



DigitalGlobe ANALYTICS

February 25, 2013

North Korea's Camp No. 25



THE COMMITTEE FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS IN NORTH KOREA
북한인권위원회



Contents



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On the cover: North Korea's Camp 25 in 2010.

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Overview and Analysis

For the past year, DigitalGlobe Analytics has been monitoring activity at political prison facilities in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, more commonly known as North Korea) as part of a joint undertaking with the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea to shed light on human suffering in North Korea. This report covers activity observed at the facility commonly known as Camp 25 and is part of DigitalGlobe's corporate goal of "Seeing a Better World."

Introduction

For this report, DigitalGlobe Analytics examined eleven images collected from 2003 to 2013 of the North Korean political prison facility known as Camp 25 (a.k.a. *Kwan-li-so* No. 25, Political Prison Facility No. 25, No. 25 Chongjin Political Concentration Camp, Susŏng Correctional Center) in Susŏng-dong, Chŏngjin-si, Hamgyŏng-bukto, on the northeast coast of the nation.¹ In this analysis, imagery was compared to identify changes in the organization of the camp, including variations in:

- Walls, perimeter, guard posts and gates
- Administrative areas
- Light industrial and prisoner housing areas
- Agriculture
- Agricultural support facilities
- Other buildings

Imagery of these areas could reveal changes that would provide insight into the operational status, prison population and security of Camp 25.

Organization

Based on an assessment of publicly available information and DigitalGlobe imagery, Camp 25 appears to consist of five main areas: government and administrative, light industrial and prisoner housing, agriculture, agricultural support and other support. Gates, walls and a fenced perimeter with associated guard posts separate the camp from the adjacent town of Susŏng-dong. Immediately outside the perimeter are two light anti-aircraft artillery positions, likely associated with the air defense of Chŏngjin.

Walls, perimeter, guard posts

Much of the walled area around the central facility remained the same throughout the time frame under study,

with barriers separating the light industrial and prisoner housing, administration and agricultural support areas. Between 2009 and 2010, a new main gate was erected, and two previously separate agriculture fields in the northwest area of the camp were combined and the road between them blocked off (Figure 10).

Before 2009, the camp had a perimeter of approximately 3,653 meters and encompassed an area of 565,424 square meters. In 2010, the perimeter expanded to approximately 5,046 meters and the area to 972,270 square meters.

In 2003, there were approximately 20 guard posts strategically placed throughout the camp. New posts were slowly erected, with two added in 2007 and four in 2009. With the dramatic expansion of the perimeter in 2010, 17 additional posts were erected, predominately along the new perimeter line (Figure 10). Many original guard posts remained present with no evidence of degradation.

Administrative Area

The administrative area is located in the east and northeast areas of the camp along the Solgol-chŏn (i.e., Solgol stream). Walls and gates separate these sections from the rest of the camp and civilian areas. Two gates serve as entrances to the administrative area—a main gate on the southeast corner facing the town of Susŏng-dong and a back gate on the north side. The buildings within this area appear to be for prison administration, government, barracks and support functions.

2003-2009

Little significant activity was noted in imagery collected from 2003 to 2009, with the exception of the construction of one building in 2004 and one building in 2009 (Figure 4, Figure 9).

2010

The most significant change to the administrative area is visible in 2010. Notable changes include the construction of a new government building (possibly a Kim Il-sung memorial hall or "Observatory"), additions to the adjacent fountain/reflecting pool and new roofs on the barracks. A new gate and guard house were constructed on the road between Susŏng-dong and the camp. This enhancement of access control ensures that citizens have little to no opportunity to interact with the prison population or use the road adjacent to the camp (Figure 10).

¹The precise national designator of this facility is unknown, so the general term *Kwan-li-so* No. 25 (Political Prison Facility No. 25), as stated by defectors, is used in this report. It is interesting to note that although the descriptions of this facility's mission matches that of other *kwan-li-so*, the physical characteristics observed in DigitalGlobe's satellite imagery are more representative of the nation's *kyo-hwa-so*, or long-term, felony penitentiaries and prison camps. David Hawk, *The Hidden Gulag: Second Edition*, (Washington, D.C.: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2012), www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/HRNK_HiddenGulag2_Web_5-18.pdf, (Accessed January 30, 2013).

2011-2013

There were no significant changes between 2011 and 2013.

Light Industrial and Prisoner Housing Area

The light industrial and prisoner housing area is broken down into two areas. The central section is reportedly where prisoners work and live. The second section includes an apparent lumberyard and light industrial buildings. Both areas are surrounded by high walls with guard towers and consist of numerous buildings with air vents. Reports state that the primary industry of this camp is the manufacture of bicycles using hand tools. The lumberyard and the layout of the adjacent buildings, however, suggests that there is also a wood mill at this location (Figure 3).

2003-2013

This area saw little change over the decade. In the central section, several buildings were removed between 2006 and 2007, exposing a structure that could possibly be used as a gallows (Figure 7). The long buildings along the east and west have vents in their roofs, and their size suggests that they probably house prisoners. Vehicles are visible in the central courtyard, suggesting that goods are manufactured in this area.

The northern area is enclosed separately from the central housing and industrial area. This section has its own entrance that opens on what appears to be a lumberyard and associated wood mill. Activity in the lumberyard is seen throughout the time in question, with variations in pile sizes and tarp coverings.

Agriculture

Cultivated fields surround the camp on the north, west and south sides. The steep terrain south of the central facility requires terraced agricultural techniques. Two large fields, which are walled-in with guard towers placed to provide full coverage of the perimeter, sit in the north section along the Solgol-ch'ŏn. All fields were under active cultivation during the period under study.

2003-2009

The fields remain active yet relatively unchanged with two large fields along the stream and terraced slopes south of the agricultural support area.

2010

Imagery from 2010 shows the significant expansion of the cultivated field immediately adjacent to the camp. Numerous buildings outside the perimeter were razed and those areas converted into agricultural fields. The two large fields along the Solgol-ch'ŏn were joined with a wall closing off the road and former entrance between the two areas. The walls previously delineating the fields are in the process of being razed (Figure 10).

