

## Washington Times Chairman Douglas Dong Moo Joo Abruptly Departs Paper For Reasons Unknown

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*Douglas Joo, left, applauds along with entertainer Pat Boone at a Conservative Political Action Conference dinner in Washington in 2007.*

Washington Times chairman Douglas Joo has abruptly—but quietly—left the company just a week after professing on the paper's 30th anniversary that he was "very proud" of all it had accomplished. The executive office of the Times confirmed the news to Whispers Friday.

Joo, who is a member of the Unification Church until very recently run by the deceased Rev. Sun Myung Moon, already gave up his position as chairman of the Times once before. In November 2009, Joo was reportedly fired from the role because of a Moon family feud that resulted in chaos among the leadership of the paper. Joo denied those reports at the time, and reassumed his role as chairman not long after.

Joo's latest departure, however, comes amid questions about the future of the Unification Church after the September death of Moon, who claimed to be a messiah. Moon founded the new religious movement in South Korea in 1954. He's left behind a conflicted legacy: unique religious practices, such as the church's mass marriage ceremonies, accusations of cult-like practices, including the alleged brainwashing of its members, and an enormous global business empire whose wealth cannot be easily estimated—even by those who have long followed the church.

According to one source with direct knowledge of Joo's departure, the reason the sextagenarian businessman left the Times is to assume a major leadership position in the church in the wake of Moon's death. Joo was already a high-ranking member of the Unification Church, and a more prominent position based in South Korea would not be much of a stretch.

But several others tell Whispers another reason for Joo's departure could be that he must deal with one or more pending lawsuits in South Korea. Larry Zilliox, a private investigator who specializes in religious cults and has been tracking Moon for 27 years, notes that Joo is currently facing criminal charges in South Korea. According to court documents, Joo allegedly made an unauthorized transfer of \$21 million from Washington Times Aviation, a holding company whose association with the paper is unclear, to another organization. "There a number of lawsuits" [Joo is facing], says Zilliox, "and things have finally come to a head."

Another source associated with the Unification Church confirmed that Joo would need to go back to South Korea to fight any suits.

Request for comment from Joo's attorney as well as an attorney for the Unification Church were not immediately returned.