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# North Korea's Long-term Prison-Labor Facility, *Kyo-hwa-so No. 3, T'osōng-ni* (토성리)

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THE COMMITTEE FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS IN NORTH KOREA  
북한인권위원회



## NORTH KOREA'S LONG-TERM PRISON-LABOR FACILITY KYO-HWA-SO NO. 3, T'OSÖNG-NI



### Location

Sinuiju-si, P'yöngbuk

### CenterPoint Coordinates

40.061094 N, 124.410453 E

### Date of Report

November 3, 2021

### Date of Imagery

- » Central Intelligence Agency (Declassified): May 8, 1968 (KH-4B),

October 17, 1977 (KH-9)  
 » Copernicus Sentinel Data: March 17, 2021  
 » DigitalGlobe: April 30, 2002, October 12, 2009, July 15, 2015, November 23, 2020, and April 24, 2021

### Size of Detention Facility<sup>1</sup>

#### Overall:

129,330 square meters (154,680 square yards)

534 meters by 345 meters (584 yards by 378 yards)

#### Walled Compound:

62,170 square meters (74,350 square yards)

285 meters by 224 meters (312 yards by 245 yards)

#### Headquarters, Administration, Barracks, and Support Areas:

67,160 square meters (80,330 square yards)

535 meters by 338 meters (585 yards by 370 yards)

### Background

The report of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (UN COI) determined that "crimes against humanity have been committed in North Korea, pursuant to policies established at the highest level of the State." Many of these crimes against humanity take place against persons detained in political and other prison camps—persons whom the Commission determined are among the "primary targets of a systematic and widespread attack" by the North Korean regime—including murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, forced abortions and other sexual violence, persecution on political grounds, and the enforced disappearance of persons. The Kim regime considers prisoners in political and other prison camps to "pose a threat to the political system and leadership" of

the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, more commonly known as North Korea).

Based on research conducted by the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (HRNK), the following trends have defined the human rights situation in North Korea under Kim Jong-un's control,

- » An intensive crackdown on attempts to escape from North Korea.
- » A restructuring of the prison camp system, with some facilities closer to the border with China being shut down, while inland facilities have been expanded, and construction of internal high-security compounds within the prisons.
- » The sustained, if not increased, economic importance of the political prison camps.
- » The disproportionate repression of women by North Korean officials; women have assumed primary re-

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sponsibility for the survival of their families and thus represent the majority of those arrested for perceived wrongdoing at the "jang-madang" markets or for "illegally" crossing the border.

- » An aggressive purge of senior officials, aimed to consolidate the leader's grip on power.
- » An increased restriction on information flow.
- » Targeting of North Korean escapees.
- » Increased focus on eliminating reactionary thoughts

### Analysis

#### Executive Summary

This report is part of a comprehensive long-term project undertaken by HRNK to use satellite imagery and former prisoner interviews to shed light on human suffering in North Korea by monitoring activity at civil and political prison facilities throughout the nation.<sup>2</sup> This study details activity observed during 1968-1977 and 2002-2021 at a prison facility commonly identified by former prisoners and researchers as "Kyo-hwa-so No. 3, T'osöng-ni" (토성리, 40.062976, 124.408946) and endeavors to establish a

preliminary baseline report of the facility.<sup>3</sup>

For this report HRNK analyzed 14 high-resolution declassified and commercial pan-sharpened multispectral and pan-chromatic satellite images of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3, and its immediate environs focusing upon examination of the following physical features,<sup>4</sup>

- » Security perimeters (internal and external), entrance and guard positions
- » Main prison
- » Headquarters, administration, barracks, and support facilities
- » Activity in the immediate

environs of the facility

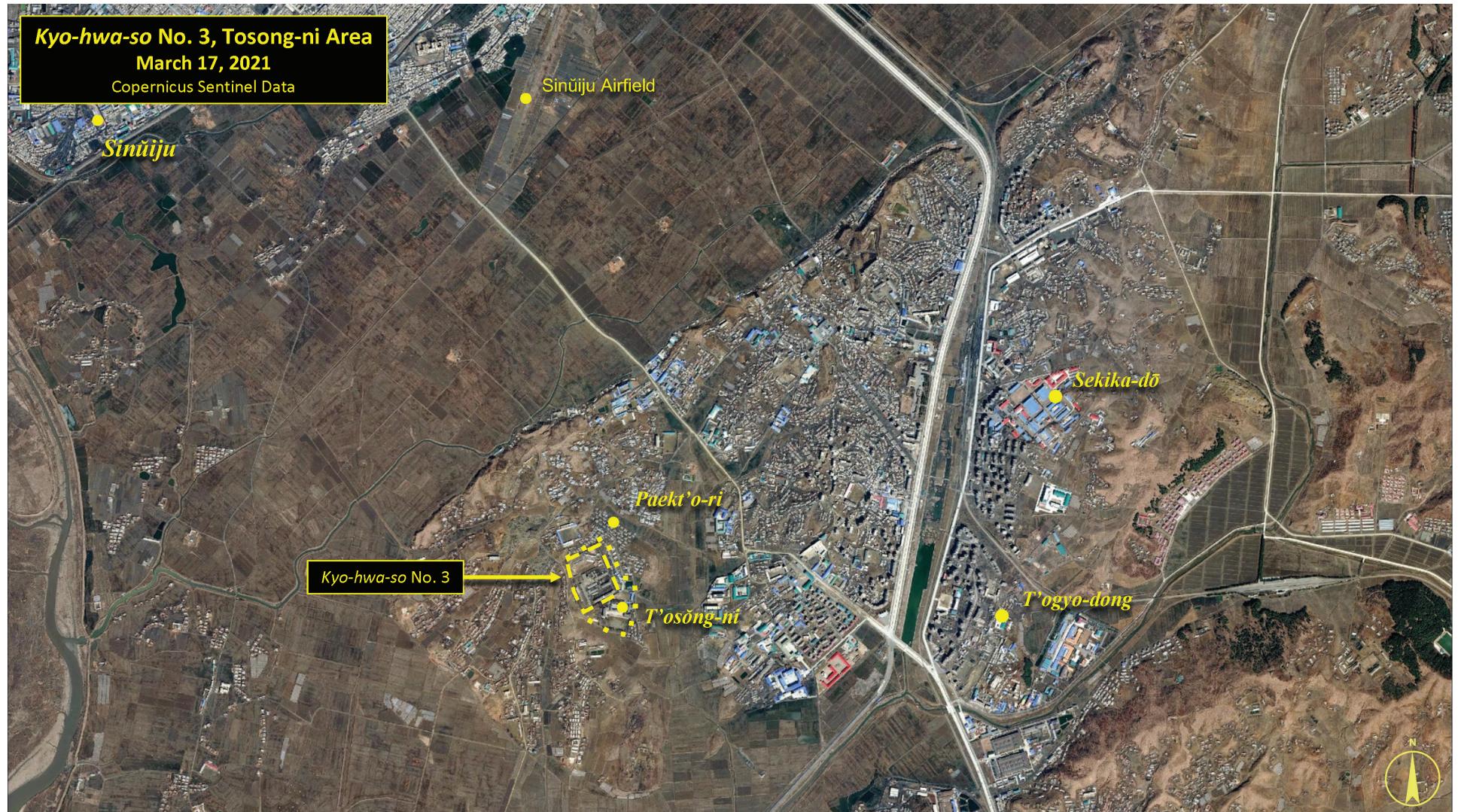
- » Walled compounds

Based upon analysis of these features *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3 is an operational prison camp established sometime about 1968. That it is mature and well maintained by North Korean standards is indicated by activity and general good maintenance in and immediately surrounding the camp.

Satellite imagery coverage of the facility and interviewee testimony indicates that the prison's economic activity is a combination of agricultural production using forced labor and likely some light

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Figure 1



Overview image of the *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3, *Tosong-ni* Area.

