



# REVEALING INTENT: NORTH KOREA

CASE STUDY



## Revealing intent: North Korea

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), is a revered think tank focused on practical policy solutions and defining the future of national security. It provides global nonpartisan, expert-driven analysis and reporting. On assignment to investigate North Korea’s ballistic missile program, a team from CSIS needed both current satellite imagery and a view into the past.

North Korea is an incredibly closed-off country with little reliable information entering or leaving the country. CSIS needed a reliable and accurate account of their progress toward ballistic missile development. The team conducted numerous interviews with North Korean defectors, government, defense and intelligence officials around the world, as well as consulting declassified documents and open source reporting.

However, critical context and evidence for the report was derived from more than 41 Maxar high-resolution satellite images. With reliable, cloud-based access to our 100+ petabyte imagery library and fresh collections, SecureWatch provided a valuable resource of historical and daily insight into North Korea.

*“When we’re working our way through interview notes and hundreds of pages of documentation, having satellite imagery that helps us visualize the information is incredibly useful. It provides evidence, “look, here it is.” And SecureWatch gives us the flexibility to work at our own pace, whether that’s pulling imagery from the early 2000s, last year or last week.”*

— Joseph Bermudez

Senior Fellow for Imagery Analysis,  
iDeas Lab and Korea Chair, CSIS



# MAXAR

## A detailed history

Very little open source information has been published on Kumchon-ni ballistic missile operating base since the early 2000s. However, access to high-resolution historical imagery dating back to 2000 enabled the CSIS team to detect changes and monitor the development of Kumchon-ni in detail.

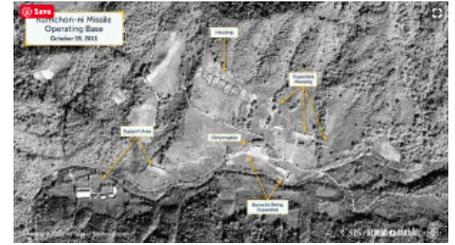
Between 2000 and 2005, CSIS identified critical infrastructure developments that indicate an increase in personnel assigned to the base. Additional imagery from 2005 through 2010 reveal a substantial second phase, including the expansion of barracks, support facilities (including greenhouses) and monuments as well as a new housing area with a school. In 2011, with Kim Jong-un in power, widespread changes across operational bases indicate heavy investments in training and operational readiness. Maxar satellite imagery provided the clarity, coverage and accuracy to enable detailed assessment of these developments—including insights on potential connecting tunnels for discreet transports.

## Global transparency

Insight into the development of military bases like Kumchon-ni help intelligence and defense organizations identify indicators and patterns of potential military activity. Maxar satellite imagery provides a cost-effective source of information and insight into remote areas and isolated nations like North Korea.

Understanding North Korea’s actual wartime capabilities is crucial for assessing risk and planning diplomacy efforts as well as defense policies. The CSIS report *Undeclared North Korea: The Kumchon-ni Missile Operating Base* gained critical media coverage to raise awareness. Maxar is proud to partner with organizations like CSIS who work to inform and prepare global leaders.

2005



2019



*“...The images ultimately presented in this report were purposely selected for their detailed or historical view of the structures and activities within and around the Kumchon-ni Missile Operating Base.”*

— Joseph Bermudez and Victor Cha

*Undeclared North Korea: The Kumchon-ni Missile Operating Base. September 2019.*



Only Maxar imagery offered the detail needed to see past obscuring vegetation.

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