

## **DPRK MILITARY AUTHORITIES MAKE A 2-DAY VISIT TO KAESONG INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX**

”As stated in the Southern press, current inter-Korean relations are at a stand-still. And this is serious situation. We are at an important crossroads.”- Kim Young Chul

On December 18, while on a two day on-site inspection of the Kaesong Industrial Complex, North Korean National Defense Committee policy bureau chief Kim Young Chul stated that regarding the KIC, each side needed to recognize the other’s genuine perspective and work toward resolving issues.

Kim’s delegation visited six businesses in the complex, and held talks with the KIC management committee chairperson and representatives from various enterprises. When visiting the various businesses, questions regarding working conditions, salaries, rest breaks, ventilation, staff size, and other labor issues were asked, as well as questions on total investment and production items.

Regarding the current conditions of South Korean businesses operating in the Complex, the delegation asked specifically about products, total employment numbers, the number of South Korean employees, and the impact of import and export bottlenecks. Regarding North Korean laborers, they asked about working hours, rest periods, salaries, and the working environment. In addition, they asked each company how the December 1 measures had affected imports and exports, the number of South Korean employees residing in the complex, and the number of South Korean workers traveling into and out of the complex, and whether there were any other

specific difficulties due to the measures.

The delegation showed specific interest in the “labor environment, and especially hazardous working conditions,” with Kim Young Chul stating, “Now that I’m here, I see that the working environment and living conditions are not good. If production is to be good, it must begin with ensuring living conditions.”

On the 17th, when Kim met with corporate representatives, he criticized them, stating that most of them sided with South Korean authorities and criticized the North, and accused them of bringing in dangerous propaganda. Last month, Kim Young Chul said in a meeting with business representatives in the complex, “ Entrepreneurs need to act like owners of the industrial complex,” and, “ The success of the KIC is the responsibility of all of you gathered here.”

He stated on the 17th, “We can live well even without the Kaesong Industrial Complex,” and, “If activities challenging the two agreements continue, the incorrect standpoint regarding the KIC is not corrected, and public opinion regarding the Mount Kumgang incident is ignored, even more strict measures can be implemented,” and on the 18 th, “Current inter-Korean relations are at a stand-still. And this is serious situation. We are at an important crossroads.” In light of these statements, it appears likely that additional measures are highly likely.

Kim Young Chul and his delegation conveyed the impression that unless South Korean authorities change their position, there will be no easing of the December 1 measures restricting border crossings and South Korean personnel in the KIC.

Based on remarks such as these, there is a good chance that further measures by the North would lead to businesses deciding to pull out of the KIC.