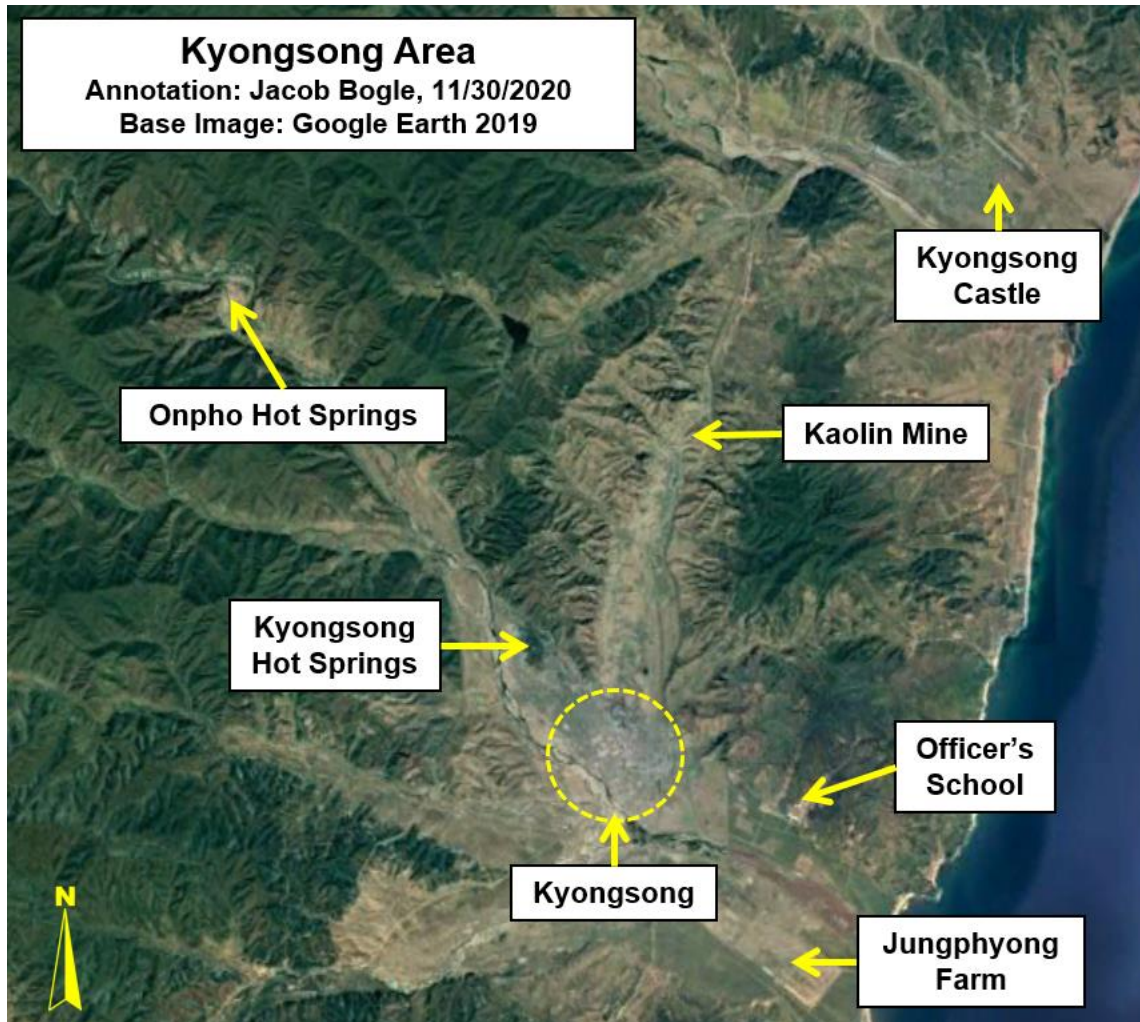


AccessDPRK analysis provided exclusively\* for a [Patreon](#) supporter by Jacob Bogle, November 2020.



**Kyongsong** is a county seat in North Hamgyong Province with a 2008 census population of 105,909. The 2020 estimated population is 119,340. Kyongsong sits in a complex alluvial plain, near the Sea of Japan and at the foot of the Hamgyong Mountains. The Kwonmachon and Onphochon rivers, as well as a small stream, converge at Kyongsong as they make their way to the sea.

The area has a long history and a diverse economy. To the north is Kyongsong Castle (41.670°129.670°), it is one of the most well-preserved fortified sites in North Korea. First built in 1107 by the Kingdom of Goryeo, the site was repaired in 1437 and was rebuilt from 1616-1622. Today it covers an area 22.7 hectares and is occupied by small homes and two schools. The South Gate still remains and is an impressive example of Korean military engineering of that era.