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Figure 2



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manufacturing (i.e., clothing, bicycles, and other products).<sup>5</sup>

As with the analytical caution presented in previous HRNK reports (such as North Korea's Chüng-san No. 11 Detention Facility) it is important to reiterate that North Korean officials, especially those within the Korean People's Army and the internal security organizations, clearly understand the importance of implementing camouflage, concealment, and deception (CCD) procedures to mask their operations and intentions.<sup>6</sup> It would not be unreasonable to assume that they have to some degree done so here.

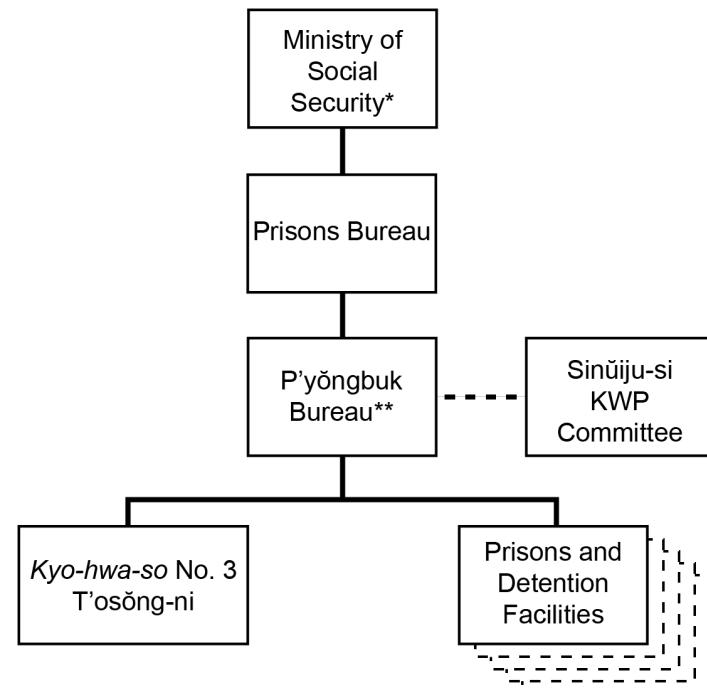
### Location and Subordination

The *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3 detention facility (40.062976, 124.408946) is located within the town of T'osöng-ni (토성리, 40.500000, 125.133333), Sinüiju-si (신의주시, Sinüiju City, 40.090556, 124.463333), P'yongan-bukdo (평안북도, North P'yongan Province)—approximately 4.4 kilometers

south of Sinüiju and 162 kilometers northwest of the capital city of P'yongyang, and consists of a large walled compound and sizable headquarters, support, and guard housing areas.

This *kyo-hwa-so* is reported to be subordinate to the Prisons Bureau of the Ministry of Social Security (사회안전부, *Sa-hoe An-jeon-sung*)—during early 2020, North Korea is reported to have changed the name of the Ministry of People's Security back to its older name of Ministry of Social Security.<sup>7</sup> Specifically, it would be under the control of the ministry's P'yöngbuk Bureau. However the nature and extent of such coordination, it cannot be ruled out that it is subordinate to the ministry's Sinüiju-si Bureau.<sup>8</sup> The Ministry of Social Security itself directly reports to the State Affairs Commission chaired by Kim Jong-un.

*Ministry of Social Security,  
Prisons Bureau, P'yöngbuk  
(Simplified)*



\* Formerly, the Ministry of People's Security

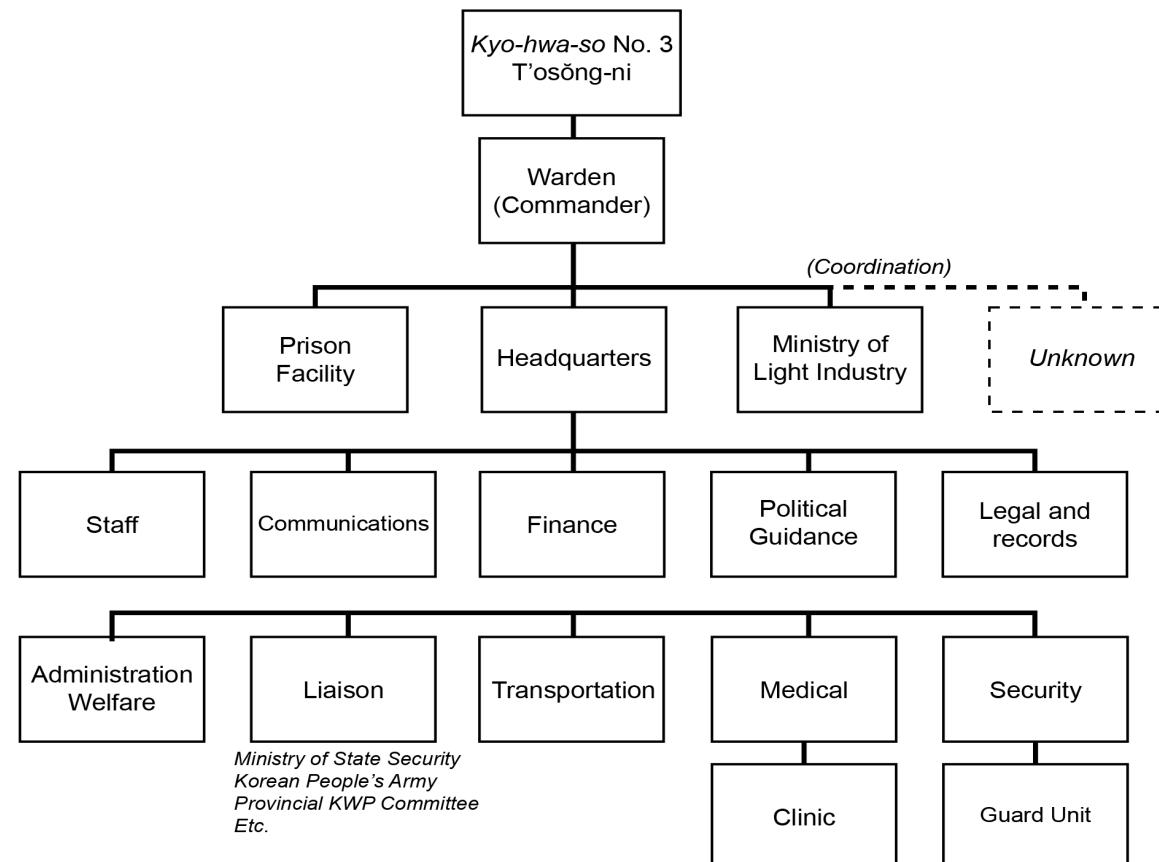
\*\* Information is incomplete and this may be the Sinüiju-si Bureau

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### Organization

Limited publicly available information and known North Korean organizational patterns indicate that *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3 is likely to be organized along a somewhat standard pattern seen elsewhere amongst other *kyo-hwa-so* consisting of: a headquarters staff, communication section, finance section, political guidance section, legal and records, administration and welfare section, liaison section (Ministry of State Security, Korean People's Army, P'yöngbuk and Sinüiju-si Korea Workers' Party Committees, etc.), transportation section, safety/medical section, and a security section (a guard unit). While it is likely that there is some level of coordination with the Ministry of Light Industry, what coordination there is between *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3 and other agencies is unknown.

*Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3, *T'osöng-ni* (Provisional)



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Little is known concerning the forced labor activities imposed upon the prisoners at *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3. What we do know from several interviews is that at different times they have reportedly been engaged in the production of bicycles, uniforms, padded winter coats, boots, and hats for all security agencies.<sup>9</sup> As with most *kyo-hwa-so*, it is likely that prisoners are also used as forced labor in adjacent agricultural fields and activities.<sup>10</sup>

There are no reliable estimates for the current prisoner population at *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3. Between 2002 and 2003, however, HRNK interviewed a former prisoner from "*Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3, Sinuiju" who was imprisoned for an admitted criminal offense and sentenced to ten years for assault and battery during the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. According to their testimony, about 2,500 prisoners mined rock and gold, and made prison uniforms.<sup>11</sup> Exactly where this "rock and gold" were being mined is unclear.

Interestingly, the layout, number, and size of the buildings in the headquarters, administration and barracks area are simply too large to be solely dedicated to the operations of the prison alone. It is therefore reasonable to assume that this part of the facility is also being used as a security forces school of some sort and/or serving as an upper-level headquarters for the P'yöngbuk or Sinuiju-si Ministry of Social Security.

Over the years small housing developments and several medium size storage-type buildings have been constructed around *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3. According to the interview data these are associated with the prison. The former are part of the prison's support infrastructure and the latter are housing units for prison command and administrative staff and their families.

There are at least six military garrisons (likely for both active and paramilitary reserve forces) and eight air defense artillery sites

observed within five kilometers of the prison.<sup>12</sup> The closest air facility to *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3 is the Korean People's Air Force's Sinuiju-si Airfield located five (5) kilometers north. This is a simple dirt airstrip that is only useable by light aircraft and helicopters and almost certainly provides no support to *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3.

While the prison is likely connected to the regional telephone network it is likely via buried service as no evidence of overhead service was identified in satellite imagery. An electrical substation is located 2.13-kilometers east-north-east of the prison and may be the source of the facility's electrical service. The nearest rail facility is the rail station at Yongsang-il-dong, which is 2.3 kilometers to the northeast of the prison.<sup>13</sup>

### Development

The precise date of establishment of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3 is unknown. However, a declassified CIA KH-4B image dated May 8, 1968, shows the presence of what is

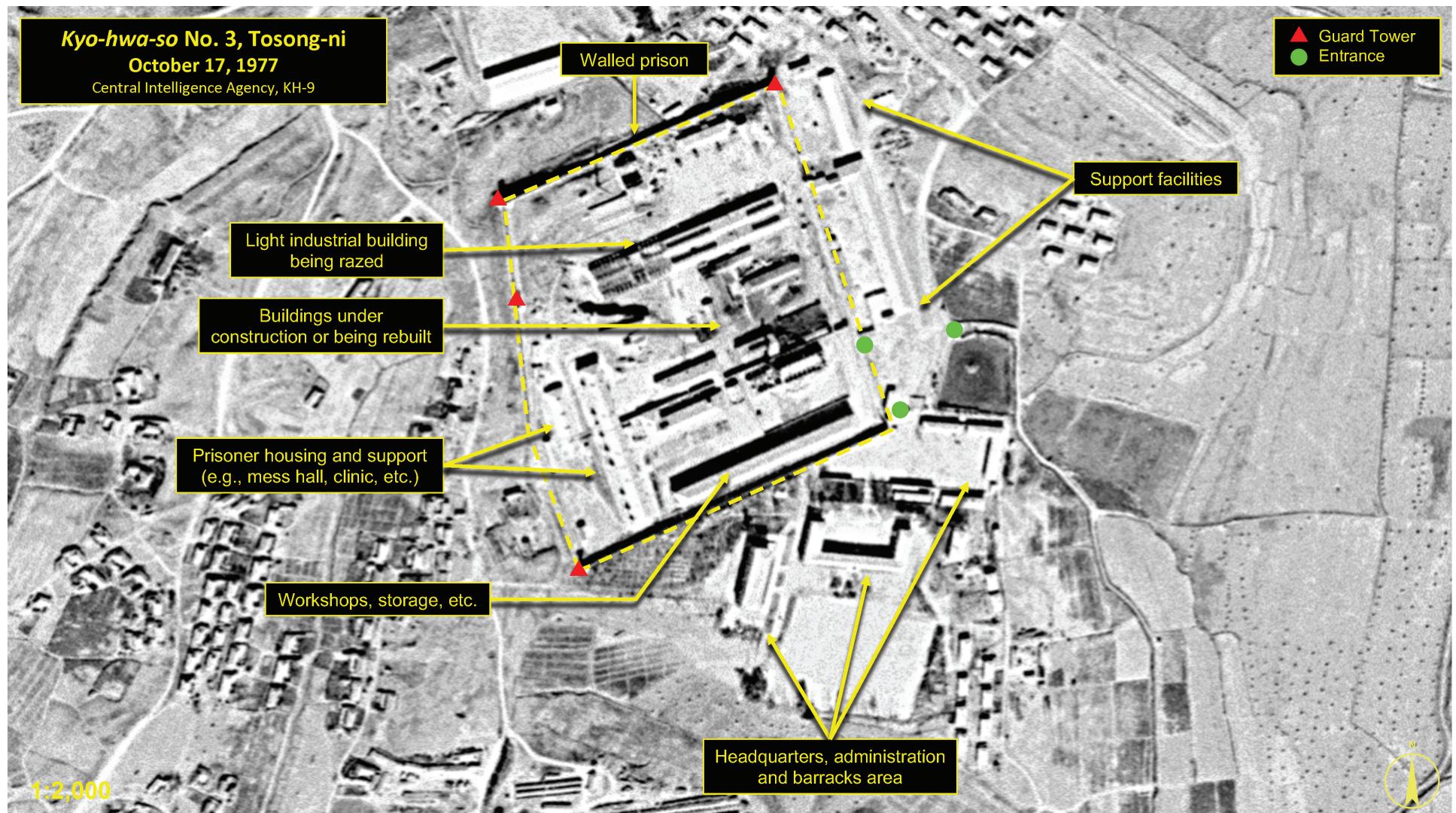
subsequently assessed to be the prison's headquarters building and parade ground.<sup>14</sup>

Nine years later a declassified CIA KH-9 image dated October 17, 1977, showed an operational prison facility that includes a headquarters, barracks (which includes a soccer pitch/parade ground), support facilities, and a walled main prison. Taken as a whole, these encompassed approximately 117,850 square meters (140,950 square yards) with a total of approximately 50 structures of all sizes. Of this, the main prison encompasses approximately 62,170 square meters (74,350 square yards). It was enclosed within a high security wall with four guard towers, one entrance, and contains approximately 32 structures including several large light industrial and prisoner housing and support (e.g., mess hall, clinic, etc.) buildings. Several of the larger light industrial buildings appeared to be in the process of being razed, while workshops and smaller industrial activities are being built or rebuilt. Notable was

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Figure 3



A close-up view of Kyo-hwa-so No. 3 from a .6 to 1.2-meter resolution KH-9 reconnaissance satellite

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a small building in the center of the prison with a tall smokestack and large roof vent, suggesting a foundry, metal working shop, or small thermal plant. Functionally, the main prison appeared to be divided into three broad areas—light industrial, workshops, and prisoner housing. Outside the prison complex several small housing developments had been built. Due to the timing of their construction and proximity to the prison these, as noted above, were likely being used by senior command and administrative staff and their families.

The first readily available, high-resolution commercial satellite image of the facility dates from April 30, 2002. This image shows the significant developments that had occurred during the intervening 24 years. Such changes included,

- » The area containing the headquarters, administration, barracks, and support facilities had developed and was now almost completely separated from the outside

by a series of connected buildings and walls. A small gap and footpath, however, existed on the west where the southwest prison wall met a new security wall around the area. These areas now encompassed approximately 67,160 square meters (80,330 square yards), bringing the total for the entire prison to 129,330 square meters (154,680 square yards).

