
Conclusion

Commercial remote sensing systems could make valuable contributions to arms control verification and peacekeeping operations. Satellite imaging systems could provide basic information for preparatory planning of peacekeeping operations. Airborne systems could provide more detailed information for arms control verification or peacekeeping. Systems are available that can provide day or night and all-weather coverage. The two types of technology — satellite and airborne — are complementary and could provide two important links in a multi-method, layered monitoring system.

Commercial satellite systems are not well suited for direct monitoring of military ground forces. Imagery from these systems would be better for interpretation of larger, more permanent features. This type of data, for example, would be useful for initial planning of peacekeeping operations, in which general information is required for updating maps to show new roads and unmarked features such as military facilities.

Airborne systems can provide more timely information with finer spatial resolution than can the commercial imaging satellite systems. Imagery from airborne systems, therefore, would be more appropriate for direct monitoring of military forces in a peacekeeping or arms control verification context. The use of commercially available airborne systems for the overflights means that the sensors and aircraft could be inspected before any overflights are made.

Although commercially available remote sensing systems are similar in some respects to military reconnaissance systems, the context in which they are most likely to be used is quite different. Commercially available systems could be more appropriate for co-operative verification or peacekeeping missions than the use of military systems would be. Technology used for verification-related monitoring may well have to be made available to all participants in the treaty regime to prevent any perception that some are at a disadvantage. The need to protect sensitive military technology generally precludes the use of such systems in these situations. Moreover, monitoring for peacekeeping purposes must usually be done in situations where trust and confidence are fragile. In some cases, the use of advanced military systems may undermine whatever trust and confidence has developed.