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Peace operations and the military dimensions of verification

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Despite the enormous range and volume of research into peace operations that has been carried out since the early 1990s and the increasing importance of verification and monitoring in the implementation of peace agreements, verification and monitoring remain a neglected backwater of study in the peace operations field. The conceptualisation of verification and monitoring with regard to peace agreements owes more to traditional arms control theory than to thinking about conflict resolution, while practice often owes more to standard military concepts of operations than to any innovations designed specifically with verification and monitoring in mind.

This chapter considers the verification and monitoring of peace agreements, with a focus on the military elements, whether carried out by an observer mission, a peacekeeping operation or some other type of peace undertaking mounted by the international community or some part of it. Such missions will be designed to help implement an agreement between warring parties, whether it be a simple ceasefire or a comprehensive peace agreement, using a mixture of incentives and disincentives. The latter may include some elements of peace enforcement, either through sanctions or through military action. Given such a focus, the chapter is *ipso facto* mostly concerned with United Nations (UN) operations, but other multilateral peace operations will also be considered where necessary.

Naturally, verification and monitoring can only play a role once an agreement has been reached to end armed conflict or at least curtail it. This is not to say that they cannot be attempted while fighting is continuing, as was the experience of the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) deployed by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 1998–99. However, such circumstances are

not ideal and usually lead to withdrawal or pressure to re-establish, or even renegotiate from scratch, the ceasefire or peace accord on which a monitoring role for outsiders is predicated.

Verification is the process by which compliance with an agreement is determined. This involves using information to make a judgement about the behaviour of the parties. While such judgements are meant in theory to be impartial, verification judgements take place in a political context: they are invariably made by a political body which perforce is obliged to take into account the political implications of any verification judgement reached.

Monitoring, on the other hand, is essentially the technical process of collecting information on which a verification judgement is to be made. It may be done remotely or on-site, by human beings or by technical means. It is, at least in theory, meant to be apolitical and impartial.

Verification theory posits several roles for verification. Although these were developed in the context of arms control and disarmament, mainly in the area of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, they are also applicable to verification in peace operations. The three main roles of verification are: the detection of violations; the deterrence of potential violators; and confidence-building, including by allowing compliant states the opportunity to credibly demonstrate their compliance.

While 100 percent verifiability of a particular agreement is rarely achievable, verification nonetheless should raise the costs of non-compliance for a violating party. It does this by increasing the risk of exposure and subsequent sanctioning, both by other parties and by the international community generally, and by forcing a determined violator to expend more resources in attempting to conceal a violation. Verification also serves the interests of compliant parties by providing early warning of potential or actual violations, permitting them to take precautionary steps or countermeasures, and by providing a sound legal or quasi-legal basis for undertaking unilateral or collective action against violators.

Verification and monitoring in peace operations

Verification and monitoring can be applied to a whole range of elements that make up a peace implementation process, most notably electoral, human rights and civilian police aspects. However, the monitoring and verification of the military

aspects of peace operations has the longest lineage of all. Ceasefire agreements historically have often provided for monitoring by a neutral third party.

Essentially any military aspect of peace agreements can be verified, provided there is some type of accord that sets benchmarks or standards against which the behaviour of parties can be judged and verification decisions made. Oddly, even though verification judgements have been frequently made in assessing compliance with peace agreements, it is only relatively recently that the term 'verification' has been used in relation to them. There seems to have been a preference for describing peace agreements as being 'monitored', apparently because the term was perceived as not having the same connotations of rigour and coercion as 'verification'.

There are significant differences between the verification of arms control and disarmament agreements on the one hand and of peace agreements on the other. The verification of peace agreements is usually less well defined and less well organised than is the case with arms control agreements. Particularly in the case of arms control agreements dealing with weapons of mass destruction, where even minor breaches can have enormous strategic and political implications, verification systems are minutely negotiated and highly organised. In peace agreements there is almost an expectation of imperfection, since it is recognised that during the winding down of armed conflict there is often a period of prolonged uncertainty before the situation settles down. Minor infractions are often overlooked on the grounds that they may not necessarily presage the emergence of more significant challenges to an agreement and that to overreact to them might jeopardise the continuing peace process. In the implementation of peace agreements there is often an expectation that monitoring and verification activities will not be prolonged and that therefore they can be makeshift and hence easily terminated. In arms control it is at least implicitly recognised that monitoring may be required in perpetuity. More robust systems therefore tend to be instituted.