- » What appears to be a cultural hall was built within the headquarters, administration, and barracks area.
- » Within the main prison the large light industrial building at the north end had been razed along with several other buildings. In their place a large greenhouse had been erected and construction of what would become a livestock facility had begun. In the center of the prison several buildings had either been newly built or rebuilt. The southern section, with the prisoner
- housing, workshops, and warehouses witnessed few significant changes.
- » While the four guard towers on top of the main prison's security wall remained, the number of entrances to the complex and prison increased to five—main complex, support area, headquarters, barracks and administration area, main prison, and a footpath entrance on the west side.
- » The individual support facilities that compose the northeast support area were separated by walls and gates.

An image collected seven years later, on October 12, 2009, shows continued development within the main prison and northeast section of the support area. Notable among these changes was that the northern half of the prison was now being dedicated to agricultural production and separated from the rest of the prison by an internal security wall. The new livestock facility was completed,

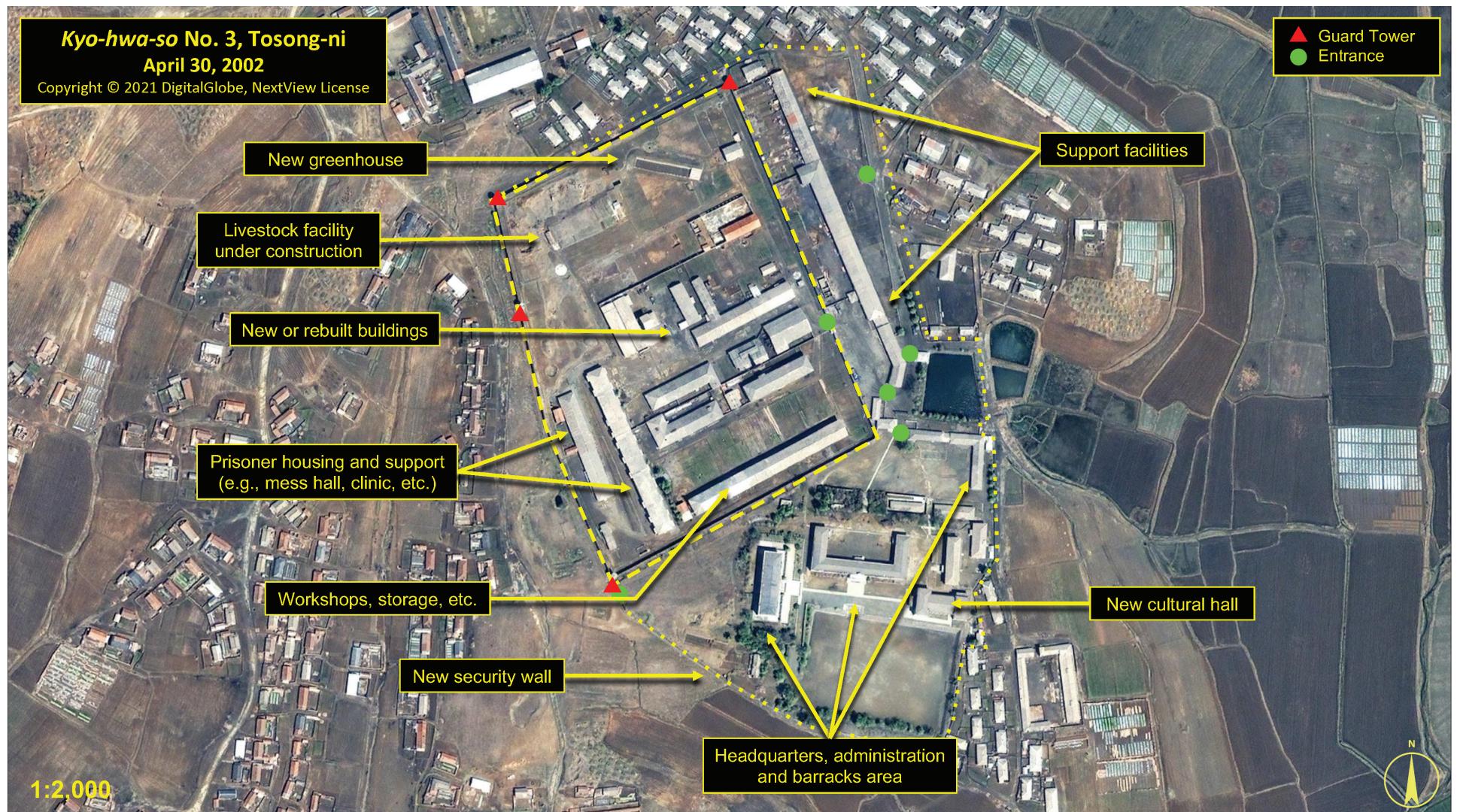
and two new buildings were built. Additional changes included,

- » The removal of a roof from a prisoner support building.
- » Both the razing of a building and construction of a new greenhouse in the workshop area.
- » While they may have been used as such previously, several buildings at the center of the prison were now being used as some sort of shipping/receiving or motor pool facility.
- » The razing of a long support building in the northeast support area, that was replaced by five smaller buildings.
- » At the same time the entrances were reconfigured and reduced to three.

Six years later, an image collected on July 15, 2015, shows only minor changes including the replacement of the roof on the prisoner support building, the completion of the greenhouse in the workshop area, and the

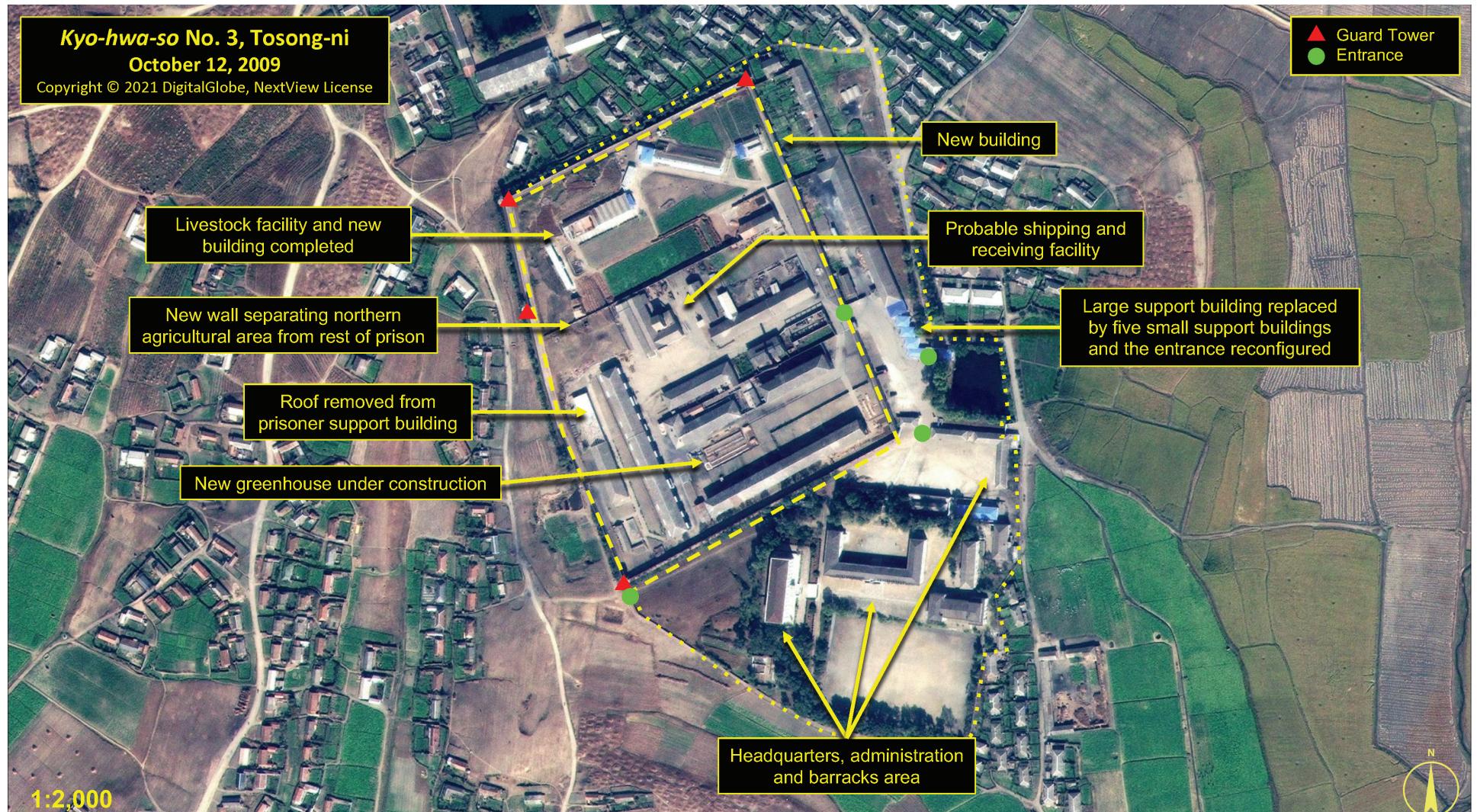
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Figure 4



