

TAEKWON-DO AND THE DPRK PART 1

Taekwon-Do as so many should know was officially introduced in the [Democratic Republic of Korea](#) (DPRK)



DPRK Propaganda poster "With investments in speed & technology we will show our wisdom & courage"

aka North Korea in 1980. Prior to this the DPRK did have its own version of karate since the 1950's after the DPRK was founded in September 9, 1948. The history of modern Taekwon -Do in the DPRK officially starts in 1980; however, did it start prior to this as some claim? Before we offer an opinion, lets take a look at Taekwon-Do in the DPRK, or as its known there.....Juche Taekwon-Do (주체 태권도 – 主體 跆拳道).



Ri, Yong-song 리용선



Ri, Yong-song with WTF Deputy Director Choi, Myung-sik 2005

Lets work backwards in regards to the current [International Taekwon-Do Federation](#) (ITF) presidents. The current President of the ITF (aka Vienna ITF, NK ITF, DPRK ITF) is Ri, Yong-song (리용선) a 53 year old North Korean graduate (1983-84) of [Kim Il Sung University](#)(김일성종합대학). His father was a military General with the DPRK Army and his mother was a leader of the Women’s DPRK Workers Party. A great majority of his family is involved in the Workers Party in high levels with several siblings and cousins also involved in Taekwon-Do. He became a member of the [Workers Party of Korea](#) in 1985 and was assigned to the International Department since he had learned English and German while at Kim Il Sung University. He is currently not only President of the ITF, but also President of the International Martial Arts Games Commission (IMGC) having been elected in 03 December 2015. He was elected President of the ITF in August of 2015. He is also vice chairman of [Chosun](#) Olympic Games and a professor of Taekwon-Do at the Pyongyang Chosun Physical Education University.

Ri, Yong-song has been traveling and working for the DPRK Workers International Department since 1985. He moved in what was then the Soviet Bloc nations (eastern Europe) and still has strong ties to Bulgaria. He has been living in Vienna Austria off and on since 1988 and full time in Vienna since 2008. Since the death of [Choi, Hong-hi](#) I have maintained that the DPRK (North Korea) would run and rule the ITF from then forward. I have had many “heated debates” on the subject over the years with many ITF grand masters, masters and black belts. Some strongly disagree with my assessments but as time goes on, history I think, will agree with my assessments.



Kim, Jong-un appointing Ri, Yong-song as ITF President and Ri, Chung-mu as Chairman of the North Korean Olympic Committee. From CTV Live Korea, August 2016.

With the heavy sanctions imposed upon the DPRK for its very flagrant violations of UN treaties and mandates in regards to the (DPRKS’)use of Nuclear Weapons and other arms programs, the DPRK has had to “work around” ways of finding and securing hard currency. One of the best ways to obtain funds is working and promoting their Sports programs on an international level. In fact their International Department has a full time committee called the North Korea Sports Diplomacy Committee. They have worked hard at bringing international sporting events to the DPRK. Everything from Basketball (which has a weird connection as we shall discuss later on), weight lifting and of course Taekwon-Do. In August of 2016 the leader of North Korea Kim, Jong-un directed that the leader of the ITF would remain a DPRK party member and directed Ri, Yong-song to help promote this effort further. And as I have said before and will again, the ITF is considered part of the International Department of the Workers Party of Korea (DPRK) and it was Kim, Jong-un who directed Chang-ung to appoint Ri, as the next president of the ITF in 2015.



Kim, Sung-hwan the next ITF president?

In 2016 [Kim, Jong-un](#) (김정은) appointed Ri, Chung-mu (리종무) the father of Ri, Yong-song as Chairman of the North Korean Olympic Committee while at the same time appointing the younger Ri as ITF President or really rather reconfirming it since he was “duly elected” in 2015 in Bulgaria and reported by [TV Chosun](#). Also, the wife of Kim, Jong-un is Ri, Sol-ju (리설주) who is reported to be a 1st cousin of Ri, Yong-song! As you can see, the DPRK custom of assigning family and friends to high posts are following closely the Confusion custom of “father to son” just like we have seen Kim, Il-sung leave to his son Kim, Jong-il who has left to his son Kim, Jong-un. We are now watching it happen to the ITF but not along strict family lines but along strict party lines of DPRK and of Choi, Hong-hi. Will discuss his ties to the DPRK in Part 2. to Chang-ung to Ri, Yong-song. The next question is whom, when Ri “retires,” will he appoint. As of right now, my belief is that it will be Kim, Sung-hwan, the current ITF Secretary General. He is a graduate of the Kim Il Sung University, as well as a senior member of the Workers Party International Department and has strong ties to eastern Europe having lived in Austria since 2004.



Chang-Ung 2nd ITF President and 1st Hon. Lifetime President

The 2nd ITF president and the 1st Lifetime ITF president of the was “appointed” to that position (2nd ITF President) by Choi, Hong-hi himself, via his published last will and testament. However, I would argue that he was actually appointed by Kim, Jong-Il as part of a “business relationship” that Choi, Hong-hi clearly had with the DPRK since the early 1980’s, perhaps even before!

Chang-Ung has been on the international DPRK for decades now. He is approaching 80 years old this year and he also graduated from Kim Il Sung University and Pyongyang University of Physical Education and Sports. He served in Peoples Army (North Korean Army) from 1956 until 1966 and then held various official positions emphasis being on basketball. His most recent political appointment was Deputy to the Supreme People’s Assembly of DPRK in 2003. Chang-Ung was new to the Taekwon-Do world in 2002. He was seen several times at ITF HQ in Vienna Austria by Master

MacCullum, Master Phap Lu, and others. But until [Gen. Choi, Hong-hi's "will" rather his final words in regards to the ITF](#) was shared by the ITF Head Quarters he was virtually unheard of.



Choi, Hong-hi ITF President & Kim, Jong-il General Sec. of Workers Party of Korea (DPRK)

PART 2 COMING SOON!