2011-2013

During this period, the imagery shows little change in the sizes of the agricultural areas. However, with the extension of a road in 2012, there is potential for agricultural growth in the coming years.

Agricultural Support Facilities

A number of miscellaneous support buildings and a small plant nursery sit between the terraced fields and the central light industrial and prisoner housing area. This agricultural support area is enclosed separately, and the buildings appear to support agricultural activity and possibly house livestock. The area has a separate entrance gate on the northwest side (Figure 3).

2003-2013

There is little change in this area. Several buildings have been razed and new ones constructed in their place. The plant nursery is consistently active, and a wall separating the nursery field from support buildings becomes apparent in the image from 2012.

Other Buildings

In addition to the main areas above, other buildings and support structures outside the central areas and adjacent to the camp perimeter have been present since 2003; others have been erected in the time under study. According to reports, the enclosed building visible since 2003 on the western perimeter is a crematory. Since 2010, there has been significant activity in the addition of buildings in these decentralized areas.

2003-2009

There is little change over this time period. A few new buildings were erected in the nearby western vicinity, but it is unclear if these buildings are related to the camp.

2010

With the expansion of the perimeter in 2010, the buildings in the western vicinity were razed, along with buildings adjacent to the northern fields. A new large building was erected south of the terraced fields within the new perimeter. This structure is enclosed with a tall fence, and a distinct road was built between the location and the entrance to the agriculture support area.

The anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) site located immediately adjacent to the camp on its south side was removed and its land incorporated into the expanded perimeter. A new AAA site was then constructed outside of the new fence line, 60 meters to the south (Figure 10).

2011-2013

Smaller support structures were erected around the large building along the south edge. Some support structures could be distinguished as guard posts. In 2013 imagery,

another structure has been erected southwest of the central facility. These buildings could possibly be used as prisoner housing (Figure 15).

Assessment

Analysis of selected imagery collected over 11 years concludes that Camp 25 remains operational and was significantly expanded between 2009 and 2010.

Although the precise reasons for the expansion remain unknown, three possibilities suggest themselves. During 2010, Kim Jong-il initiated a concerted effort to ensure his succession by his son Kim Jong-un. To this end, he appointed his brother-in-law, Jang Song-teak, to vice-chairman of the National Defense Commission in June 2010. Then, in September of that year, he appointed his sister Kim Kyong-hui and his son Kim Jong-un as four-star generals in the Korean People's Army (KPA). Separate from this high-level restructuring, citizens continued to clandestinely leave the country in increasing numbers during 2009-2010. This prompted restructuring within some internal security organizations and increased efforts to stem the flow of defectors, many of whom were returned to the DPRK from China. Such transitions within the power-holding elite and internal security organizations have historically been accompanied by purges among the patronage groups of those who have been displaced from power and the fixing of responsibility for failure (real or perceived) upon groups, rather than individuals. This would result in the imprisonment or execution of a significant number of

individuals. Further, as indicated by the two DigitalGlobe/HRNK reports on the current status of Camp 22, although that camp remains operational, there are indications that it may be undergoing a transformation ranging from consolidation to complete closure and the replacement of the prisoner workforce with a more or less "regular" workforce. The North Korean internal security organizations and the Korean People's Army may have been implementing their camouflage, concealment and deception (CCD) capabilities to downsize or close down some of the camps—especially Camp 22, which is close to the border with China—while transferring the prisoners to other facilities within North Korea's vast system of unlawful imprisonment. The apparent expansion of Camp 25 may possibly be part of such a transformation.

Despite extensive imagery coverage of the camp area, there is very little open-source information to confirm or deny the reported camp population of 5,000 prisoners. However, continuous agricultural development, maintenance and construction activities provide unambiguous evidence that the camp has been and currently is operational. With the recent perimeter expansion and surge in the number of guard posts and construction activities, there is an even chance that the prisoner population has increased or that the camp is preparing for growth in the near future. Security has probably increased to account for growth.

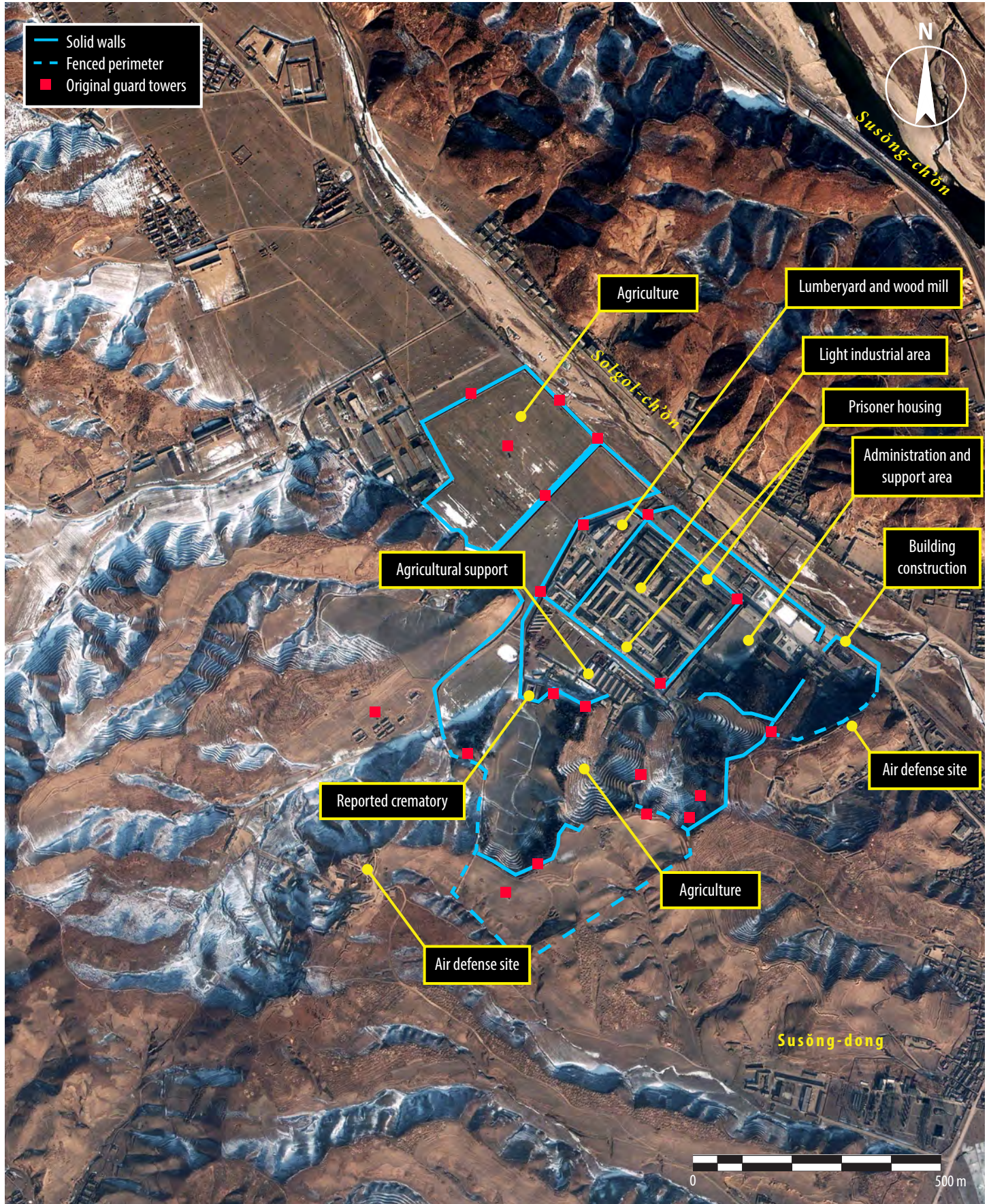
Continued monitoring of the area is recommended to derive more conclusive evidence of prisoner population size and possible human rights abuses.

