

Figure 1 Definition of Verification

Verify v.t., Establish the truth or correctness of, by examination or demonstration. (Concise Oxford Dictionary)

An arms control agreement is essentially a compromise in which each side bases at least part of its national security on the promises of the other contracting parties rather than on the strength of its own weaponry. Consequently, reciprocal confidence that all parties will live up to their obligations is essential, particularly in conditions of suspicion and uncertainty. Since the benefit to each participating state derives from the compliance of the other participants in the agreement, there is a natural desire for some form of external assurance that all participants are fulfilling their obligations. In simple terms, verification is the means by which such assurance is gained. Consequently, the reliability and adequacy of the verification measures associated with an arms control agreement are usually of vital importance, both to the successful negotiation of an agreement and to its successful implementation once it enters into force.

The actual methods used to verify an arms control agreement can vary widely: from on-site inspection where inspectors physically visit a facility, to the use of remote sensors located some distance from the area being examined. The latter systems have proven of particular importance for verifying bilateral arms control agreements between the USA and the USSR. Such systems, called "national technical means" (NTM), are not identified in