## CAMP NO. 3

Figure 5

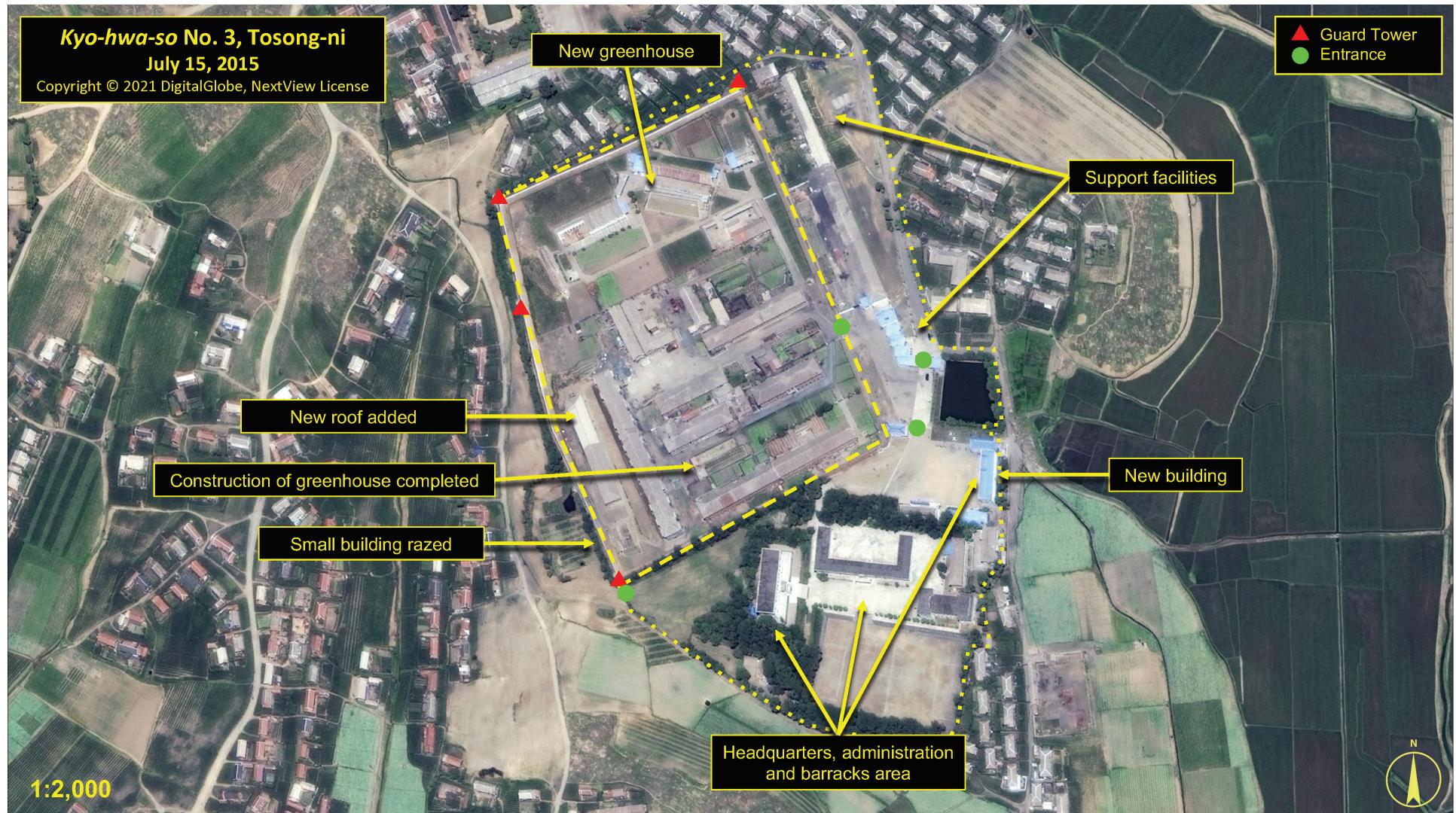


Kyo-hwa-so No. 3 showing recent developments.