Figure 1.



Map courtesy of ESRI, National Geographic

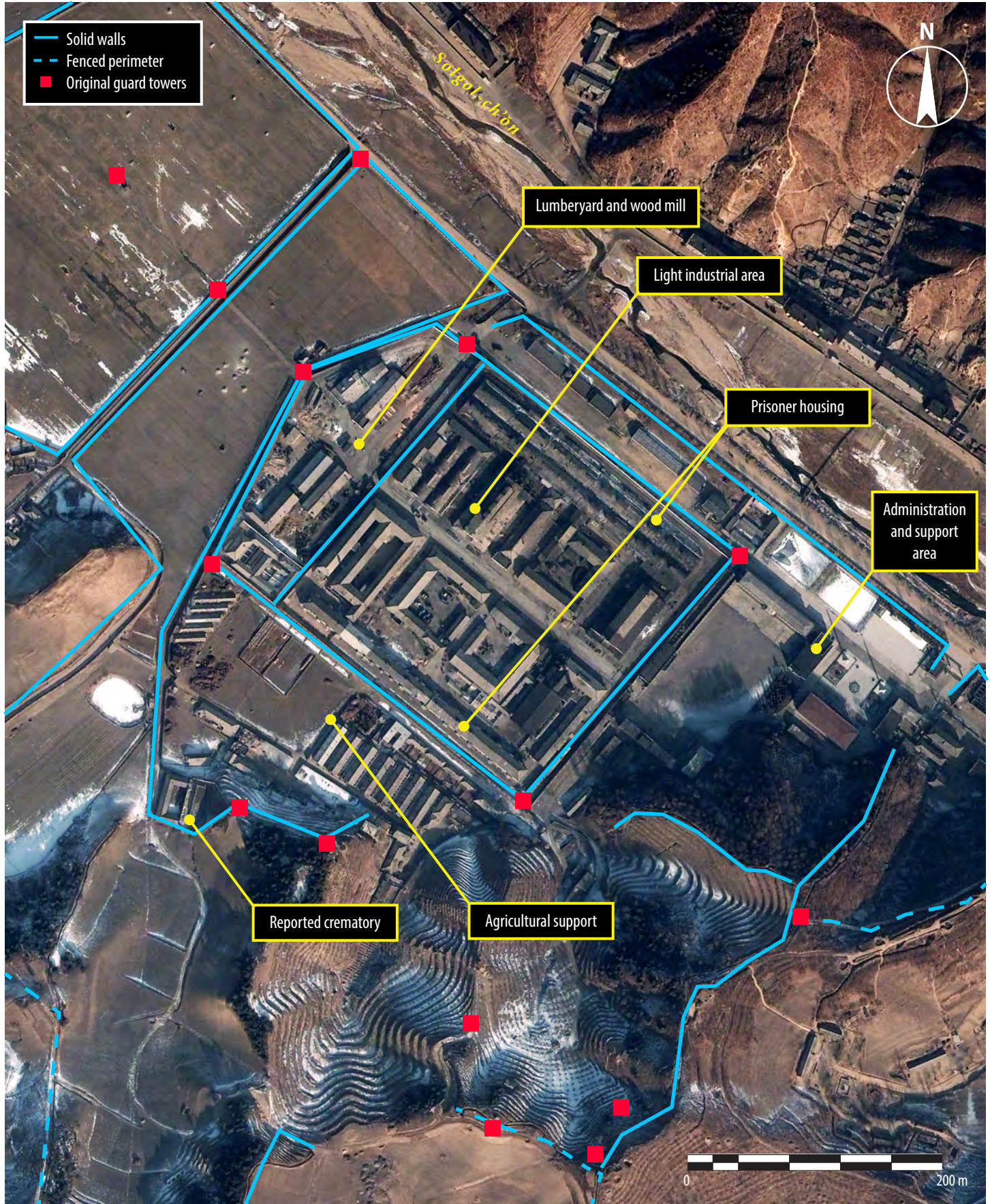
Figure 2. Overview of Camp 25 showing the perimeter and strategically placed guard towers.



DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, January 18, 2003, 41 49 56 N, 129 43 28 E

2003 - Central camp area

Figure 3. The central camp area, including agricultural support, a light industrial area, prisoner housing, a crematory and administration and support areas.



DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, January 18, 2003, 41 49 59 N, 129 43 33 E

2004

Figure 4. Little change is visible in 2004, though a new building has been erected.



DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, March 5, 2004, 41 49 56 N, 129 43 28 E

2005

Figure 5. Little change is visible in 2005.



DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, February 28, 2005, 41 49 56 N, 129 43 28 E

2006

Figure 6. Imagery from 2006 shows small changes to the light industrial and prisoner housing area. Two new possible guard towers are also visible.



DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, March 21, 2006, 41 49 56 N, 129 43 28 E

2007

Figure 7. Imagery from 2007 shows that several buildings have been razed and new buildings have been erected.



DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, April 11, 2007, 41 49 56 N, 129 43 28 E

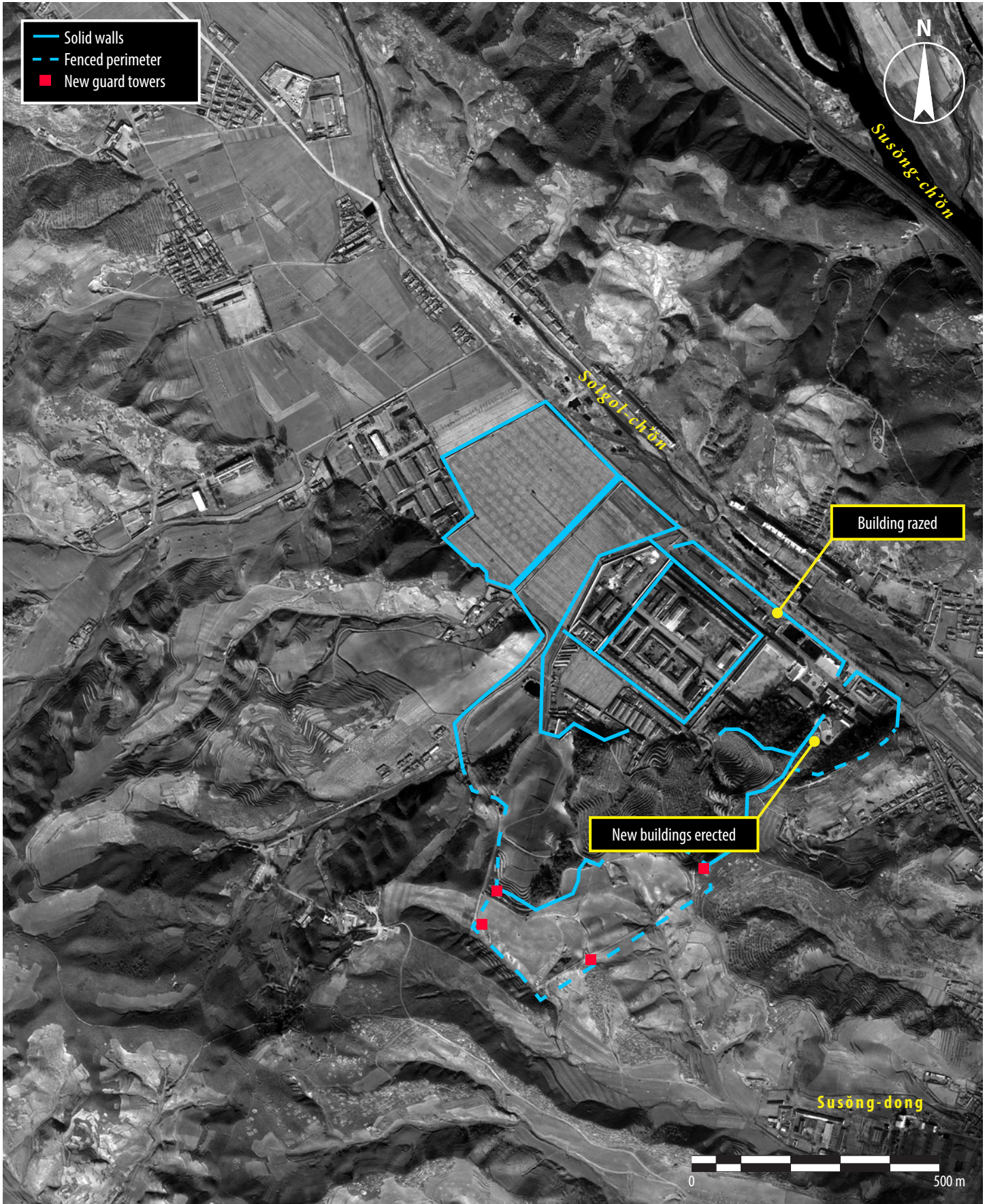
Figure 8. Several new buildings are visible in 2008 imagery. Fencing around buildings appears to be removed, and earth has been graded for construction.



DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, February 24, 2008, 41 49 56 N, 129 43 28 E

