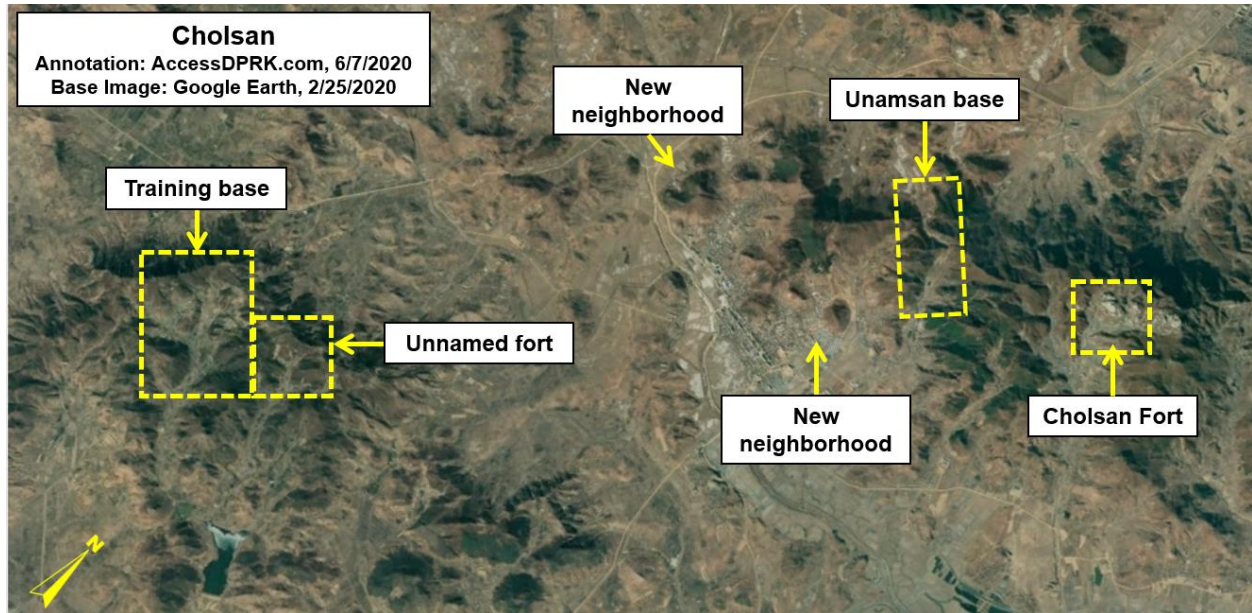


AccessDPRK analysis provided exclusively* for a [Patreon](#) supporter by Jacob Bogle, June 2, 2020.

Cholsan (also known by its historic Chinese name from the 17th century, *Tieshan*) has a current population of approx. 95,000.



Cholsan area site-reference map.

Cholsan County is situated along the coast of North Pyongan Province and its geography is made up of low mountains, hills, and coastal plains that have been heavily farmed. Its highest peak is Yōndaesan (393 m).

Two historic fortresses are also nearby, with portions dating back to the 11th century after the area came under Goryeo control following the unification of Korea. Cholsan Fort is at 39°47'50.61"N 124°41'43.70"E and much of its original walls are still visible. A second fort, for which I don't have a name, lies to the south at 39°44'45.84"N 124°40'21.95"E. North Pyongan Province actually has the most archaeological sites of any province in the country. This reflects its place in history. Parts of the Chinese Great Wall exist within the province as does a Korean "great wall", and many city walls and forts were also built over the centuries to defend the region from Chinese and Mongol attack.

Cholsan's economy is reliant on agriculture and lacks any substantial industrial or mining facilities. As part of its agricultural activities, a series of twenty large greenhouses were built in 2014.

Cholsan has a monument plaza which contains the Immortality Tower and joint murals of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il (constructed in 2012 after Jong Il's death). The '[children's driving park](#)' was built in 2017 and is just 300 meters from the town's stadium, which is really just a large field in front of a school.

Two apartment buildings were built in 2017 as was a new neighborhood with around 36 new housing units. Another one with 22 housing units was built ca. 2016 and lies to the west of the urban area.

The town's market hasn't changed much in size since 2005 and covers approx. 3,530 sq. m. However, the market was moved to a new location along the river in 2020. There are four identifiable schools in the city but, unfortunately, the local hospital and any restaurants or hotels aren't necessarily identifiable by their general architecture (as seen via satellite), although they certainly exist. The train station is relatively small and, prior to 2011, it had been the terminus of the Cholsan rail line.

There is also an interesting looking compound located at 39°46'18.36"N 124°41'4.58"E. It shares design aspects with both agricultural facilities and regional jails, so it's difficult to know what its purpose is without further investigation. I [wrote about](#) this general issue in Nov. 2017.

Military

Mirroring its militarized past, the area around Cholsan has several military installations. The largest are two training bases.

To the north at Unamsan is a training base. A large pool/water obstacle was added in March 2012 at 39°47'13.80"N 124°40'58.75"E. A larger training facility is at 39°43'58.38"N 124°37'38.52"E and went through a period of expansion in 2009-2010.

And, of course, the [Sohae Satellite Launching Station](#) is in the same county. An access rail line was built connecting Cholsan to the site in 2011 and runs for 14.4 km.



Close-up of larger training base located to the south of Cholsan.

The Cholsan peninsula, which is where Sohae is located, is ringed with fences and nine small coastal defense sites. As part of anti-invasion defenses, the area also contains at least 14 anti-vehicle/anti-tank roadblocks.

A number of small tunnels exist in the county as well, but there are no major underground facilities.

Lastly, the Kibong-ni Hovercraft Base is located near the tip of the peninsula at 39.614052° 124.631619°.

***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, April 22, 2020 (edited October 2021)

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