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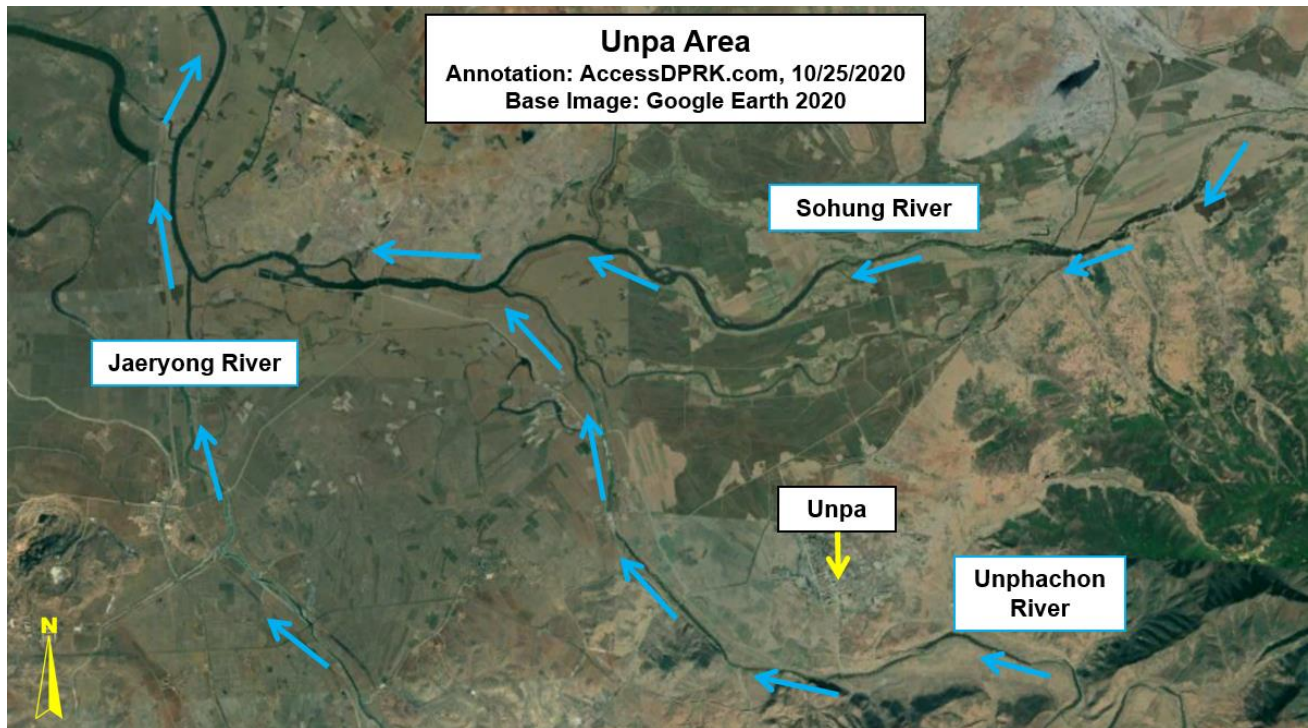
**Unpa-up** is a county seat in North Hwanghae Province, near the border with South Hwanghae and close to the provincial capital of Sariwon. Its 2008 census population was 110,988. The 2020 estimated population is 125,064.

The area served as the grain basket during the historic royal Korean dynasties, While the area was important to food production, there is no obvious evidence of historic city wall ruins in Unpa. However, an old fortress does exist 7.2 km to the northeast ( $38.448565^{\circ}$   $125.862547^{\circ}$ ). The fortress walls run for 1.92 km, creating an oval shape.

During the Korean War, the Battle of Sariwon (11 km north) occurred on Oct. 17, 1950 as the United Nations-allied forces fought their way north to Pyongyang. Fought primarily between DPRK and British Commonwealth forces, it was an Allied victory. The area remained contested, however, and it wasn't until the battle lines settled roughly around the current DMZ region in 1951 that Unpa was able to stay under the control of DPRK forces. While the ground remained under North Korean control, the air war continued, and the region would face repeated air attacks until the end of the war.

The city sits at the foot of Mt. Chialbong and within a floodplain created by the Unphachon and Sohung rivers as they flow west and meet the Jaeryong River (a tributary of the Taedong River). The entire system creates a low-lying alluvial plain that covers over 500 sq. km and is only 7-10 meters above sea level.

This also means that the soil is highly fertile and allows for growing soybeans, wheat, rice, cotton, and tobacco. Rice and soybeans are the primary crops, which is evidenced by the Unpa Soy Factory north of town.



Due to its low-lying nature and mountain ranges to the east, the area is prone to flooding. While Google Earth imagery isn't new enough to reflect the damage done during the 2020 storms, we can examine official media reports and locate portions of the damage and areas under recovery.

The KCNA reported that anti-flood embankments along the Unphachon River were damaged but were quickly repaired. Ironically, in 2019 a new neighborhood was constructed on the northern bank of the river. Additionally, three micro hydroelectric stations along the river were damaged.

The most important damage was that done to fields and transportation networks, as this will cause even greater food shortages, and rebuilding bridges and rail lines take up more resources than fixing otherwise unpaved roads.

Unpa's economy is, of course, tied to agriculture but it does have the benefit of being near Sariwon and Pongsan, both of which have greater economic bases, allowing for a mix of goods available for trade. Unpa's market occupies a little over 3,000 sq. m and occasionally sees overflow crowds, indicating a robust market.

In terms of the **military**, the immediate area contains small sites like reserve tunnels (to house equipment, deploy single artillery pieces, etc. during a conflict), and there are a series of three small bases to the east of town. An example of the tunnels can be found here  $38.395357^{\circ} 125.768853^{\circ}$ . Two of the bases are at  $38.415541^{\circ} 125.814362^{\circ}$  (with another one less than 0.3 km away) and at  $38.400597^{\circ} 125.837322^{\circ}$ .

Nearly all of the mountains in the province are fortified but the nearest substantial site to Unpa is a surface-to-air missile base 13.7 km southeast. The base is located on top of a mountain ( $38.379448^{\circ} 125.945465^{\circ}$ ) and includes the missile battery, a radar facility, and three anti-aircraft artillery batteries.

The barracks portion of the base sits at the bottom of the mountain and it also includes an underground facility.

Unpa is thus protected by the SAM base and may also be covered by the numerous AAA batteries in Sariwon, depending on their exact ranges.

**\*Free online access has been granted by the patron. This city brief has been edited for tone, context, and added references when needed.**

--Jacob Bogle, Oct. 25, 2020 (edited October 2022)

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