

Satellite data could be used to detect change over a specified target area over a period of time. If large scale changes were scheduled to occur at a specific site, such as the construction or destruction of buildings, satellite imagery could be used to confirm or refute that such changes were occurring. Limitations on the spatial resolution and timeliness of commercially available imagery precludes its use for change detection applications which might be considered intelligence gathering, such as the detection and tracking of convoys of military vehicles. In this way, the use of commercially available satellite imagery might be acceptable within a peacekeeping context.

There are several factors that must be considered if satellite information is to be used for map updating purposes for United Nations peacekeeping. Time to order and process the satellite images for a specific site can be a limiting factor if speed is required. Satellite images can take as long as one month to arrive once ordered, although special requests are sometimes considered. The frequency of the satellite overpasses of an area of interest is dependent on the repeat cycle of the particular spacecraft. For example, the SPOT satellite overflies the same point on the ground approximately every 26 days. Therefore, a careful catalogue search must be done before any data is chosen and ordered. The spatial resolution of satellite imagery restricts the use of such data to large scale mapping such as major construction projects of large buildings or transportation systems.

In contrast to commercial satellite systems, airborne imagery is much more versatile and flexible. It can be acquired over any particular area at almost any time required assuming an aircraft and sensors are available. Delays in obtaining the information are minimal and the resolution of the images is generally superior to that provided by satellite data.