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Yonhap (03.01.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2VqYFUV> - A senior North Korean diplomat stationed in Italy has disappeared with his wife since he left the North's embassy in early November last year, South Korea's spy agency said Thursday.

Jo Song-gil, the North's acting ambassador to Italy, left the North Korean Embassy in Rome days before his term ended in late November, the National Intelligence Service was quoted as saying by Rep. Kim Min-ki, a ruling party lawmaker.

Earlier in the day, the JoongAng Ilbo, a Seoul-based daily, said the 48-year-old envoy applied for personal security protection with the Italian government in early December as he is seeking asylum.

"The NIS has not attempted to contact Jo or not received any contact from him for the past two months," the spy agency was quoted as saying by Kim.

The agency also stopped short of confirming that Jo is attempting to gain asylum for a third country.

"We cannot confirm it," the NIS said in response to questions such as how many children the North Korean diplomat has or which country is protecting Jo and his wife, according to Kim.

sooyeon@yna.co.kr