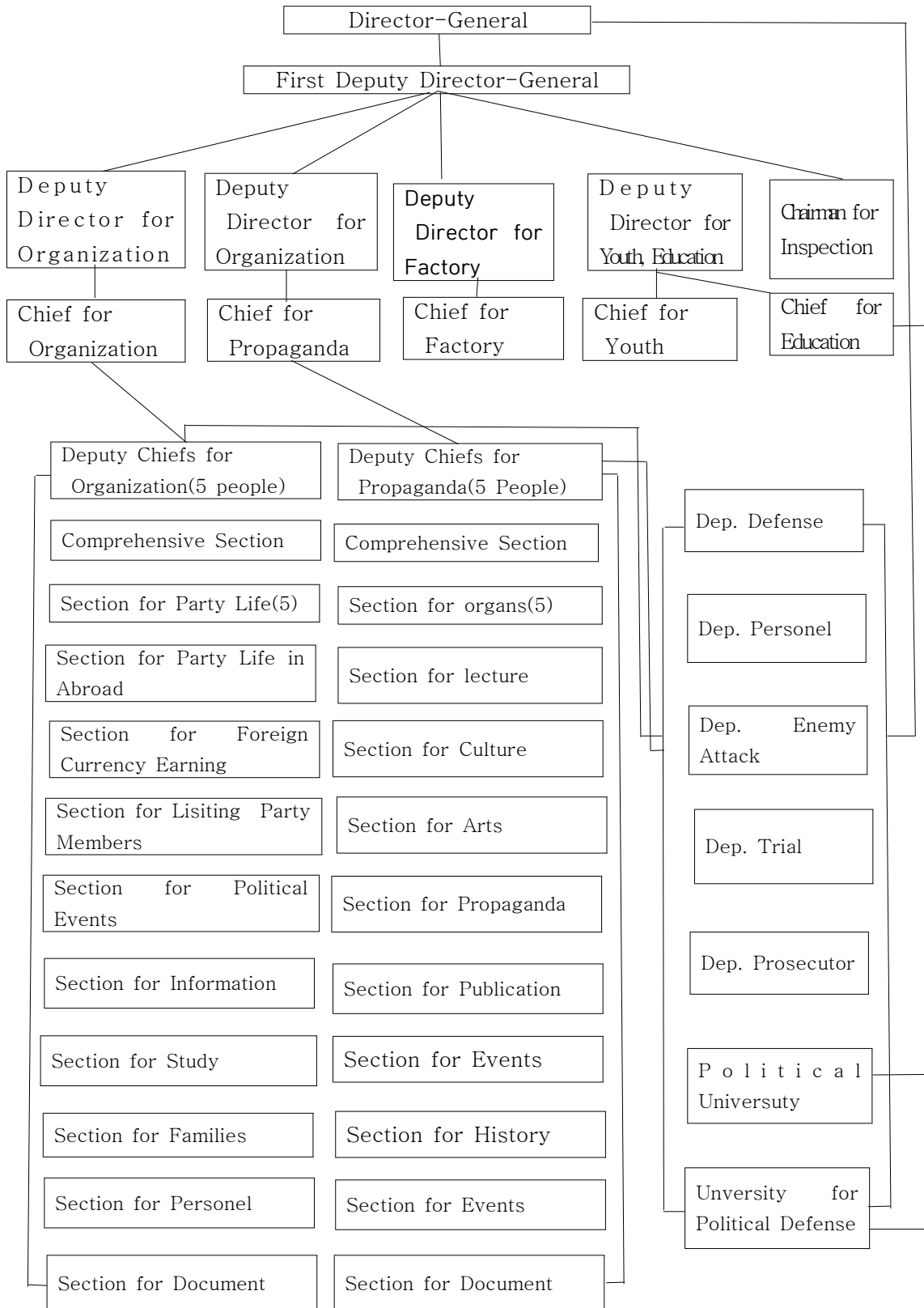
#### ④ The Various Operating Systems of the Party Conference

The highest leadership organization from the Party organization of the People's Army to the Corps and Division Party organization is the Party Representative Meeting (same as the Party Congress) and is organized once every three years. The functions of the party representative meeting are the generalization of the works of the party committee and the party inspection committee, the election of the party committee and the party inspection committee, and the selection of representatives to be dispatched to the higher party representative meeting. Representatives to be dispatched to the Korean Workers' Party Congress are elected at the People's Army Party's representative meeting. The supreme leadership institution of the regiment and battalion party organization is the general meeting of the elementary party, and the general

meeting of the elementary party shall be convened at least once every three months.