2009

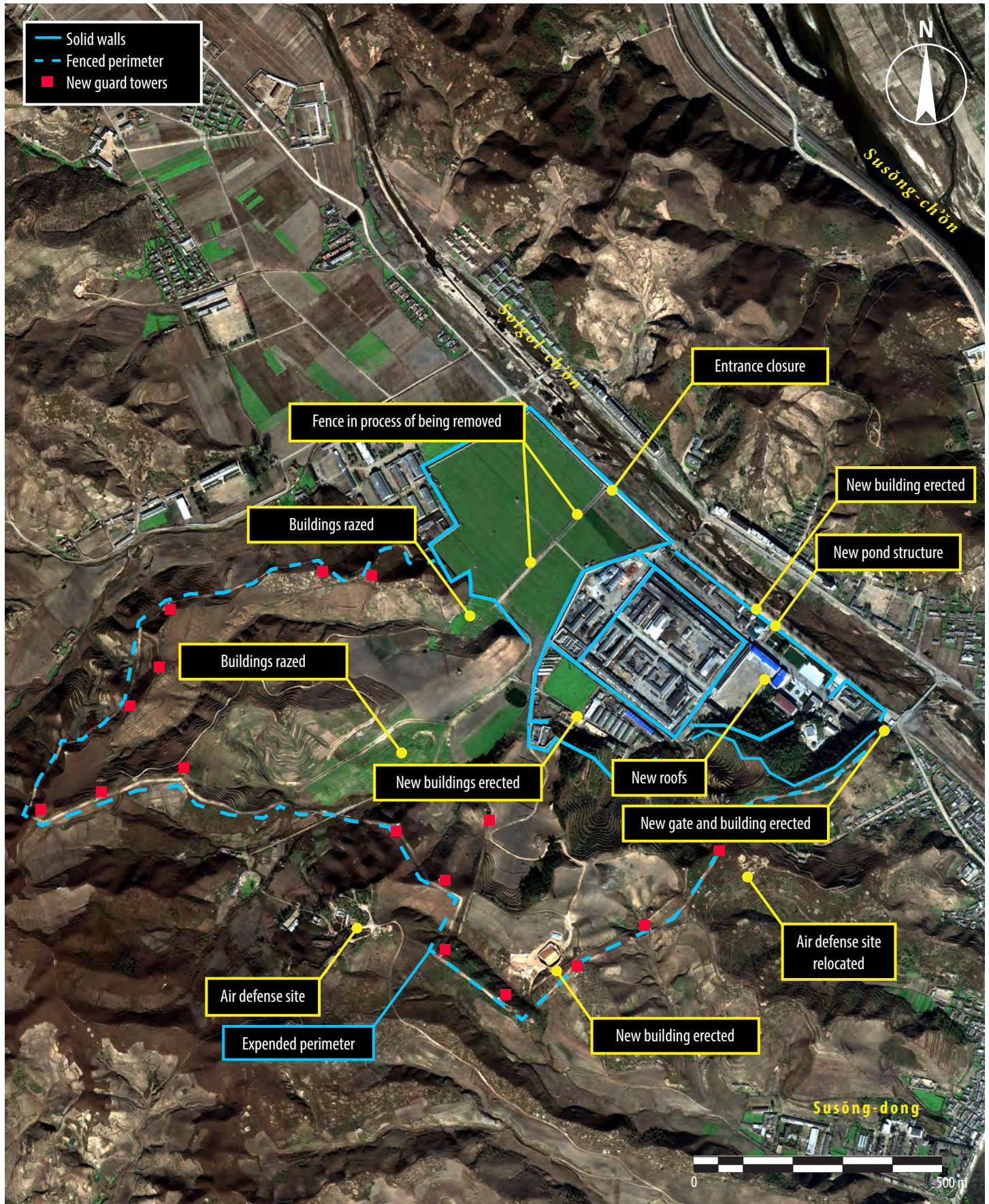
Figure 9. One building has been razed, and four new guard towers and one building have been erected in 2009 imagery.



DigitalGlobe Panchromatic Image, October 27, 2009, 41 49 56 N, 129 43 28 E

2010

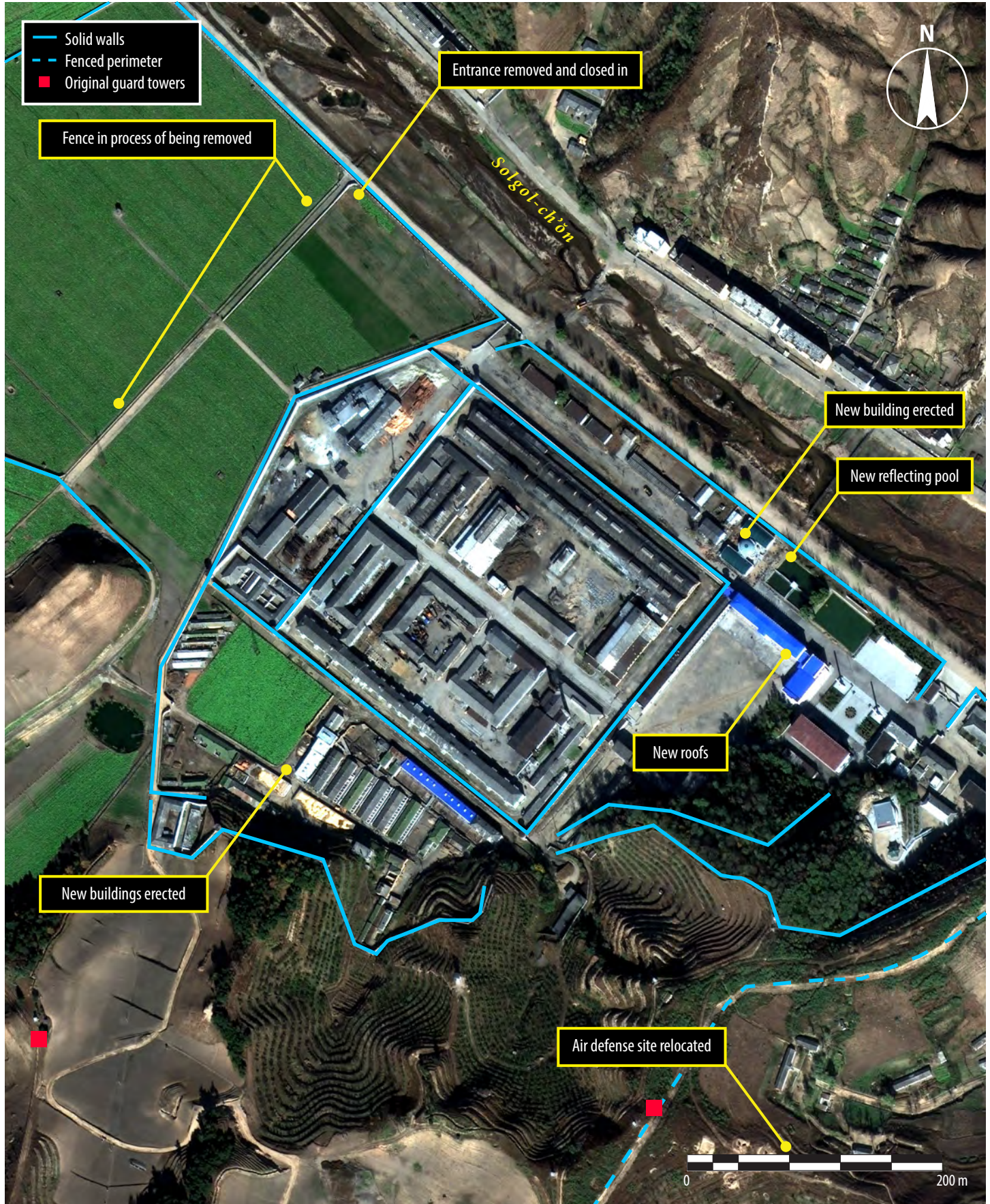
Figure 10. In 2010, the camp's perimeter was significantly expanded. New guard towers have been added, and numerous structures have been razed or are under construction.



DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, October 27, 2010, 41 49 56 N, 129 43 28 E

2010 - Central camp area

Figure 11. New buildings have been erected, and a fence is being removed. New roofs have been installed on the barracks, and a new fountain/reflecting pool is visible.



DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, October 27, 2010, 41 49 59 N, 129 43 33 E

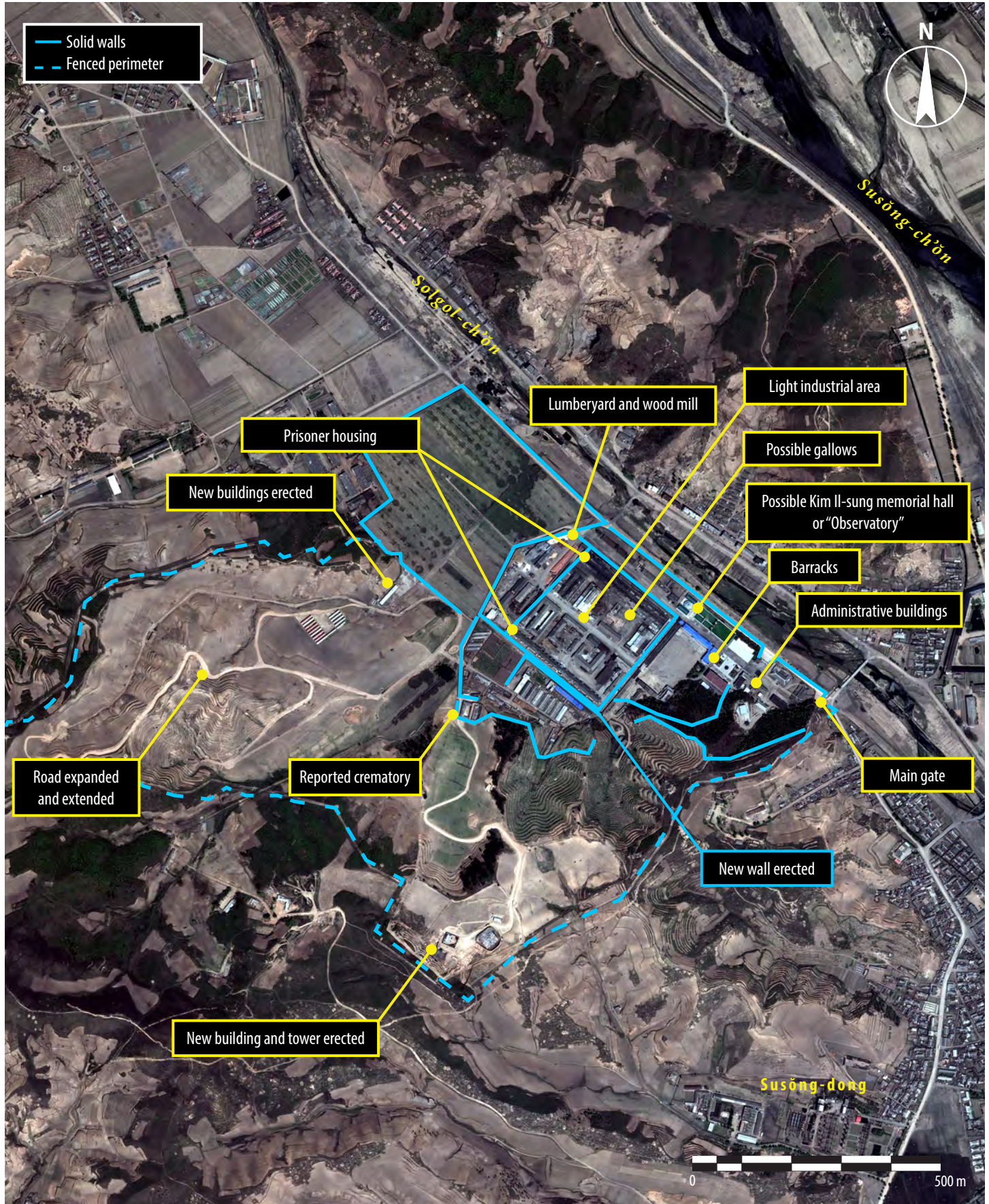
2011

Figure 12. With the exception of several new buildings, little change is visible between 2010 and 2011.



DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, January 6, 2011, 41 49 56 N, 129 43 28 E

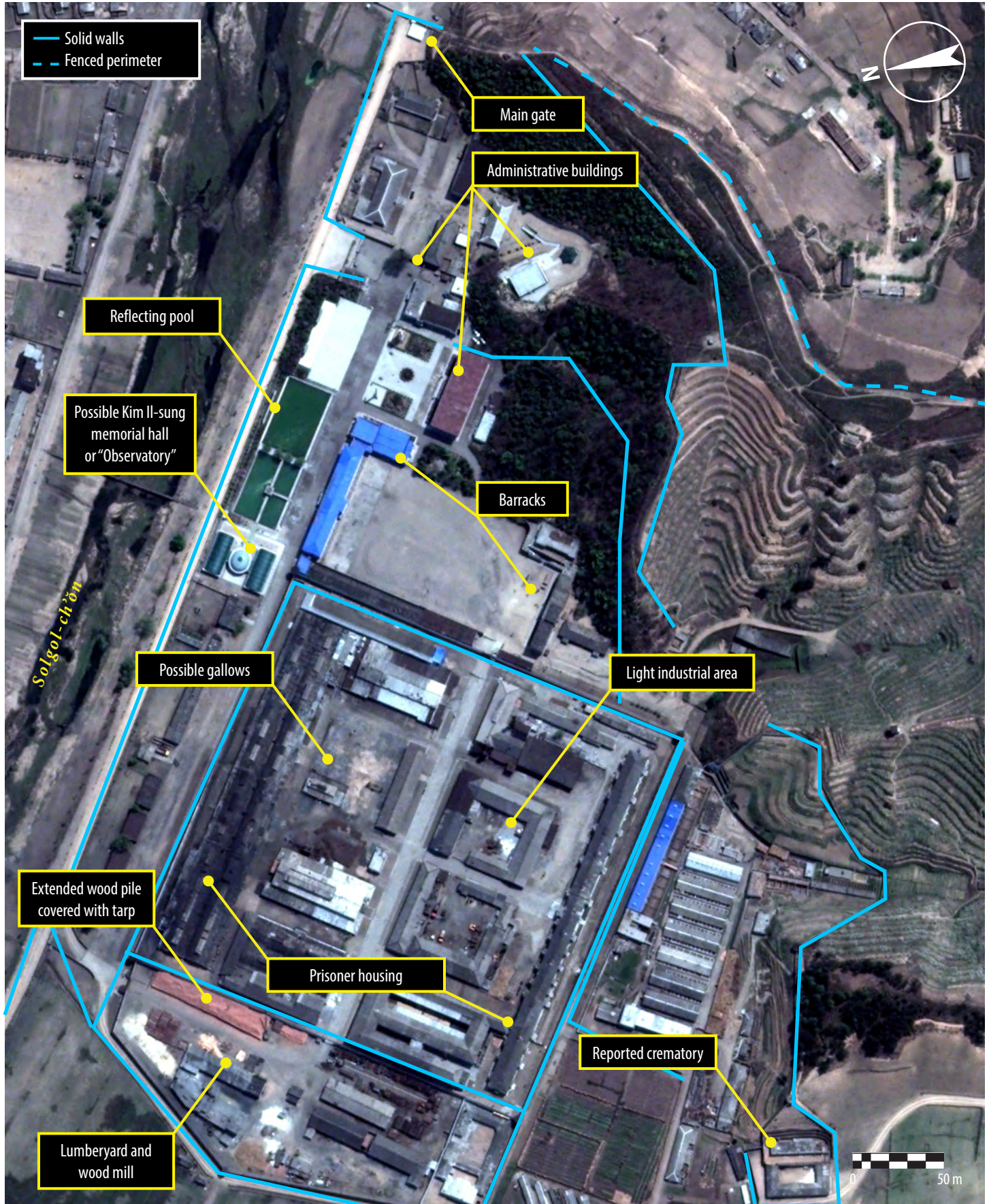
Figure 13. In 2012 imagery, roadways in the expansion have been widened. A new wall and new buildings have also been erected.



DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, May 19, 2012, 41 49 56 N, 129 43 28 E

2012 - Central camp area

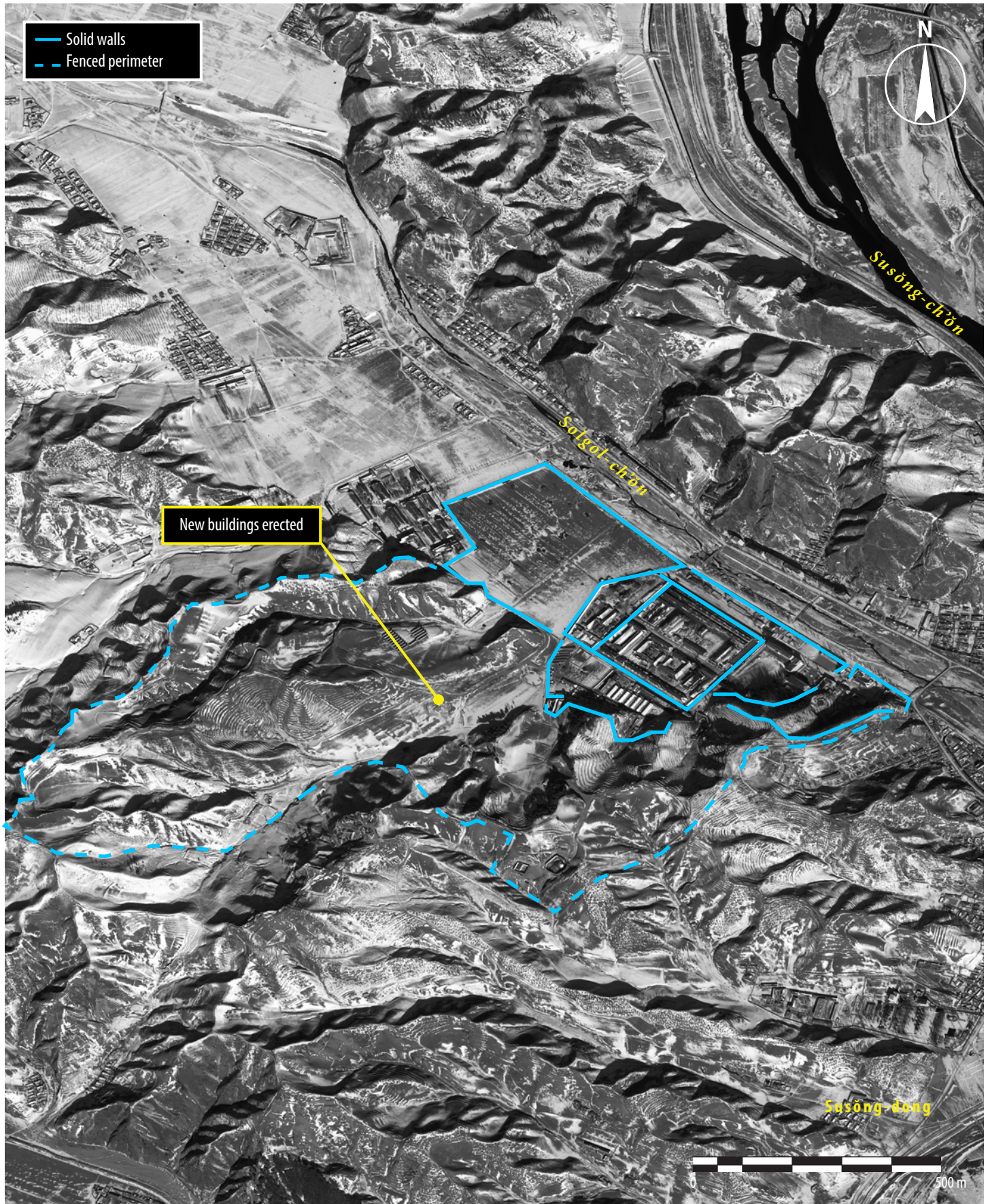
Figure 14. Major buildings and areas noted in 2012 imagery.



