

Hongwon is a county seat in central South Hamgyong Province, and it is situated along the coast of the East Sea (Sea of Japan). Its 2008 population was 142,910. Its estimated 2022 population is 153,245.

Hongwon is dominated by mountains in its interior and by the Tongdae River valley that runs north-to-south through the central part of the county, emptying into the sea 3 km south of Hongwon's town center.

During dynastic Korea, this area was under central Korean authority as far back as Goryeo and before that it belonged to the ethnic Korean kingdom of Balhae (698-926 AD). The settlement of Hongwon is known to have existed by at least the 14th century and was the site of a battle between the Yuan general Naga-chu (納哈出) and the Korean general Lee Seong sometime prior to the establishment of the Joseon Dynasty in 1392.

The Hongwon Revolutionary Site is located at 40° 3'5.15"N 127°58'40.63"E and occupies 30 hectares. It has several monuments, a museum, and a large area of parkland. The site is dedicated to Kim Hyong Gwon who led anti-Japanese guerillas on several raids extending from Pungsan, Ryanggang to Hongwon. Kim was later captured and died in prison on Jan. 12, 1936.

During the Korean War, UN forces moved up the coast of South Hamgyong on their way to Chongjin and small skirmishes occurred in the vicinity of Hongwon, but there were no major battles. However, the *USS Gloucester (PF-22)* received light damage on Nov. 11, 1951 due to shore-based artillery in Hongwon.

The county was created at its current extent in 1952.

Hongwon is serviced by the Pyongra Rail Line, the country's main east coast railway. It was first constructed in 1916 by the Japanese and there are four train stations within the county. From south to north, they are Samho, Ryongun, Hongwon, and Kyongpho.

The county's economy is divided among agriculture and fishing. Although the area is heavily forested, timber is not a substantial part of the economy.

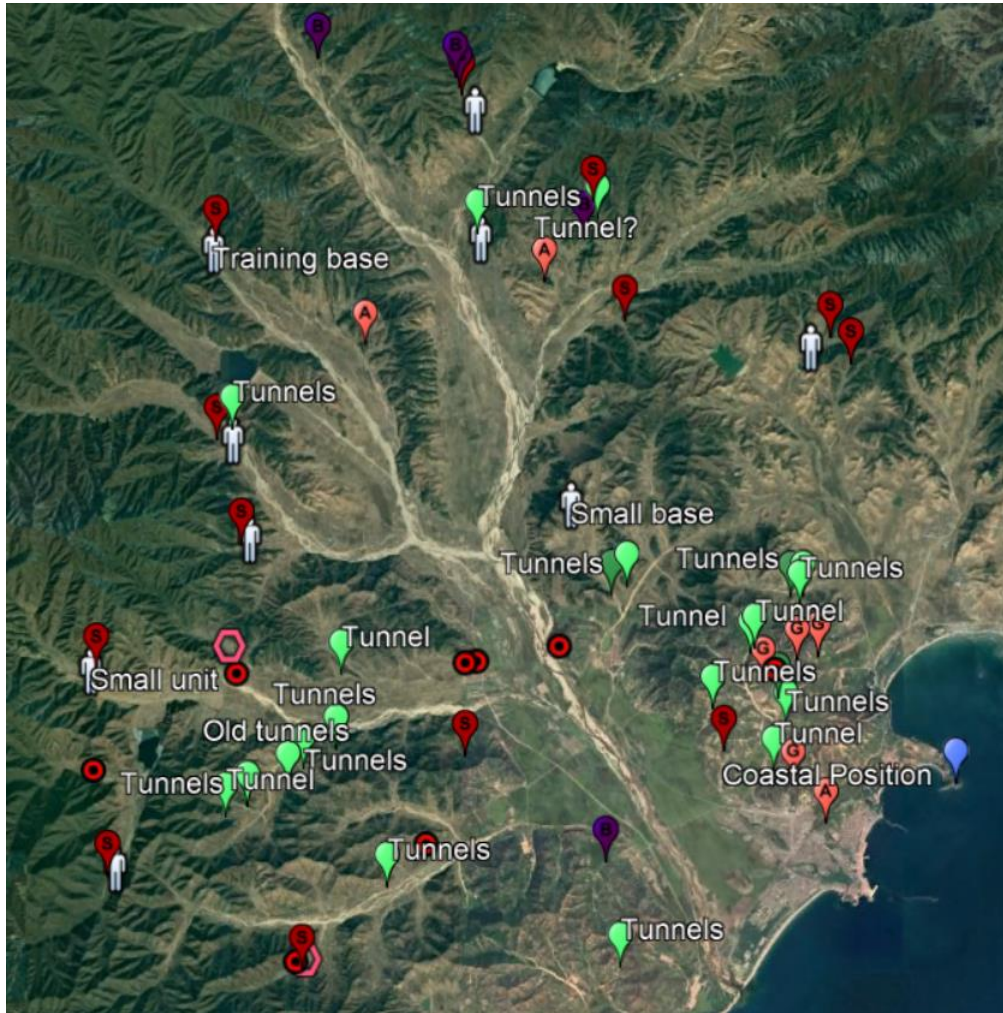
Hongwon has a large port with several ship repair and fitting facilities, and fish processing buildings. In 2012/13 a number of new buildings were constructed, enhancing the port's capacity.

Hongwon is also home to four possible sanitariums/rest homes along the coast. These would be used to provide vacation and rest/recovery facilities for workers or the elderly. The most well-developed of these sites is located at 40° 1'57.75"N 127°58'45.01"E.

The city's market covers 7,100 sq. meters but hasn't grown in size since at least 2013. Additionally, Hongwon has a large fish farm (10.8 hectares), a poultry facility was built in 2015, and there is a possible county-level university in the village of Sanyang-ri at 40° 4'57.22"N 127°52'28.17"E.

Hongwon suffered some flood damage in 2021 and the government has since been in the process of rebuilding bridges and destroyed homes. In 2022 some 126 housing units were built at 39.998857° 127.938250°.

Military



Active military sites within Hongwon County. Via the [AccessDPRK 2021 Map \(Pro\)](#).

Hongwon is situated between the city of Hamhung and the critical naval facilities at Sinpo, giving Hongwon numerous small military installations.

As during the Korean War, Hongwon maintains a coastal artillery battery. There are also several hardened artillery sites, multiple tunnels, and a training base at $40^{\circ} 7'41.29''N$ $127^{\circ}49'40.43''E$.

The rocky Tas-som Islands off the coast at $39^{\circ}59'0.44''N$ $127^{\circ}56'52.32''E$ are also occasionally used in artillery target practices.

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

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