

Unhŭng is a county seat in eastern Ryanggang Province. Its 2021 estimated population is 65,838. Outside of the county seat, Unhung contains twenty villages and workers' districts, the largest of which are Ilgöl (Ilgon), Saengjang, and Taedong.

Situated along the north-south spine of the volcanic Paektu Mountain range, most of the county lies between 1,000 and 1,900 meters above sea level.

The primary water source is the Unchong River which flows down from its mountain source within the county and eventually joins with the Hochon River within the Samsu Reservoir, and then drains into the Yalu.

This part of Ryanggang province was previously part of southern Hamgyong province until 1896 when they were split into two different provinces. I'm not aware of any historic sites within the county that I can identify with a name, although there is certainly a site of historic importance located at 41.339727° 128.369633°.

This area was not impacted by the ground war during the Korean War and no major battles are known to have been fought here as part of anti-Japanese operations during WWII.

Transportation is provided via the Paektusan Ch'öngnyŏn Rail Line and a narrow highway that connects the county to Paekam in the east and Hyesan in the west.

Economy

Owing to Unhung's rugged terrain and high elevation, agricultural activities are limited. Some of the crops grown are potatoes and soybeans.

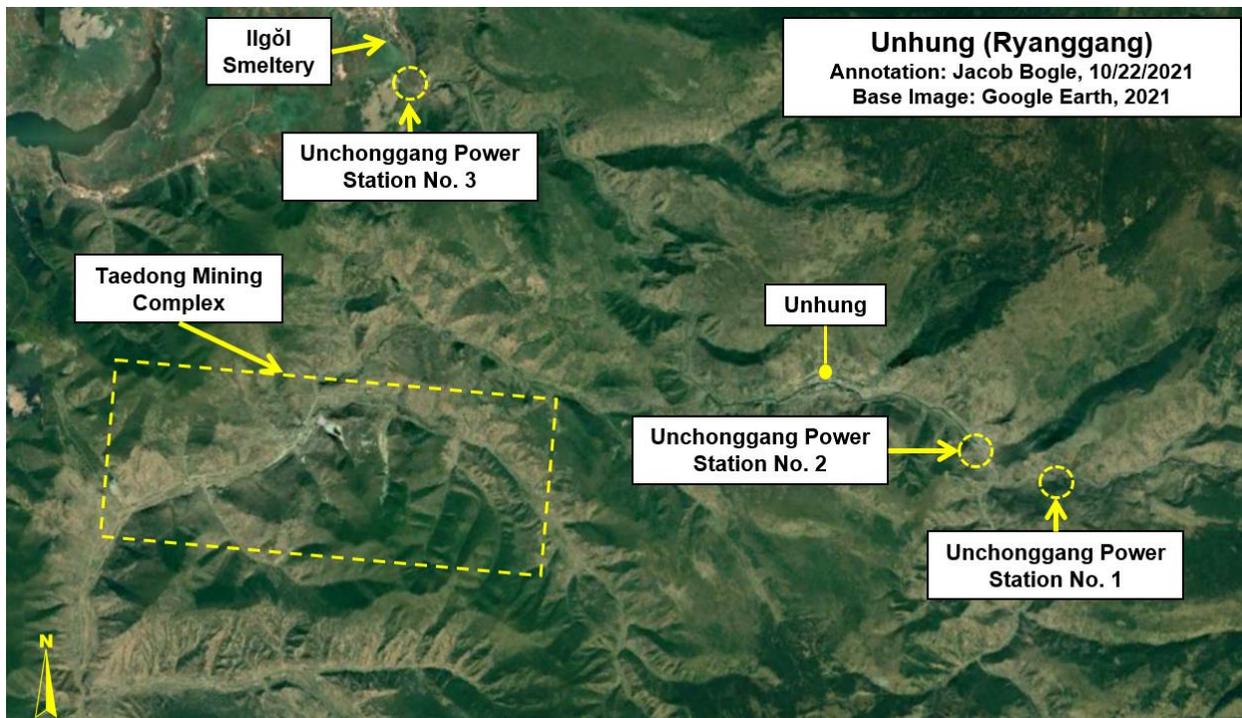
More the county's economy is based around logging and mining. In fact, a small logging railway exists and runs for 21 km, transporting logs from the forested east of the county and delivering them to a facility at Saengjang Station which is located at 41.290178° 128.540458°.

These logging tracks are not shown on normal transportation maps and AccessDPRK is one of the few places where they have been mapped out.

There are also several mines throughout the county. One of the largest is in the workers' district of Ryŏngha at 41.279826° 128.750185°. Another active mine is located at in Ilgŏl (41.393403° 128.344031°), which is also home to a smeltery – the second largest industrial site in the county.

Constructed in 1979, the smeltery originally had a capacity of 25,000 tonnes of copper and could also produce 80,000 tonnes of sulfuric acid, with raw materials being brought in from mines within the province. After the famine the factory fell into disrepair. Kim Jong-il managed to [refurbish](#) the factory in 2009 through purchasing 6 million euros worth of Chinese equipment, but the facility still does not operate at its original capacity.

Twenty-nine housing units were constructed in Ilgŏl in 2011, perhaps as part of the smeltery coming back online and the need for the nearby mine to increase production. Several small groups of new or modernized housing have been built in the county in the 2020s, but the rural construction boom seen throughout most of the country hasn't yet made it to Unhung (as of June 2023).



The largest mine in Unhung is the Taedong Copper Mine in the south of the county at 41.294929° 128.348497°. It includes a large ore processing complex as well as several satellite mines that are located across an area of about 44 sq. km.

One other key economic activity is hydroelectric power. Unhung itself has five micro generating stations as the Unchong River flows through town. In the early 2010s, however, a larger hydroelectric project was initiated. This resulted in a series of four tunnel-fed hydroelectric generating stations being constructed (ca. 2010 to 2015) along the river. As part of the project, most of the village of Simpho (41.370525° 128.378446°) was refurbished and old homes were replaced by newer ones.

Unhung County has three known market sites. Together they have a combined space of 3,850 sq. m. The market in the town of Unhung hasn't changed much since 2011, but the village of Taedong had a second market added ca. 2013.

Military

There are two small air defense sites protecting an unidentified military installation in the east of the county, but those are the only military locations within Unhung. The unidentified site (41.228152° 128.691030°) appears to be a storage facility of some kind, possibly as part of the province's strategic reserves.

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--Jacob Bogle, originally published Sept. 2021 (edited March 2024)
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