

## SGA Update

By **JADE HERBST**  
STAFF WRITER  
JKH185@PSU.EDU

As the beginning of the school year starts, the Student Government Association is already at work planning an eventful year.

In the second meeting of the 43rd Congress, President Antonios Avramidis and Vice President Nathaniel Heziah opened with announcements of members and the loss of staff.

They did not meet quorum, so this meeting did not hold a voting session.

A public announcement for the need of a treasurer, and a Webmaster will be posted soon. If interested, be on the lookout for informational announcements.

If interested in joining SGA,

please contact the SGA office.

The meeting did hold promising enthusiasm to the start of the THON fundraising season. THON fundraising will begin Oct. 1.

SGA is looking to help gather support from the community for our university and student activities. Be sure to look for student events in which you can help.

President Antonios Avramidis shared his experience at the summer Leadership Conference. President Avramidis represented Penn State Harrisburg in the conference and came back with encouraging news. He was the only individual representing Penn State Harrisburg, but he reassured that he was filled with confidence in the upcoming semester plans for SGA.

## Kim Jong Il may be gravely ill, jeopardizing talks

By **PAMELA HESS AND  
MATTHEW LEE**  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITERS

WASHINGTON (AP) — North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il may be gravely ill, perhaps the victim of a stroke, U.S. and other Western officials said Tuesday after he failed to appear for a major national parade. If so, it could jeopardize the already troubled international effort to get his nation to abandon nuclear weapons.

Kim's absence from a military parade for the country's 60th anniversary lent credence to reports that the man North Koreans call the "Dear Leader" had been incapacitated during the past few weeks.

The 66-year-old Kim, who has been rumored to be in varying degrees of ill health for years, has not been seen since mid-August. Though he appears rarely in public and his voice is seldom broadcast, Kim has shown up for previous landmark celebrations.

"There is reason to believe Kim Jong Il has suffered a serious health setback, possibly a stroke," one Western intelligence official said. A senior U.S. official said fresh rumors had been circulating about Kim's health and his control over North Korea's highly centralized government.

A former CIA official with recent access to intelligence on North Korea said that even before

Tuesday the agency was confident that reports of a health crisis were accurate.

The officials spoke anonymously to summarize sensitive intelligence.

The reclusive Kim took power in 1994 after the death of his father, Kim Il Sung. It was communism's first hereditary transfer of power, and both Kims are revered in a personality cult perpetrated by the country's authoritarian government.

To the outside world Kim is best recognized as a silent, waving figure with a bouffant hairdo and a quasi-military suit reminiscent of communist leaders of an earlier time. Word of his possible health problems recalled the Soviet era, too, when U.S. analysts pored over photos of military parades for clues to who was up and who was down in the Kremlin.

Neither the White House nor the State Department would comment publicly on Kim's health, noting that the North Korean government is one of the most opaque and secretive on Earth.

But U.S. officials said privately they were concerned that Kim's apparently failing health jeopardized six-nation talks aimed at ridding North Korea of its nuclear weapons. The United States has been a wary partner in those talks, but their success is one of the Bush administration's signature foreign policy goals.

The talks are now stalled

## Russia to send ships, planes to Venezuela

By **IAN JAMES**  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Russia's plan to deploy ships and warplanes to the Caribbean for joint military exercises with Venezuela is allowing President Hugo Chavez to capitalize on tensions between Moscow and the U.S. and showcase a growing military alliance.

Russia announced on Monday that it will send a naval squadron and long-range patrol planes for the exercises later this year — a move that appeared retaliatory after the U.S. sent warships to deliver aid to Georgia following its conflict with Russia.

The deployment is expected to be the largest Russian naval maneuvers in the Caribbean — and perhaps the Western Hemisphere — since the Cold War.

Chavez considers the U.S. a defense threat, and his welcoming of the Russian navy contrasted with his sharp criticism of the recent reactivation of the U.S. Navy's Fourth Fleet for the Caribbean and Latin America. He ridiculed possible U.S. concerns about the Russian deployment on

Sunday, saying: "Go ahead and squeal, Yankees."

