

Data Preservation, Distribution and False Alarms

The various elements of the verification infrastructure will be producing data of some kind on a fairly constant basis. In addition, the verification organization will have a major role in distributing CBM-related data among governments, armed forces headquarters, and possibly irregular armed groups. Long distances and difficult communications, as well as rugged terrain and harsh weather, will conspire to damage data and render their handling and distribution problematical. Systems will be needed to preserve and distribute data in a timely and secure fashion and this also may require a special degree of sophistication in the design of appropriate systems.

Lastly, and related to detection, is the thorny problem of false alarms. As can be easily imagined -- given communications difficulties, the circumstances surrounding sensor placement and operation, civilian peasant and animal movements, extraneous noise and the overall size of the area in question -- it is to be expected that the false alarm rate will be high.

Investigating false alarms, given the conditions under which the verification organization is working, may be difficult and, in the long run, may cause exhaustion among personnel. Follow-up missions of all kinds may prove long, tiring, costly, and periodically even impossible to achieve given ground and weather conditions. Unless a large number of personnel is available, or technical means to assist here as well can be found, this problem may be extremely difficult to resolve. Indeed, pressed by over-tasking and under-staffing, the teams may find that by the time they can respond to an alert, they may not be able to determine the cause of the "anomaly."

On all of these matters the co-operation of local armed forces and government could help greatly and is to be hoped for. However, the Central American republics have less than fully developed national infrastructures as it is, and war has taken its toll on them. Therefore it would be unwise to take much for granted where infrastructure is concerned. Given the problems of manning a sizeable force however, it is to be hoped that technology will assist in providing as multi-dimensional a system as possible.