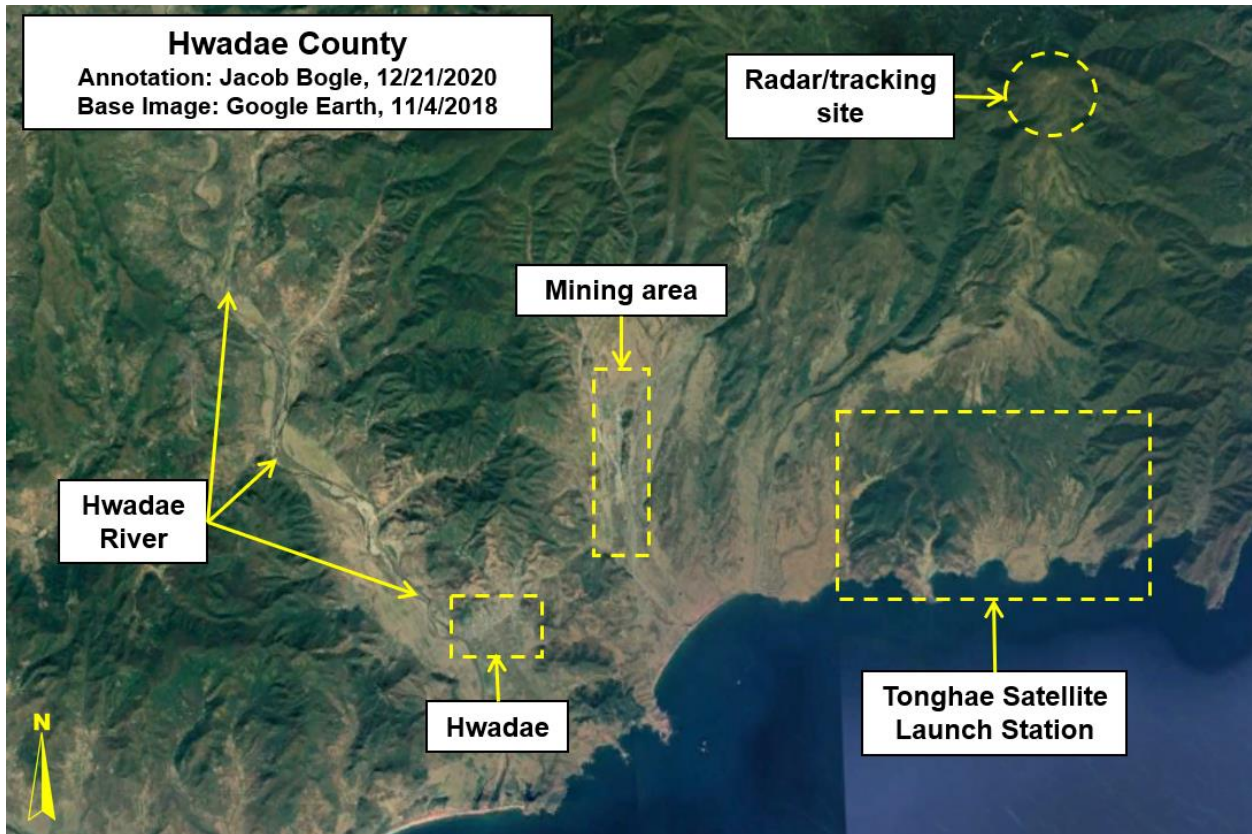


AccessDPRK analysis provided exclusively* for a [Patreon](#) supporter by Jacob Bogle, Dec. 21, 2020.



Hwadae is a county seat in North Hamgyong Province, along the Sea of Japan (West Sea) coast. The 2008 census gave a population of 67,677. The 2020 estimate is 76,260. Hwadae is at the foothills of the Hamgyong Mountain Range but also sits within the Hwadae River plain, which gives the town access to arable land.

In 2002, the North Korean government [announced](#) the discovery of three Paleolithic bodies buried in a lava field. While the entire region is made up of magmatic deposits, they claimed they were able to extract DNA from these 300,000-year-old individuals. I find that claim to be dubious at best considering the fragile nature of DNA and the country's limited access to modern genetic technology. Regardless, anatomically modern humans didn't migrate to the region until 100,000 years ago at the earliest. If the bones found are indeed 300,000 years old, they would have been a related hominid species, not *Homo Sapiens*.

The earliest pottery evidence for inhabitation in this region dates to 8,000 BC, while Goguryeo Period (37 BC-668 AD) artifacts have been found in Hwadae specifically.

The current Hwadae County was established in 1952 by taking parts of Kilju and Myongchon counties.

Hwadae can be divided into two populated districts. The main town is aligned west-to-east, while the Hwadae Cooperative Farm is aligned north-to-south.



Aside from agriculture, Hwadae has a small industrial base, a mining complex 5 km NE of downtown, and the coast is dotted with fishing villages that also contribute to the local economy. Despite being a county seat and having a large enough population to sustain a marketplace, I haven't been able to locate one. However, the [Center for International and Strategic Studies](#) says that there is a marketplace that can accommodate 651 vendor stalls (as of 2018).

This suggests that markets are conducted in the open-air and only at certain times of the month, limiting the ability to spot them in generally available satellite images.

The town is not connected to the country's rail system, and the nearest train station (Soksong) is about 17 km to the west.



(Military sites as seen on the upcoming 2021 AccessDPRK Map. "Man" icons are bases, red "S" icons are storage, green icons are tunnels, hexagonal icons are potential military sites.)

Militarily, Hwadae is on the same highway that leads to the Tonghae Satellite Launch Station; the main gate being less than 9 km to the east. The entire coastline is also lined with military sites; prepared gun emplacements, small coastal batteries, hardened artillery sites, various tunnels, and small military bases. There are two moderately sized training facilities to the west of town as well.

Interestingly, the satellite facility is only protected by four coastal sites and there is a single AAA base to protect a radar installation several km to the north.

In 2012 a new test stand or silo was under construction at Tonghae, and it was the subject of my very first blog [post](#). It was only the second mention of the site to ever be published in a public forum. The site was never completed and Tonghae currently remains in [caretaker status](#), with some parts appearing to have been abandoned.

***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, Dec. 21, 2020 (edited November 2022)