Perhaps the most crucial difference is that the monitoring and verification of peace agreements is but a small part of a larger process designed to move the status quo—the end of fighting—towards a sustainable peace. As long as the process is moving in the right direction, monitoring and verification need not be fetishised, as sometimes appears to be the case in arms control and disarmament. In arms control and disarmament, verification and monitoring are usually directed at pre-

serving the status quo once a particular level of armaments has been reached or their absence has been established.

Notwithstanding these differences, there are also strong similarities between the fields of arms control and disarmament and peace agreements. Impartiality, transparency and confidence-building are leitmotifs of monitoring and verification in both cases. Also in both cases the verification of declared items is easier than the verification of non-declared items. And finally, in both fields, monitoring and verification are devoted to discovering veracity in an essentially political context, in which allegation and counter-allegation can rapidly sour the atmosphere of trust that monitoring and verification are designed to establish and sustain.

Traditional verification and monitoring activities

The most conspicuous verification and monitoring activity and the one most often associated with the early UN peacekeeping missions, such as those in the Middle East, was the monitoring of a ceasefire line. This simply involved the stationing of peacekeepers along the line, equipped with the normal military means of surveillance and detection. As time went on, fixed monitoring positions would be established. Often the whole monitoring environment would become entrenched, static, increasingly routine and neglected in terms of funding and personnel. An example is the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), which has languished in the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir since 1949.[1] Nonetheless, the mission continues to file reports with the UN Security Council about violations of the so-called ceasefire between the two states. Another example is the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), established in 1974, which observes the ceasefire and buffer zone between Israel and Syria.

Such monitoring missions are not only often neglected, but they are usually detached from any political processes which may be going on around them. While, in addition to their monitoring activities, they may engage in limited local 'peacemaking', between local communities or between low-level military commanders or factions, or may even indulge in limited peace-building through assisting local communities with medical support or modest aid projects, they are essentially divorced from the larger political issues at stake. Indeed, they can often become pawns in a larger political game, as has been the fate of the inaptly named UN

Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which has been alternately ignored, attacked and manipulated by the Israelis, the Syrians, the Lebanese and their various factions since being deployed in 1978.

Post-Cold War missions: new roles for verification and monitoring

The end of the Cold War resulted in more peace operations, of greater complexity and size, often integrating a number of implementation tasks in one operation.[2] Peace missions suddenly became an integral part of comprehensive peace processes rather than mere stopgap measures to allow political processes to begin. In these missions, such as those in Cambodia, Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, East Timor and Kosovo, monitoring and verification came to be part of a much larger undertaking rather than the main undertaking. In such missions, however, monitoring and verification have paradoxically become politically more important, because such means are used to determine not simply the compliance of the parties to the agreement, but the success of the mission and its progress through various stages of an evolving and complex peace process. Such a process often aims at nothing less than the re-establishment of democratic governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

For example, in Cambodia in 1994 military observers (MilObs) on the Thai–Cambodian border were able to prove through their monitoring activities that the arms embargo imposed on the Cambodian parties was being violated by Thai military personnel supplying arms to the Khmer Rouge.[3] Since Thailand was also a key party to the 1991 Paris Peace Accords on Cambodia, public exposure of Thailand risked undermining the whole peace process. The issue eventually went all the way to the UN Security Council, resulting in political pressure, mostly on a bilateral basis by the US, being applied to the Thais. Similarly, the political importance of monitoring and verification was highlighted when the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was obliged to undertake strenuous efforts, including the dispatch of verification teams throughout the country, to verify that no Vietnamese soldiers remained there after their announced withdrawal.[4] A failure to disprove Khmer Rouge allegations in this matter would have given credence to the guerrilla group's allegations that the peace process as a whole was stacked against them, including through the illicit presence of Vietnamese forces.

The greater importance of monitoring and verification in peace operations today is due not just to a higher political salience but to the heightened media attention paid to peace operations and the instantaneity of the transmission of information. An incident that violates or is presumed to violate a peace accord can be flashed by the news media around the world before a peace mission has had time to investigate it thoroughly and make a sober assessment of its significance. Peace missions have thus been required to improve their monitoring and verification capabilities, and their capacity to deal with alleged violations.

The military aspects of verification and monitoring

While, overall, more and more aspects of peace processes are being subjected to monitoring and verification, military matters remain at the forefront. Military aspects of a peace process that may require monitoring and verification include: the ceasefire and separation of forces; the withdrawal of forces; the establishment of buffer zones or demilitarised zones; disarmament; cantonment; demilitarisation; demobilisation; the reintegration of armed personnel into society; and arms embargoes.

