

Hamju is a county seat in South Hamgyong Province. Its 2008 population was 133,896 and its 2022 estimated population is 143,579 at a growth rate of 0.5% annually.

Hamju County extends east to west across the whole province and so contains flat coastal terrain in the east that rises toward the Rangrim Mountain Range in the west, with peaks reaching nearly 1,830 m at their highest.

The large Kumjin River begins in the mountains to the north of the county but then runs through Hamju and further south before it empties into the Sea of Japan. The coastal plain contains a maze of small streams that eventually converge into a short river that flows into the sea near Yonpo-ri.

Hamju was part of an expanding Goryeo Dynasty in the 11th century, and along the coasts of modern North and South Hangyong provinces, a series of nine fortresses were constructed to prevent invasion by the Khitan and Yeojin peoples of Manchuria. As part of this defense, a long wall was also constructed in 1033-44. The Cheonli Wall was originally 1,000 *ri* in length or approximately 392 km and extended across the whole peninsula.

It lies slightly to the south of the current border between Hamju and Chongpyong counties. The wall's path can be clearly seen at 39°48'14.41"N 127°21'15.93"E. There is also a fortress outside of town but within Hamju County at 39°53'4.61"N 127°22'11.26"E.

The county is served by the Pyongra Rail Line and by the main north-south highway that runs to Hamhung.

Economy

Hamju's economy is largely reliant on agriculture given the large portion of the county that is fertile coastal plains, but there is also timber and hydroelectric generation.

For agriculture, rice is the primary crop. Potatoes, soybeans, and red beans are also grown. In 2022 the government ordered that the nearby Yonpo Airfield be demolished and replaced with a [large vegetable farm](#) similar to the one constructed in 2018-19 at [Jungphyong](#).

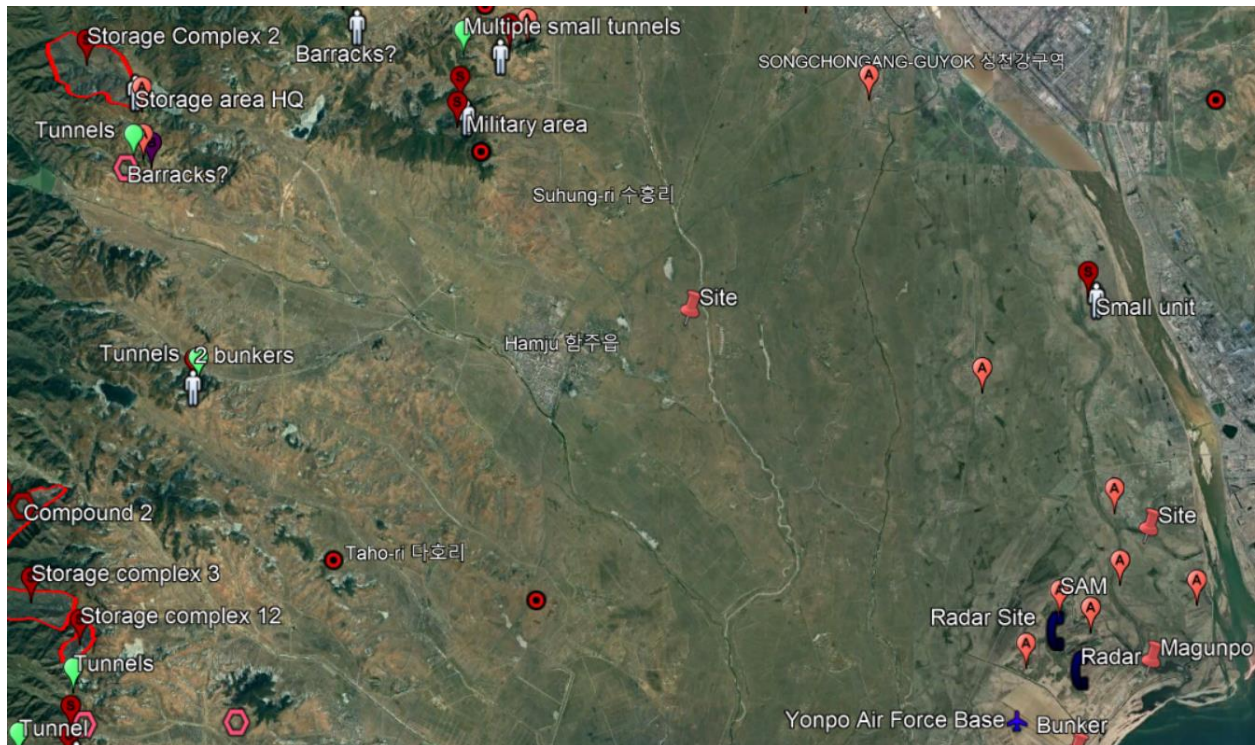
There are also several livestock centers and small fish farms in the county.

Hamju is home to Kumjingang Power Station No. 4 and Hamju-Chusang Power Station No. 1 and 2. These electricity generation sites are part of a larger network based along the Kumjin River.

The first cellular communications tower was built ca. 2009, several others were then constructed in the county between 2012 and 2015.

The town's market is ~5,070 sq. m. and has not grown much in a decade. There has also only been limited construction throughout the county in the last decade.

Military



Military sites around Hamju as seen in the AccessDPRK 2021 Pro Map.

Most of Hamju has relatively minor military facilities. As mentioned above, the Yonpo Airbase, which had been home to several squadrons of An-2 biplanes, has been demolished to make room for the vegetable farm.

However, 2 km away at 39°48'5.64"N 127°33'38.26"E is the [Magunpo Rocket Engine Test Site](#). It was constructed in 2013-2014 and is a major testing facility for solid rocket motors for North Korea's ballistic missile program. The surrounding grounds also hold a surface-to-air missile base and two radar facilities.

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--Jacob Bogle, originally published June 2022 (edited April 2024)

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