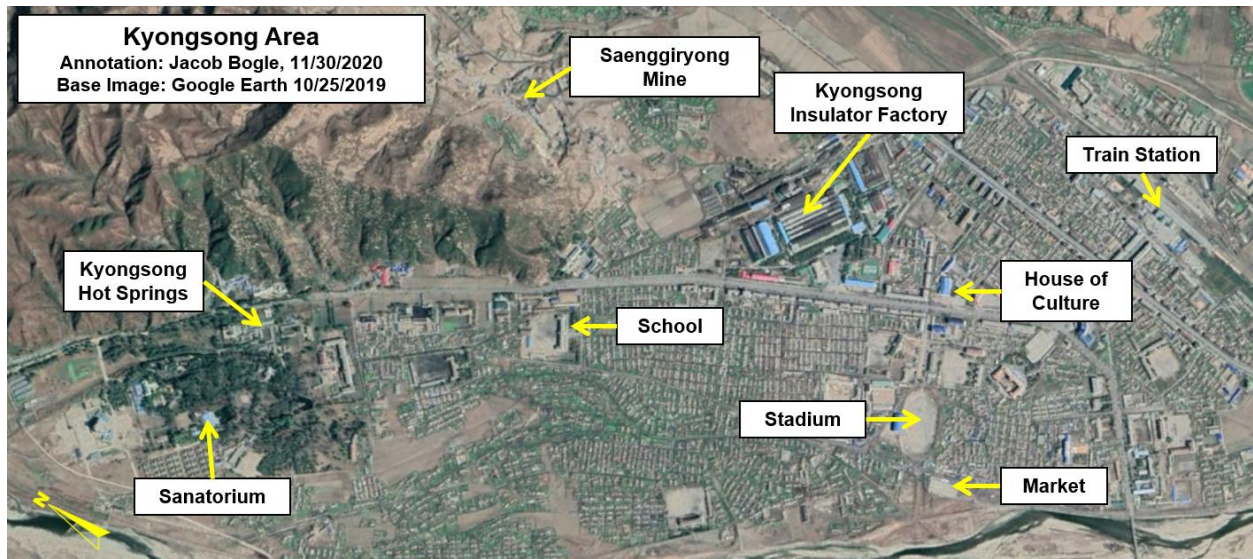


During the Japanese occupation, the P'yŏngra Line railway was constructed that connects the city to Chongjin in the north and Kimchaek in the south. The DPRK government took up the task of repairing the line and extending it after World War II.

The rugged mountains of the area also give rise to two hot springs, both of which were turned into important relaxation destinations by the Japanese, and a large nature preserve and crane habitat. The smaller Kyongsong Hot Springs (41.602° 129.585°) is home to the Kim Jong Suk sanatorium (a kind of long-term health spa). The larger hot springs is the Onpho Hot Springs which has been a favorite spot for the rich and powerful for nearly a century.

Onpho (41.657° 129.527°) began to undergo [renovations](#) in 2018 as the site fell into disrepair, but progress has slowed as a result of COVID and the resulting trade interruptions, and is still not completed as of October 2022.

Besides tourism and medicinal relaxation, Kyongsong's economy is built upon a moderate industrial and arts base as well as a growing agricultural base.



The Kyongsong Insulator Factory (some of which are made with ceramics), Kyongsong Porcelain Factory, Saenggiriyong Ceramics Factory, and Pakchung Ceramics Factory are the largest factories in Kyongsong. Ceramics has been an integral part to Korean culture for thousands of years, and this area has served as a key ceramics manufacturing region for generations. To provide the necessary raw materials to the ceramic's factories, two mines are also in Kyongsong that yield *kaolin*, a high-quality clay mineral, and coal for heating.

On the agricultural front, what used to be the Kyongsong Chuul Airport (41.558° 129.629°) has been converted into the Jungphyong Vegetable Farm & Tree Nursery (during 2018-2019). The farm is part of a national plan to build large vegetable farms and tree nurseries in each province. Jungphyong was the first to be completed.

It covers 197 hectares and has the capacity to grow 20 million saplings. There are also regular greenhouses and hydroponic greenhouses, as well as a residential section that includes housing, schools, and a medical clinic.



The Jungphyong Vegetable Farm (still under construction), looking toward the Sea of Japan.

**Militarily**, the Kyongsong Officer's Training School (which used the now demolished Kyongsong Chuul Airport), is still in operation. The coastline from Kyongsong north to the castle is defended by eleven coastal batteries, two hardened artillery sites, within range of two anti-aircraft batteries, and is protected by the Chongjin surface-to-air missile sites. The Sungam Airbase is also nearby. And 17 km to the south is the Orang Airbase, which is part of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Division.

Additionally, multiple small military units and storage sites are dispersed throughout the hills and mountains. There are also three small training bases that facilitate basic training activities, training in artillery, and learning how to drive various vehicles and tanks.

More military sites quickly build up to the north as you near Chongjin. North Hamgyong and Ryanggang provinces are defended by Korean Peoples' Army VI Corps.

[[Image below]]



Military sites around Kyongsong based on the AccessDPRK database.

**\*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, November 2020 (edited October 2022)

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