

A combination of aerial photography and thermal infrared linescanning would provide a day or night capability to collect overhead imagery. For real-time operations, CCD cameras could be used during the day and FLIR systems for operations at night. SAR would provide an all-weather capability.

Aerial reconnaissance systems are flexible. Aircraft and sensors can be modified to suit required tasks. Overflight parameters can be varied to provide imagery of a specific scale or coverage at a particular time. The imagery can be produced in real time on the aircraft, down-linked to a ground station or recorded on magnetic tape or film to be examined at some later time.

Airborne systems could be particularly appropriate for multilateral verification and peacekeeping. Aerial surveillance would be within the technical and financial resources of many countries that could not develop or operate a more sophisticated satellite-based system. The option of restricting overflight coverage and allowing host country personnel to accompany the aircraft during overflights may make aerial reconnaissance politically acceptable by ensuring that unauthorized data collection does not occur.

Co-operative verification may benefit from the use of commercially available sensors and platforms. Aircraft could be subject to inspection or could be required to have host country observers on board when overflights are done. In this way, commercial sensors may avoid concerns of spying to the extent that use of special-purpose military reconnaissance systems would. At the same time, commercial sensors would be capable of collecting data that would be very valuable for arms control verification or peacekeeping support.