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Figure 6

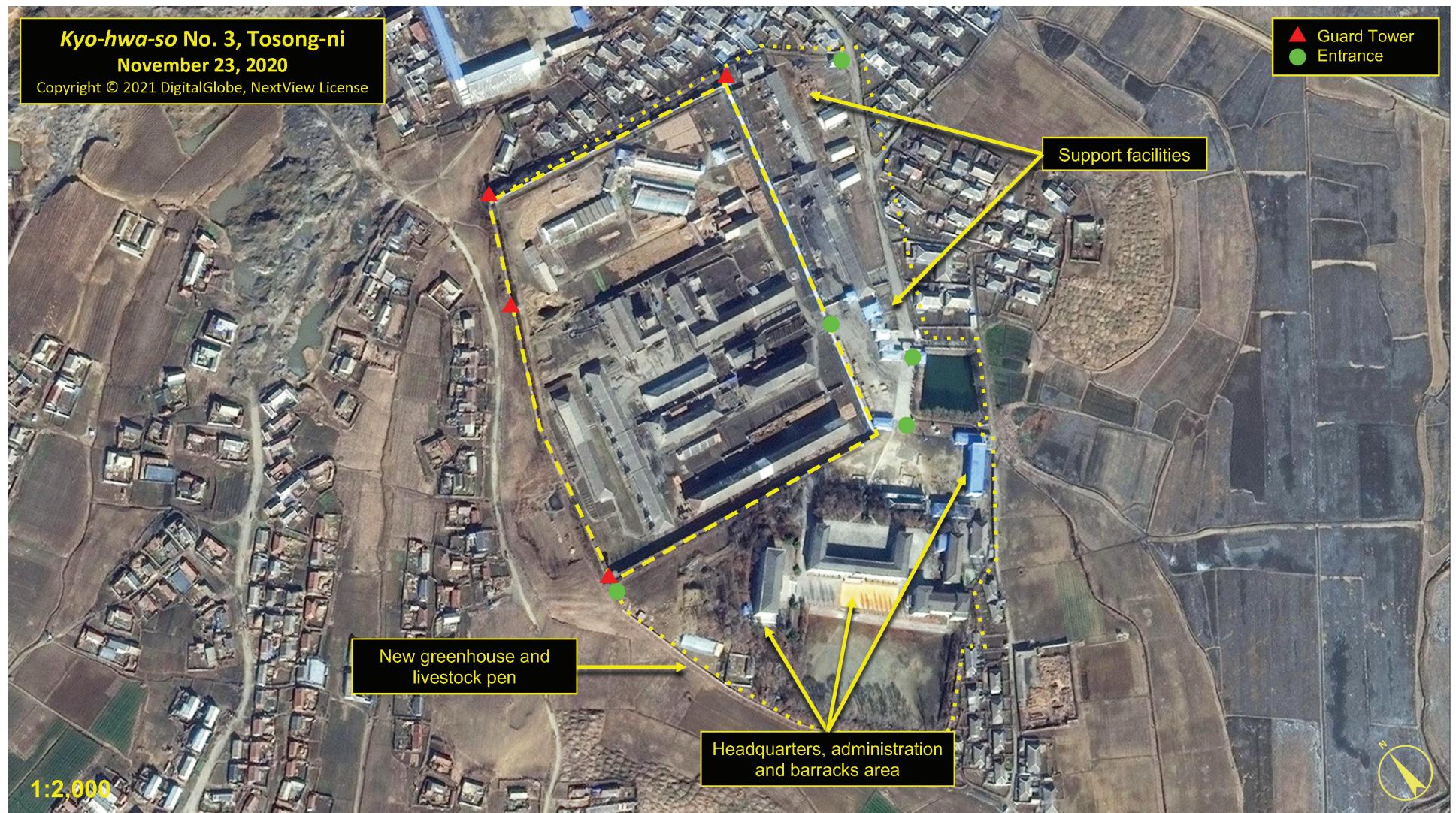


A view of Kyo-hwa-so No. 3 on July 15, 2015, showing developments in the northern section.

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Figure 7



A close-up of Kyo-hwa-so No. 3 on November 23, 2020, showing only minor developments.

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replacement of a building in the headquarters, administration, and barracks area. Similarly, imagery from November 23, 2020, shows only minor changes including the addition of a small greenhouse and livestock pen in the headquarters, administration, and barracks area.

A March 17, 2021, image is somewhat unique in that it shows what are most probably three groups of prisoners in formations of different sizes outside the main prison entrance and in the nearby support area. According to a recent interview conducted by HRNK, the prisoners at *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3 are used to work the agricultural fields around the prison. This is supported by what appear to be numerous stacks of grain (potentially winter wheat or barley) within the support area and adjacent to the formations of prisoners. Much of this grain appears neatly bundled—perhaps in trailers. Further supporting this assessment may be the presence of two open-bed trucks located nearby. Finally, what appears to be a line

of security guards is visible on the nearby road to the administration and barracks area. By 2021 the number of entrances had now increased to four (the fourth being on the road at the northern end of the support area).

Collected the following month, on April 24, 2021, an image continues to show only minor changes within the prison typical of what would be expected (e.g., razing or construction of small shed-type buildings, etc.) at a prison facility of this type in North Korea.

All imagery since 2005 shows that almost all open space within the *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3, T'osöng facility is being used for gardens of various types.

### Assessment

Analysis of high-resolution satellite imagery of *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3, T'osöng-ni and its environs collected between 1968 and 2021 indicates that:

» *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3 is a very

mature operational prison facility that is well maintained.

- » The infrastructure of the facility has continued to develop over the years, likely in response to organizational and political conditions.
- » These changes are typical of what has been observed at other *kyo-hwa-so* throughout the nation.
- » Perimeter walls and gates are well maintained and in good repair.
- » Guard positions are well positioned to provide overlapping fields-of-view of the prison and are well maintained.
- » Administrative, barracks, housing, support buildings, and grounds are well maintained and in good repair.
- » The grounds and buildings of the prisoner housing and work areas appear to be well maintained and in a good state of repair.

As noted above there are no reliable estimates for the current prisoner population at *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3. HRNK anticipates that we will be able to validate the earlier 2002 and 2003 estimate of 2,500 prisoners and develop current estimates in the future when satellite imagery is correlated with future declassified information and interviews with additional former prisoners.

### Recommendations

Continued background investigation and ongoing monitoring of the *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3, T'osöng-ni is recommended to identify all its components, provide a detailed accounting of its previous operations, and develop an objective baseline understanding of their continuing activities, maintain an evidentiary catalog of physical changes at the facility, update its status, develop evidence of prisoner population size, and assist with the identification of possible human rights abuses.

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Figure 8



Kyo-hwa-so No. 3 as seen on March 17, 2021.

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Figure 9

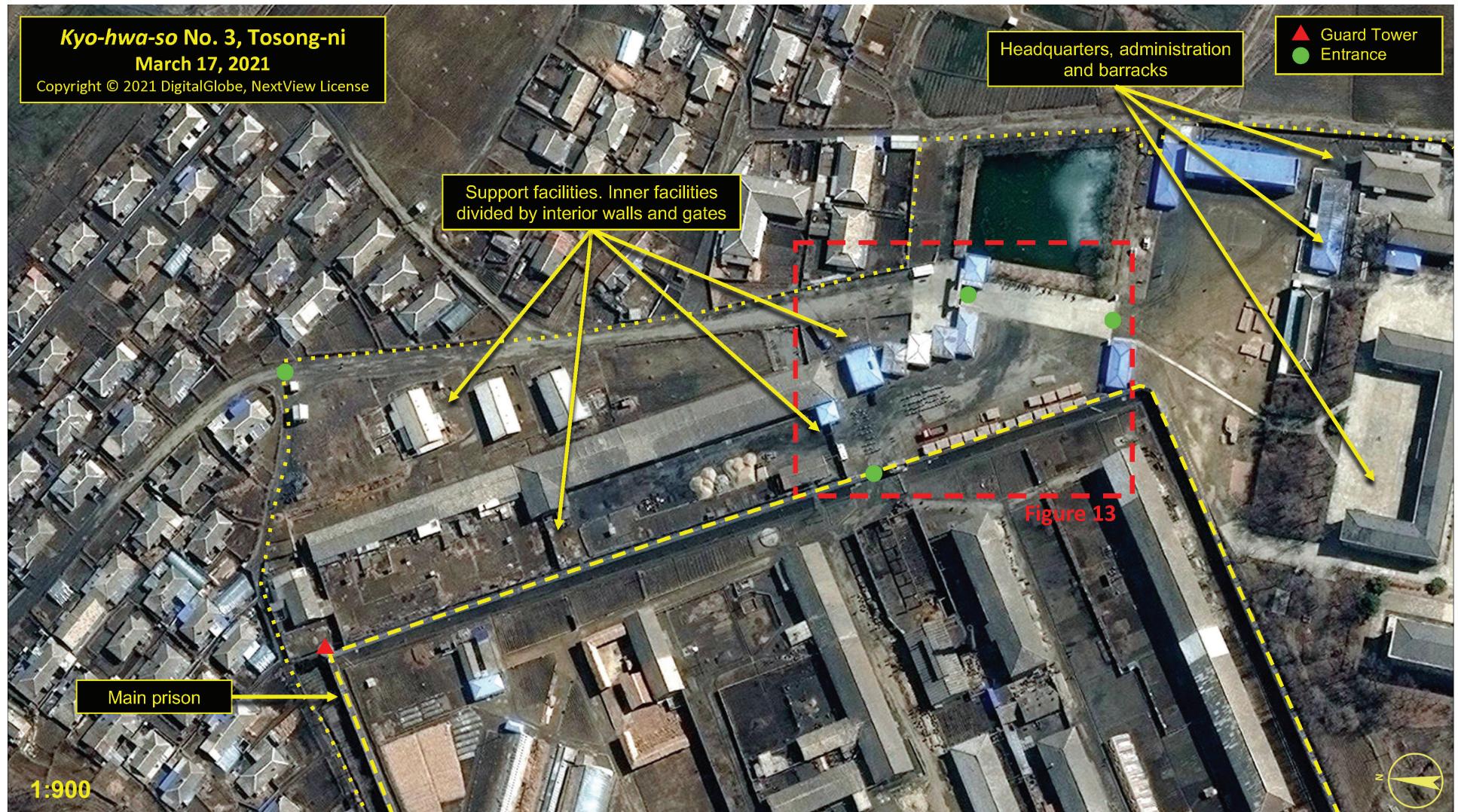


Overview of the main prison and northeast support area.

