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'Some sort of fantasy': Mysterious group declares itself N. Korean 'government-in-exile'

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A shadowy group known as the Cheollima Civil Defense (CCD) has declared itself North Korea's "government-in-exile" while decrying the government of Kim Jong-un as an "immoral and illegitimate regime."

CCD released a statement Friday, declaring their government, which they have dubbed 'Free Joseon,' as *"the sole legitimate representative of the Korean people of the north."* A video of a woman dressed in a traditional black and white hanbok with her face blurred out reading out the group's manifesto was also released.

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Joseon is an old name for Korea. The term is sometimes used by North Koreans and Koreans living in China based on a kingdom on the peninsula which lasted from 1392 – 1897. The group, named after a winged mythical horse, is believed to be harboring and protecting Kim Han-sol, the son of Kim Jong-un's assassinated brother, Kim Jong-nam, who was killed with VX nerve agent in Malaysia on February 7 2017.

An expert on the region told RT.com that he is highly skeptical of the group and suspects it is backed by South Korea or the USA.

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The CCD organization, which has assisted people defecting from the North in the past, is now attempting to revive a sense of peninsular pride on the 100th anniversary of the March 1 Independence Movement launched in 1919 which sought Korean liberation from Japanese occupation.

Little is known about the shadowy group, though there is speculation that it is tied to South Korea's intelligence services. Some of the text on the group's website appears as though it has been translated directly from English, adding further questions as to its authenticity and origin.

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The announcement comes just one day after the Hanoi peace summit between the US and North Korea failed. Tim Beal, author, researcher and Asia specialist told RT that he doesn't give much credence to the group's claim to power and questioned who actually supports them.

*"[It is] some sort of fantasy constructed by South Koreans, Americans what have you,"* Beal told RT.com.

*"There's no reason to suppose that this is anything more than some sort of fantasy. No reason to think they have any support."*

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