DigitalGlobe Natural Color Image, May 19, 2012, 41 49 59 N, 129 43 37 E

2013

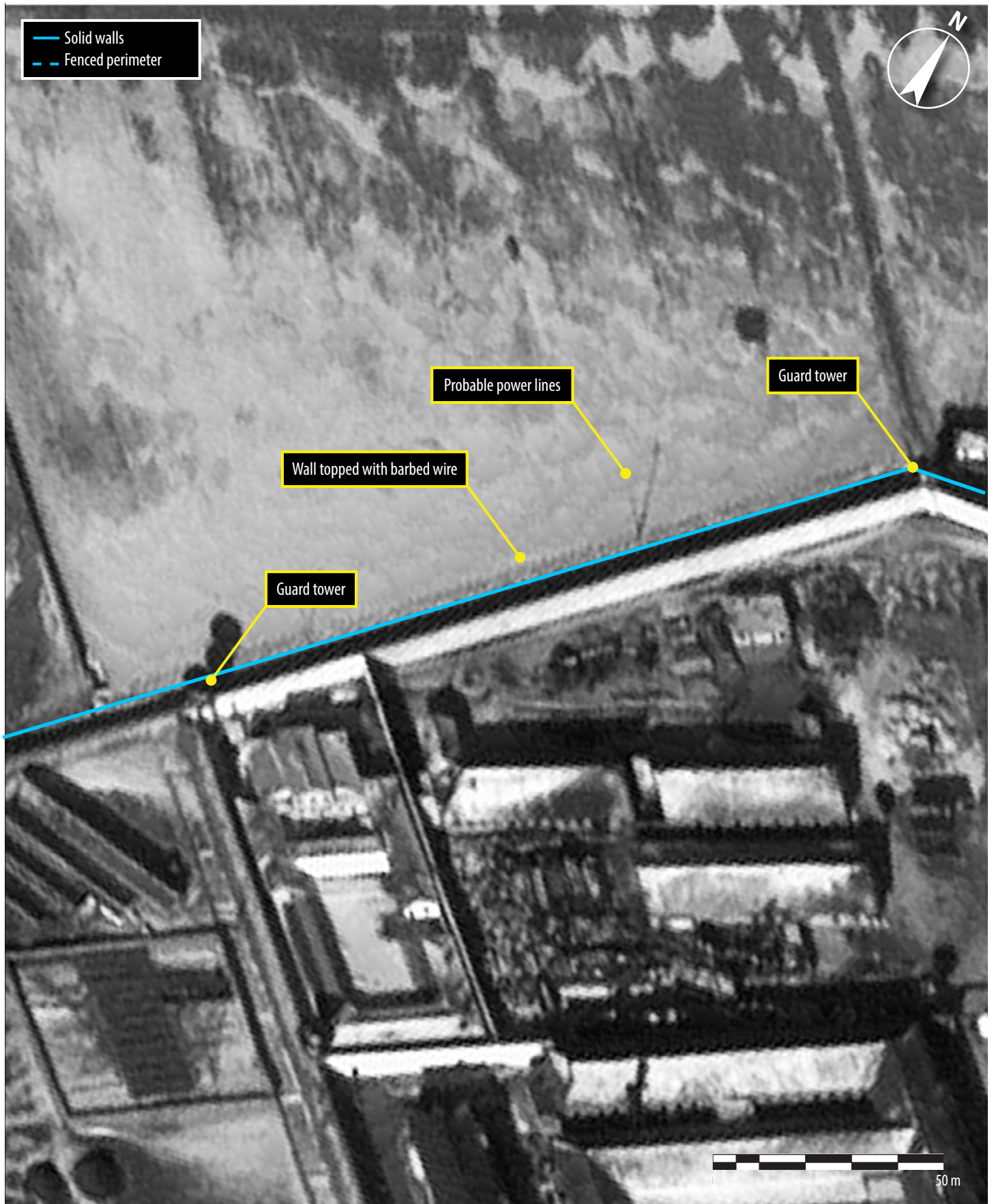
Figure 15. In this 2013 high off nadir image, new buildings have been erected outside of the main area of the camp.



DigitalGlobe Panchromatic Image, January 5, 2013, 41 49 56 N, 129 43 28 E

2013 - Light industrial and prisoner housing area

Figure 16. In this image of the northwest wall of the light industrial and prisoner housing area, a guard tower, probable power lines and a wall topped with barbed wire are visible.



DigitalGlobe Panchromatic Image, January 5, 2013, 41 50 03 N, 129 43 26 E

Gazetteer

Ch'ŏngjin-si	41°47'2.81"N	129°47'10.26"E
Susŏng-dong	41°49'38.46"N	129°44'8.98"E
Kwan-li-so No. 25 (Camp 25)	41°50'0.61"N	129°43'34.34"E

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