"This is vintage Chavez. He rarely misses an opportunity to needle and provoke Washington," said Michael Shifter, an analyst at the Washington-based think tank Inter-American Dialogue. "He is taking advantage of the growing chill in U.S.-Russia relations, especially over the situation in Georgia, to poke his finger in (President) Bush's eye. There is nothing he relishes more."

Chavez says the U.S. Fourth Fleet — which was dissolved after World War II — poses a threat to the region. U.S. officials say the fleet will help maintain security while performing humanitarian missions and counter-drug operations.

Anna Gilmour, an analyst at Jane's Intelligence Review, said she believes the exercises will be primarily for the benefit of Venezuela, which has been drawing closer to Russia and buying weapons from Kalashnikov assault rifles to Sukhoi fighter jets. She said the maneuvers also appear to be a response to the relaunch of the U.S. Fourth Fleet. "By allowing Russian vessels to dock at Venezuelan ports, Chavez

is sending the message that the U.S. is not the only major power active in the Caribbean," Gilmour said.

The U.S. government, however, appeared unconcerned.

U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack poked fun at Russia's navy, saying if Russia really intends to send ships to the Caribbean, "then they found a few ships that can make it that far."

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Andrei Nesterenko insisted that Russia's decision to send a naval squadron and planes to Venezuela was made before Russia's war with Georgia and is unrelated to the conflict.

But last week, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin warned that Russia would mount an unspecified response to recent U.S. aid shipments to Georgia using Navy vessels on the Black Sea.

Shifter said it's clear Russia in "unhappy about the U.S.'s increasing presence in the Black Sea" and "as part of its resurgent nationalism, Russia wants to flex its muscles and remind Washington that it too has important alliances in the U.S. backyard."

in a dispute over the North's obligation to allow intrusive foreign accounting of its known nuclear stockpile.

North Korea's powerful military is known to be opposed to the negotiations with China, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the United States. Many analysts believed the process was continuing mainly due to Kim's support and his backing of moderates in the foreign ministry.

U.S. officials noted that shortly after the health rumors began to circulate in mid-August, North Korea started to adopt a tougher line in nuclear negotiations. The North first suspended disablement of its main nuclear reactor and then threatened to rebuild it, saying the U.S. had not kept a pledge to remove the country from a terrorism blacklist.

The reactor at Yongbyon was dismantled and its cooling tower blown up in June. In exchange, Washington was to strike North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism but only after Pyongyang agreed to a mechanism to verify that it was abandoning atomic weapons development. The North has yet to agree to the verification

scheme.

On Aug. 26, Pyongyang's official news agency reported that the country would "consider soon a step to restore the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon to their original state as strongly requested by its relevant institutions."

The reference to "relevant institutions" suggested the military may have taken the upper hand and that Kim might no longer be wielding absolute authority.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said the United States had recently seen a decline in "outputs" from North Korea on the denuclearization process, particularly on verification.

He added that since last week Pyongyang had been removing equipment from storage near Yongbyon while breaking U.N. seals on other items in what may be preparatory moves to reassembling the reactor.

"Certainly, those steps are not welcome," McCormack said. "Their energy needs to be focused on moving that process forward. Those actions of taking the equipment out of storage, breaking seals, that doesn't move the process forward."

In Seoul, Kim Ho-nyeon, a spokesman at South Korea's Unification Ministry, said Tuesday that officials there had obtained information that Kim's health condition had worsened.

South Korean media have reported in recent days that Kim's condition — South Korean intelligence says he suffers from diabetes and heart disease — may have worsened.

The Chosun Ilbo newspaper, South Korea's largest, said Tuesday that Kim collapsed on Aug. 22.

North Korea's state media were silent about Kim's absence from the televised parade.

Other key North Korean leaders, most notably the country's No. 2 official, Kim Yong Nam, were shown watching the ceremony at Pyongyang's main square. Kim Yong Nam was quoted by the Korean Central News Agency as telling a banquet later that the country "has a rosy future of a great prosperous powerful nation under the leadership of Kim Jong Il."

Kim's demise could lead to