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Figure 10

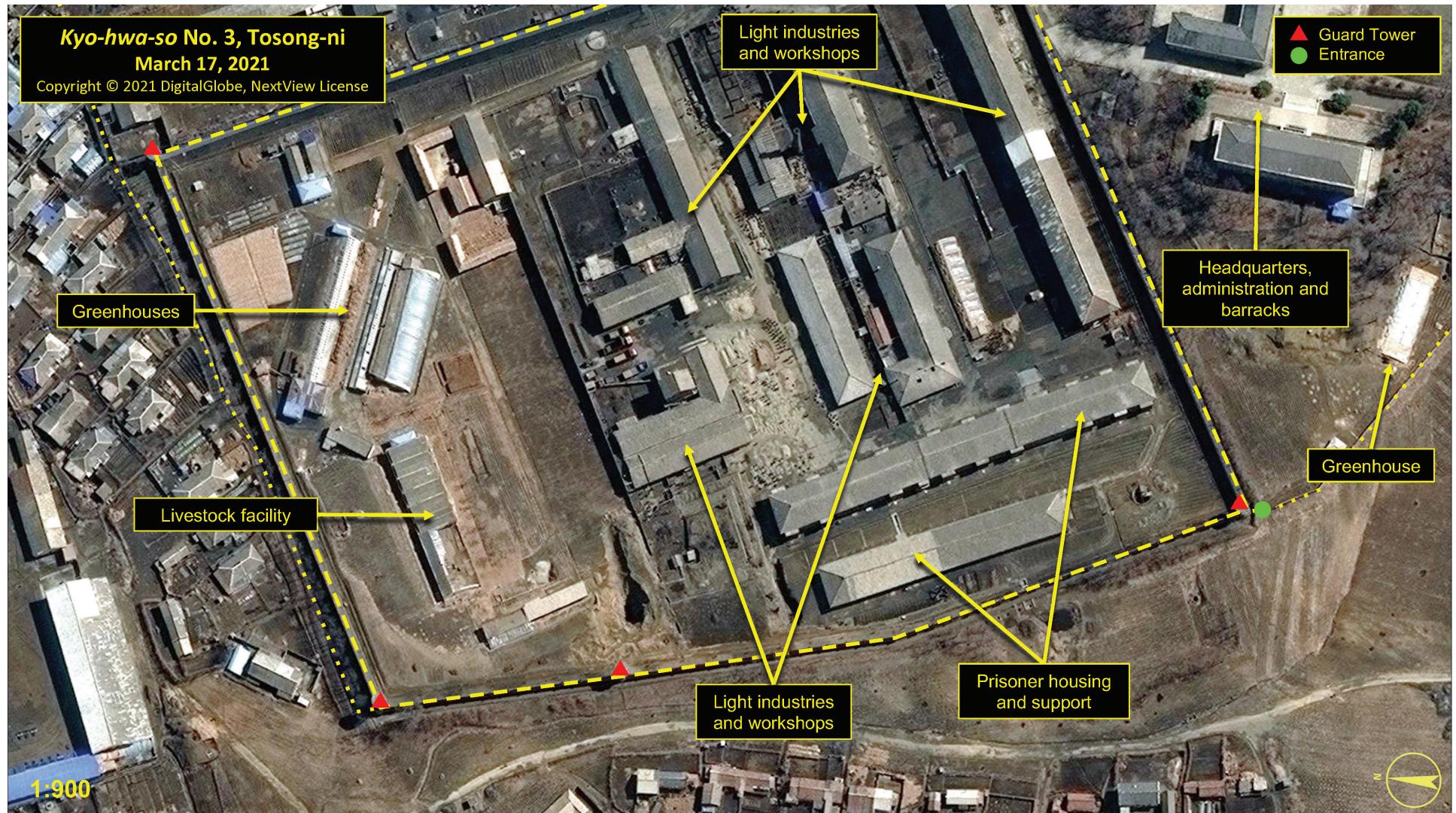


A close-up of the east side of the *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3 showing the support area, portions of the light industry and workshop area, and entrances.

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Figure 11



A close-up of the west side of the Kyo-hwa-so No. 3 showing the greenhouses, livestock facility, light industry and workshop area, and prisoner housing and support buildings.

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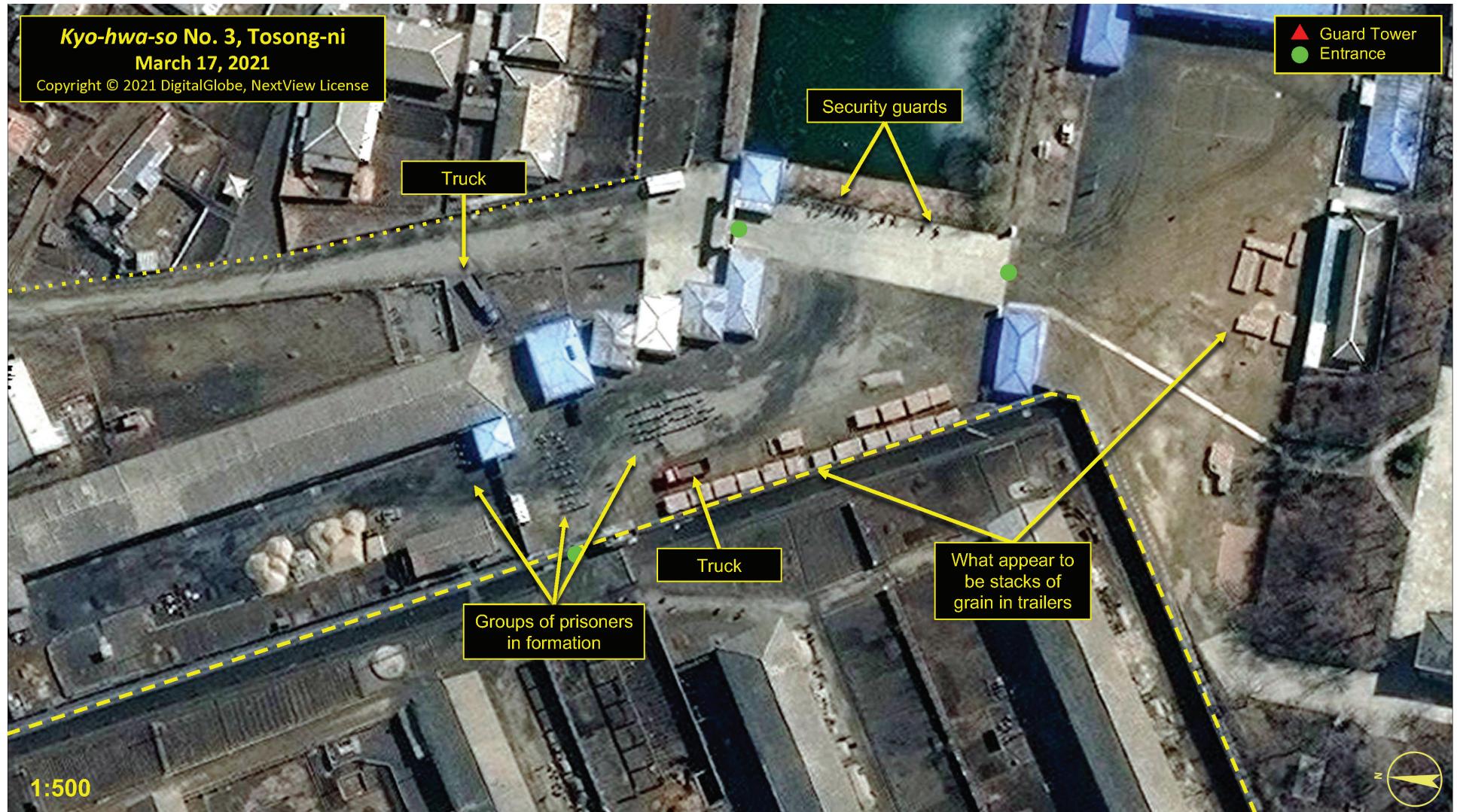
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Figure 12



A close-up of the south side of the Kyo-hwa-so No. 3 showing the headquarters, administration, and barracks area.

