



## Monitoring North Korea's Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site

David Albright and Serena Kelleher-Vergantini

April 25, 2014

ISIS has been monitoring activity at North Korea's Punggye-ri nuclear test site. ISIS obtained Digital Globe satellite imagery dated April 23 and April 25, 2014 that confirms media reports of heightened activity at the test site. The images show in particular activity at the South Portal of the site, a possible site for North Korea's next nuclear test, and in the main support area.

On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, several containers were located in front of one of the South Portal's tunnel entrances. The higher resolution April 25<sup>th</sup> imagery shows more clearly what appears to be this collection of boxes or containers near this tunnel entrance.

Moreover, containers that appeared in previous imagery dated April 19<sup>th</sup> posted by [38North](#) have been moved. Additionally, in the April 23<sup>rd</sup> image, a white truck is visible on the road connecting the South Portal to the main support area.

In the April 25<sup>th</sup> imagery, a trailer truck is visible near the tunnel entrances at the South Portal. This may be the same truck from the April 23<sup>rd</sup> image that was closer to the main support area.

There have been media reports in South Korea of camouflage netting over one or more tunnel entrances at the South Portal. Netting would not be unexpected since North Korea has covered tunnel entrances with netting in the past. However, ISIS was unable to confirm through government sources the existence of this netting or find it definitively in the April 23<sup>rd</sup> image. However, the newest image which ISIS received late on April 25<sup>th</sup>, is of higher resolution than the April 23<sup>rd</sup> image and shows what may indeed be netting over one of the tunnel entrances at the South Portal. This netting could suggest that the next test would be at this portal and North Korea is trying to shield something from view.

At the West Portal, there do not appear to be any containers or trucks. However, the roads connecting the main support area to the West Portal appear heavily used.

Test site preparations do not necessarily mean that a test will occur in the next few days. North Korea has made preparations before and not tested. There is a political factor that plays a role in the decision to test. Does North Korea want to conduct an underground nuclear test while President Barack Obama is in the region? It may guarantee a harsher political response from the President. Nonetheless, determining North Korea's plans and schedules is always fraught with uncertainty. Thus, a test in the next several days cannot be ruled out by any means.

