

Chapter Four

International Efforts

In 1976 the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva gave the Group of Scientific Experts its first mandate. The Group was asked to specify the technical features of a possible international seismic data exchange system and to provide factual results and analysis of data exchange methods.

The key words here are “international seismic data exchange.” Equally important is an understanding of what the mandate does not encompass. The Group is not, for example, intended to design or develop an international system to monitor compliance with any hypothetical treaty. Rather, its objective is to facilitate verification by any interested state through a co-operative exchange of relevant seismic data.

In other words, what the Geneva Group has been doing since 1976 is discussing the technical and seismological means to achieve such an exchange of data among participating countries. The system, as now devised, would make data available to any participating country desiring it. Verification would remain a national responsibility.

Members of the Group of Scientific Experts meet in Geneva for two weeks twice each year. As a result of their initiatives, international experiments were conducted in 1980, 1981 and 1984 to test and improve a key element in worldwide monitoring, that of speedy international data exchange. By far the most important of these was the International Seismic Data Exchange experiment, conducted on a worldwide basis from October 15 to December 15, 1984.