Figure 13



Detailed close-up view of the three groups of prisoners in formations of different sizes outside the main prison entrance and in the nearby support area. Also visible nearby are piles (likely in trailers or carts) of what appear to be grain and two open-bed trucks. Located nearby are what appears to be a line of security guards on the nearby road to the administration and barracks area.

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HRNK calls upon the United Nations and any international humanitarian organizations or humanitarian NGOs operating near *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 3, T'osöng-ni to consider the vulnerability of any prisoners and incorporate a Human Rights up Front approach when delivering humanitarian aid to North Koreans in need.<sup>15</sup>

HRNK calls on North Korea to abide by the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Female Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules).

HRNK requests that North Korea "grant immediate, free and unimpeded access to international humanitarian organizations to provide assistance to the most vulnerable groups, including prisoners" as per Ireland's May 2019 Universal Periodic Review recommendation, which North Korea supported.<sup>16</sup>

### Gazetteer

Location	Latitude (N)	Longitude (E)
<i>Kyo-hwa-so</i> No. 3, T'osöng-ni (토성리)	40.062976	124.408946
Sinüiju (신의주)	40.100556	124.398056
Sinüiju-si (신의주시)	40.090556	124.463333
T'osöng-ni (토성리)	40.500000	125.133333

### Note

HRNK would like to extend a special note of thanks to Allen Anderson for his gracious support of HRNK's efforts to document North Korea's prison system and the tragic conditions present within that system. HRNK would like to thank Rosa Park-Tokola for her editorial work and graphic design supervision. HRNK would also like to thank interns Maria Del Carmen Corte for her graphic design work, and Doo-hyun Kim and Junsoung Kim for their inputs and research assistance.

## Endnotes

1. All measurements are approximate.
2. Previous reports in the project can be found at <https://www.hrnk.org/publications/hrnk-publications.php>.
3. Some interviewees and researchers have occasionally identified the facility as the "Sinuiju Concentration Camp," "Baekdo-ri Kyo-hwa-so (백토리 교화소)," or "Sinuiju Kyo-hwa-so." Following historical DPRK practices this facility likely has multiple designations. Interview of former Sinuiju Resident by HRNK, Washington, D.C., September 23, 2020 (hereafter Interview D1) and Sookyung Kim et al., *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2019* (Seoul: KINU), 2019, <https://kinu.or.kr/www/jsp/prg/api/dIV.jsp?menuldx=346&category=46&thisPage=1&searchField=&searchText=&biblioid=1532295>.
4. The term "high resolution" in this report refers to digital satellite images with a ground sample distance (GSD) of less than 1 meter. The GSD is the distance between pixel centers when measured on the ground. Analog (film) satellite imagery is measured in ground resolution. Declassified KH-4B satellite imagery has a best ground resolution of approximately 1.8 meters and KH-9 of .6 to 1.2 meters.
5. *Interview D1.*
6. Bermudez Jr., Joseph S., Greg Scarlatoiu, Amanda Mortwedt Oh, and Rosa Park, *North Korea's Chüngsan No. 11 Detention Facility*, (Washington, D.C.: HRNK), December 21, 2020, <https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Chüngsan%20No.%2011%20Detention%20Facility%20Web.pdf>; and Bermudez Jr., Joseph S., Greg Scarlatoiu, Amanda Mortwedt Oh, and Rosa Park, *North Korea's Long-term Prison-Labor Facility Kyo-hwa-so No. 12, Jöngö-ri - Update 3*, (Washington, D.C.: HRNK), September 30, 2020, [https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/KHS12\\_FINALFINAL.pdf](https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/KHS12_FINALFINAL.pdf).
7. Jeongmin Kim, "North Korea likely renames Ministry of People's Security," NK News, June 3, 2020, <https://www.nknews.org/2020/06/north-korea-likely-renames-ministry-of-peoples-security/?t=1591178315505>.
8. *Interview D1*, September 23, 2020.
9. *Interview D1*, September 2, 2021. "...I heard the prisoners in Baekto-ri Kyo-hwa-so [Kyo-hwa-so No. 3]make padded winter coats. I have no guarantee it is 100% sure but it makes sense because there is a big chemical fiber factory and textile factory in Sinuiju. The two factories are huge."
10. *Interview of former prisoner by HRNK*, Washington, D.C., July 30, 2021 (hereafter: Interview D2).
11. David Hawk with Amanda Mortwedt Oh, *The Parallel Gulag: North Korea's "An-jeon-bu" Prison Camps* (Washington, D.C.: HRNK, 2017), 29, [https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Hawk\\_The\\_Parallel\\_Gulag\\_Web.pdf](https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Hawk_The_Parallel_Gulag_Web.pdf).
12. No surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites are observed within this area.
13. The rail station at Yöngsang-il-dong is sometimes identified as "Nam Sinuiju" (South Sinuiju) station.
14. HRNK anticipates that it will be able to further refine the date of establishment of this prison facility and fill in gaps in its organization, development, and operational history in future updates when satellite imagery is correlated with future declassified information and interviews with former prisoners.
15. "Rights Up Front," May 2014, <http://www.un.org/sg/rightsupfront/doc/RuFAP-summary-General-Assembly.htm>; see also Roberta Cohen, "Must UN Agencies Also Fail in North Korea?," *38 North*, April 21, 2015, [https://www.38north.org/2015/04/rcohen042115/#\\_ftn2](https://www.38north.org/2015/04/rcohen042115/#_ftn2). The United Nations (UN) and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Sinuiju area (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic) are understood to have been the following: UN: World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); and CSOs: Korea Sharing Movement, Food for the Hungry, South-North Sharing, Handicap International, Korean Foundation for World Aid, and the Korean Living Together Movement.
16. Recommendation 126.58. *List of all recommendations made to Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its responses*, Session 33 - May 2019, [https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/document/korea\\_dpr/session\\_33\\_-\\_may\\_2019/2rps\\_dprk.pdf](https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/document/korea_dpr/session_33_-_may_2019/2rps_dprk.pdf).



HRNK is the leading U.S.-based bipartisan, non-governmental organization in the field of North Korean human rights research and advocacy, tasked to focus international attention on human rights abuses in that country. It is HRNK's mission to persistently remind policy makers, opinion leaders, and the general public in the free world and beyond that more than 20 million North Koreans need our attention.

Since its establishment in 2001, HRNK has played an important intellectual leadership role on North Korean human rights issues by publishing over 50 major reports (available at <https://hrnk.org/publications/hrnk-publications.php>). HRNK became the first organization to propose that the human rights situation in North Korea be addressed by the UN Security Council. HRNK was directly, actively, and effectively involved in all stages of the process supporting the work of the UN Commission of Inquiry. HRNK has been invited numerous times to provide expert testimony before the U.S. Congress. In April 2018, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) granted HRNK UN consultative status.

For media inquiries, please contact Executive Director Greg Scarlatoiu at +1 202.499.7973 or by e-mail at [executive.director@hrnk.org](mailto:executive.director@hrnk.org).

All satellite imagery in this document: DigitalGlobe, NextView License; Central Intelligence Agency declassified KH-9 imagery; and Copernicus Sentinel Data.