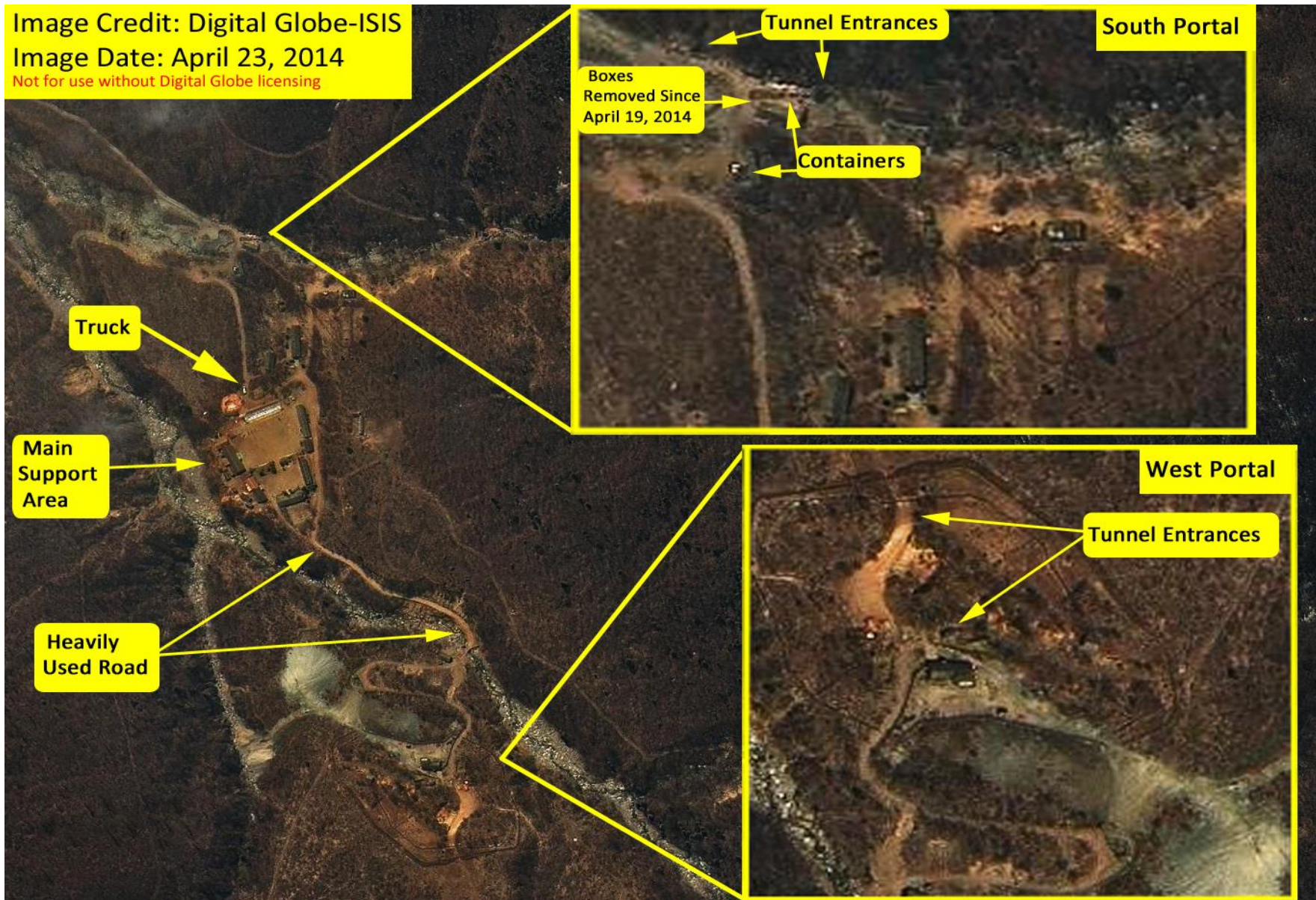


Figure 1. Digital Globe imagery showing North Korea's Punggye-ri nuclear test site on April 23, 2014.



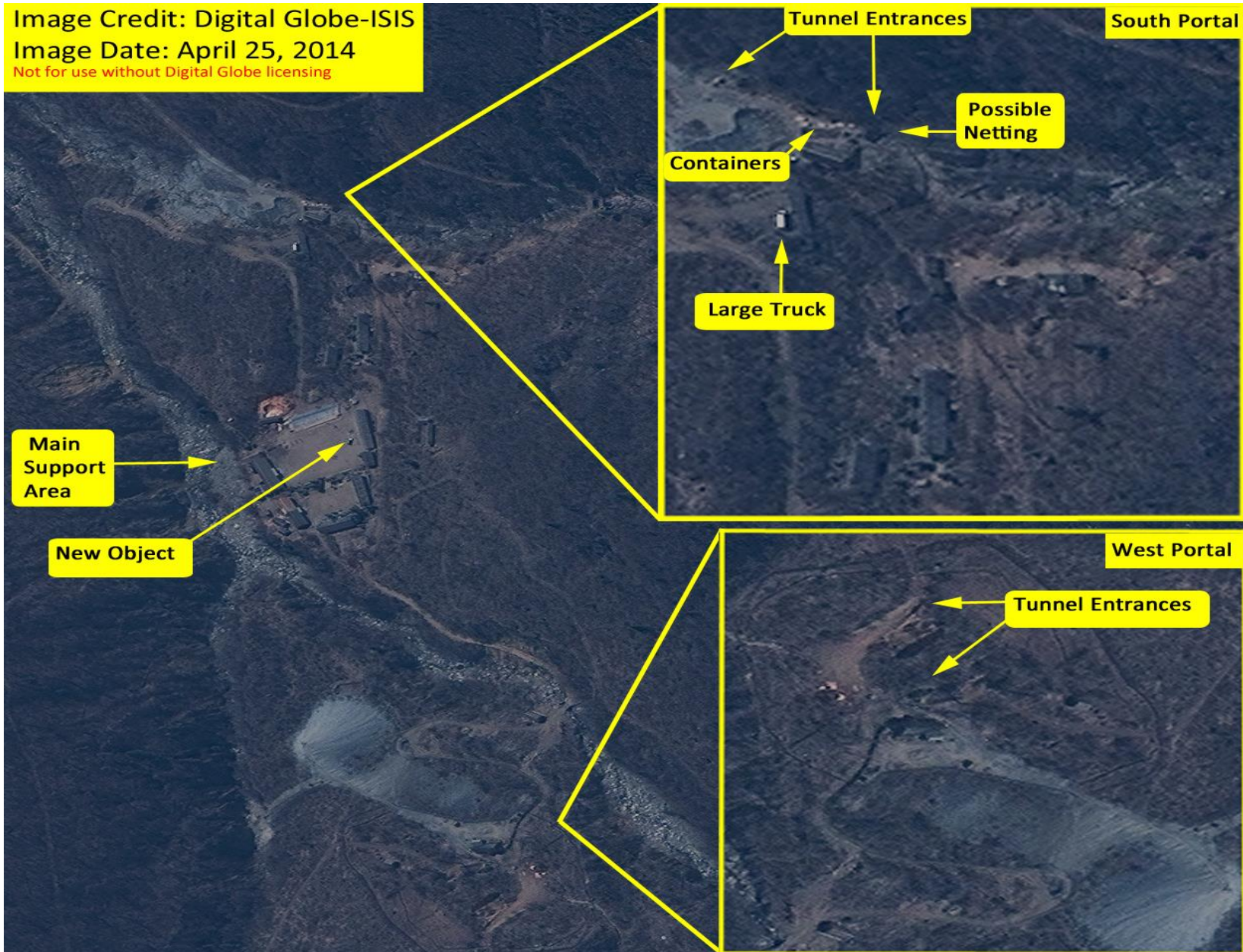


Figure 2. Digital Globe imagery showing North Korea's Punggye-ri nuclear test site on April 25, 2014.