The top leadership organization of a company party organization is the General Assembly of Cells. According to the party rules, all party cells must convene a general meeting of cells at least once a month. In addition, a plenary session of the People's Army Party Committee is convened every year (about two times), the military and political affairs of the People's Army are summarized, and a new leadership body (the People's Army Party Committee) is elected. All units, including corps and divisions, also convene a plenary session of the unit's party committee, summarize the settlement (military, political projects, etc.), and elect a new leadership organization (party committee). The summing-up meeting of party life is a conference in which one confesses faults or mistakes arising from the ideological life of the party organization (participation in meetings, learning politics, etc.) and individual privacy (speech, behavior, mindset, etc.) for a certain period of time. The meeting also refers to a kind of party conference in which the cause is politically analyzed and corrected, and self-criticism and mutual criticism are made in the form of determination. The types of summing-up meeting of party life include weekly and monthly generalization of party life (party cell meeting), and quarterly generalization of party life (elementary general meeting). In addition, if there is guidance and inspection by the Central Committee of the Party and higher political institutions, there is a general meeting for guidance and inspection. (It is so-called the meeting of Ideological Struggle.)

### 3. General Political Bureau of the Korean People's Army



#### 4. General Staff of the Korean People's Army, Ministry of People's Armed Forces, and Operational Bureau

##### 1) General Staff of the Korean People's Army

The General Staff is the highest organization in charge of establishing military strategies and operational combat plans, commanding units, and general military administration. General Staff of the Korean People's Army means the Bureau of Operations. The Ministry of People's Armed Forces, the General Staff, and all corps, military service, and military service commands are to be operated in accordance with the orders of the Operational Bureau. The Director of Operations is required to act under orders from the Chief of General Staff and the Minister of the People's Armed Forces. The General Staff has a General-chief of the Staff and 4 deputy chiefs of the Staff. The deputy chiefs of staff are in charge of operations and combat preparation, the 2nd bureau of operations (adjacent to the head of the bureau), the military training, the military diplomacy and sports, and the rear.

There is no secretariat as an aide to the chief of staff, and there is one secretary (director), one technical secretary, one deputy (colonel), one driver (middle seat), and a waiting car (for training guidance, hunting) drivers. In addition, there are about five inspectors of the General Staff, who are above the former director of the General Staff. It is believed that it is currently called the inspector of Supreme Command. Deputy Chief of Staff shall only be responsible for his/her field of responsibility and shall not be one agent of the Chief of Staff. The No.1 agent of

Chief of Staff is the Director of Operations, and the Deputy Chief of Staff is directed by the Director of Operations. The military title of the Director of Operations is "Captain," but the vice-chiefs are lieutenants, lieutenants, or the above level. The ranking of cadres in the military is not defined by duties or military titles, but according to duty of the Party. The Director of Operations is a member of the Central Committee of the Party and a member of the Military Committee, but in some cases, the deputy chief of staff is a candidate member or not a candidate member. Even if he is the same military commander and has a high military title, whether he is the a member of the party's Central Committee, his credibility from Kim Jong-un varies differently. In the case of a chief of corps, who is a member of the party's Central Committee, the car number starts with "216, birthday of Kim Jong Il" and the car is managed by the transportation department of the central party's finance and accounting department. The corps commanders without the title of the Party are managed by the passenger car management office of the Ministry of Transportation and Management, which carries military numbers.

In addition, the General Staff includes the Political Department of the General Staff of the General Political Bureau and the General Staff Department of the People's Army Security Bureau. The Political Department and the Security Bureau are not ordered by the Operations Bureau and have party and political control and surveillance systems for all the Operations Bureau and the Armed Forces. The military security agencies, including the People's Army Security Bureau and the Corps, are capable of tailing, eavesdropping, and monitoring military and administrative officials. However, it cannot be done about party and political

chiefs and political officers.

## **2) Ministry of People's Armed Forces**

There is no clear distinction between the Ministry of People's Armed Forces and the General Staff. All departments and units shall execute ratification documents related to military operations and training with the approval of the Chief of general Staff, and other projects related to general military administration, such as finance, planning, construction, and rear, with the approval of the Minister of People's Armed Forces. There is no secretariat for the head of the People's Armed Forces, but there are only a assistant, technical secretary, driver and the Operational Bureau of the General Staff is in charge of the works. All documents to the Chief of General Staff and the Minister of the People's Army must be submitted through the Director of Operational Department. The ratification documents and reports posted by the all units to Kim Jong-un will be submitted to the Chief of General Staff, the Chief of the People's Armed Forces, the Director-General of the General Political Bureau, and the Director of Operational Department, respectively.

## **3) the Bureau(Department) of Operations**

1 Director of Operations Bureau(Captain), 1 Party Secretary (Chief), 5 Deputy Directors(Chiefs), and 10 Director (Chiefs). and there are three party chiefs and one party executive advisor. There is also a security advisor from the General Staff's security department. The missions of the Operational Bureau are as follows; Division 1 : General Division, Division 2 :

Division of Supreme Command, Division 3 : Division for Corps,  
Division 4 : Training Center for Mechanized Corps, Division 5 :  
Division for Special Warfare, Division 6 : Division for Air Force,  
Division 7 : Division for Navy Force, Division 8 : Division for  
General Administration(General Staff, Departments of Armed  
Forces and its affiliated units), Division 8 : Division for Training,  
Press Office : Division for Statement and Panmunjom works of  
Korean People's Army, Division for Historical Record, Division  
for Secret Documents

☞ Table 4. (Organization of the General Staff, Ministry of People's Armed Forces)

