

CSCE Network Aids Information Exchange

November 1993 marked the second anniversary of the inauguration of the CSCE Communications Network, which provides a direct means of exchanging electronic mail between participating states. The decision to establish the Network was contained in the Vienna Document 1990. Use of the Network complements existing diplomatic channels, but enables more rapid exchanges.

Like its predecessors, the "hot lines" of the Cold War, the CSCE Network is a classical confidence-building measure; however, it provides more than a channel for the timely and direct exchange of information during crises. The Network facilitates the implementation of information and notification measures designed to enhance military transparency. It has become an important tool in implementing the provisions of the CFE Treaty and the Vienna Document 1992. Similarly, it may play a key role for the Open Skies Treaty.

Three CSCE institutions and the foreign ministries of 32 CSCE states are linked via the Network. All "stations," which consist of readily available personal computers, transfer and re-

ceive messages using public Packet Switched Data Network (PSDN) services. Messages are routed to a central computer switch located in the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands, which automatically relays the messages to all intended recipients.

The Network has shown its usefulness in exchanges of information on CSCE meetings, military forces, annual calendars of military exercises, and military budgets. Its speed is particularly useful in sending notifications concerning verification inspections. Although users are free to send messages in any of the six official CSCE languages, most messages are sent using formats that reduce the need for translations.

Although a European company produced the overall design, the Network has a small but significant Canadian component, reflecting Canadian industry's strength in telecommunications. The electronic mail program is based on computer software developed by OSIware Incorporated of Burnaby, BC. In addition, the hardware interface between each station and the PSDN is produced by Eicon Technology Corporation of Montreal. ■

Open Skies Awaits Entry Into Force

The Open Skies Treaty was signed March 24, 1992 in Helsinki by Canada, the US and 23 European states. The aim of the Treaty is to develop greater openness and transparency by opening the airspace over signatory states to flights by unarmed surveillance aircraft. The agreement can be helpful in resolving uncertainties associated with the implementation of other arms control accords or confidence-building measures. Allowable sensors include cameras, synthetic aperture radars and infrared devices. Each of these systems complements the others to permit the acquisition of imagery on a 24-hour, all-weather basis.

By the end of 1992, Canada and the former Czech and Slovak Federal Republic had deposited their Instruments of Ratification. In the first 11 months of 1993, the two co-depositaries — Canada and Hungary — received additional Instruments from Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary and Iceland. Several other states have indicated that they are close to completing national ratification procedures. The Treaty will enter into force (for those states that have deposited Instruments) after a total of 20 Instruments have been deposited, as long as these include those states assigned passive quotas of eight or more overflights (namely Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, the UK and the US).

The Treaty created an Open Skies Consultative Commission (OSCC) with a mandate to oversee Treaty implementation and operation. The OSCC has held several sessions since Treaty signature. Within this body, decisions have been taken on such topics as the split in the former Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and the establishment of a new scale of distribution for common administrative costs. The OSCC has also agreed on extensions to the period of provisional application so that states have more time in which to deposit their Instruments of Ratification.

Working groups have met to discuss issues such as sensors, flight rules and procedures, notifications and formats, and communications and data. The texts of several OSCC decisions have been negotiated, and will enter into force simultaneously with the

Treaty. While awaiting the Treaty's entry into force, some states have held trial overflights for training purposes. Such flights are also useful for verifying the appropriateness of technical rules under consideration within the OSCC. In April, Canada participated in a trial conducted by the US over Alaska and western Canada. Subsequent trial flights were conducted in 1993 by the US over Hungary, by Germany and the UK over Russia, and by Russia over the UK and Germany.

In response to national programs of fiscal restraint and the economic restructuring affecting many signatories, efforts are underway to minimize the anticipated costs of implementing Open Skies. The Benelux states, for example, have invited other states that operate Lockheed Hercules C-130 aircraft to cooperate in acquiring and sharing a set of sensors suitable for use on that airframe. Canada and several other states have responded positively to this suggestion. As an additional cooperative venture, mem-

Working groups refine details of implementation.

bers of the Western European Union are considering the formation of a pool of aircraft that could be used to conduct overflights on a cost-recoverable basis for signatories.

With a view to broadening the potential usefulness of Open Skies flights, some signatories have proposed using the regime to conduct environmental monitoring flights. A two-day experts seminar was hosted by the OSCC in December 1992 to discuss the relevance of Open Skies sensors and operational procedures to monitoring environmental problems. While supportive of the need to address environmental issues on a priority basis, some states have expressed concern about the impact that environmental monitoring flights might have on conducting the flights for which the Treaty was originally designed. ■