

Verification measures to provide early warning against surprise attack included the US Open Skies proposal at the Geneva Summit in 1955. In the UN Disarmament Subcommittee that year, the Soviet Union agreed that an international verification organization should establish control posts at railway junctions, airports, and other places, in order to observe any dangerous concentration of forces. Canada supported both these proposals. In a separate initiative Canada "urged its allies to take a serious look at the possibility of an East-West agreement on the reciprocal establishment of ground observation posts".²⁴ Unfortunately, the Soviet position on ground control posts at the 1958 Surprise Attack Conference was unacceptable because it would have amounted to little more than self-inspection.

Canada was one of five NATO countries to attend the abortive 1958 Surprise Attack Conference in Geneva.²⁵ Proposed by the United States, "the Conference of Experts for the Study of Possible Measures which Might Be Helpful in Preventing Surprise Attack" met for six weeks and adjourned without reaching agreement on its agenda. While its full title contained the ambitious objective of preventing surprise attack, documents tabled by the West referred to the more modest but realistic objective of reducing the danger of surprise attack.

One Western document defined one type of surprise attack as "the unexpected assault by ground forces of one state or group of states on another state or group of states in overwhelming strength." It listed the "instruments of surprise attack" as short-range, surface-to-surface missiles with mobile launchers, troop-carrier aircraft, armoured fighting vehicles and mobile artillery. The document proposed a system for "observation and inspection" of ground forces. It concluded that a "significant reduction of the danger of surprise attack by ground forces is practicable and technically feasible through the use of an adequate number of observer teams with properly defined rights, with

²⁴ Tucker, Peace&Security, Summer 1987, p. 7.

²⁵ In addition to Canada, Western participants were the USA, the UK, France and Italy. Eastern countries at the conference were the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania and Albania.