The increasing demands on peace operations for monitoring and verification have appeared at the same time as other demands have been imposed on the military and other components of peace operations. For instance, unlike during the Cold War, military observers can today be involved in assisting in the negotiation of accords as well as overseeing their implementation. In both Cambodia and Mozambique, UN MilObs offered technical advice on the ceasefire-monitoring aspects of the peace agreement as it was being negotiated. Such involvement helps to ensure that monitoring and verification tasks are realistic, affordable and manageable within a given time frame. This situation is quite different from that found in the arms control and disarmament world, where implementation and verification functions, for instance, within international implementation bodies, are normally kept quite distinct.

As in arms control agreements, the easiest task of monitors in peace agreements is to confirm the presence or absence of declared items or activities (for example, surrendered weaponry or numbers of troops deployed along a border). It is much more difficult to verify the existence of undeclared items or activity, since it is

impossible for verification to prove a negative. In Kosovo, for instance, although the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) committed itself to surrendering all its weaponry once the province came under UN and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) control, in fact it has proved impossible to verify complete compliance with this undertaking. In Northern Ireland it has proved possible to verify that a limited number of arms identified by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and sealed in arms dumps have not been used between visits by international inspectors and that they have been put 'beyond use'; but it has not proved possible to determine what proportion of the total IRA holdings this amounts to, since that has not been declared.[5] Verification of the total amount is not therefore in prospect. As in the Northern Ireland case, this can cause significant political problems.

Jane Boulden has identified what she terms 'multi-layered verification packages' for military monitoring operations, in which each element has its own purpose but supports all the others.[6] The package includes:

- observers;
- information provided by the parties (baseline data);
- inspections to confirm the accuracy of information (baseline inspections);
- data provided by outside parties;
- ongoing inspections;
- patrols and observation in the case of ceasefires and agreed troop levels or positions;
- aerial surveillance;
- other remote monitoring, including by automatic sensors; and
- a joint commission process.

Such 'packages' include a chain of command for dealing with reported and alleged violations. Violations that are sufficiently serious and which cannot be handled in the field are usually reported to field headquarters, both to the military commander and to the representative of the UN Secretary-General or other 'political' representative in the case of non-UN missions. Often some type of liaison body, or joint commission, comprised of representatives of the parties to the conflict as well as of the mission, will have been established to handle allegations of non-compliance. In Cambodia this was called a Military Mixed Commission. However, it may also

be a civilian body, such as the so-called Security Committee established in Somalia by the US Special Envoy to Somalia, Robert Oakley, during the US-led United Task Force (UNITAF) intervention in 1992–93.[7]

If violations are serious and persistent, UN headquarters in New York and the UN Secretary-General will be notified. Political pressure may then be applied to the party or parties concerned. If this fails to rectify the situation, the Secretary-General may report to the Security Council, which could take appropriate action, such as imposing sanctions. In any event, the Council is kept informed of all notable violations through regular reports by the Secretary-General on the progress of each peace operation in the field.

Military observers

Military observers tend to be the backbone of monitoring and verification in respect of peace accords. They are usually unarmed and may or may not be in military uniform (although they may sometimes be in civilian uniforms).[8] They may be deployed and organised separately from the regular peacekeeping contingents which may be deployed in the same theatre contemporaneously. In this way they maintain their separate identity, which can be seen as enhancing their impartiality. A MilObs force often made up of individual officers from a wide variety of nations.

Many of the problems encountered by military observers in the field reflect those which civilian police monitors encounter. They lack the level of military support that fielded battalions of peacekeepers have, their chain of command is usually less robust and they are often deployed in remote locations. They are also vulnerable to attack, hostage-taking, harassment and, perhaps surprisingly, boredom. Since they are forward-deployed and often unarmed, they are a vulnerable target for warring factions wishing to put pressure on a peace operation as a whole, as happened in Bosnia during the deployment of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the mid-1990s.

Naval and air forces

Aside from military observers on the ground, naval and air forces are increasingly being used in monitoring and verification tasks. Naval forces have helped monitor, for example, the arms embargo imposed on the states of the former Yugoslavia.[9]

In the case of the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) for Iraq, which for several years monitored Iraqi compliance with a key aspect of the Gulf War ceasefire agreement—Iraq's pledge to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction capabilities—the US Air Force actually loaned a U-2 aircraft to the monitoring body to assist in its verification effort. The acquisition by an international body of such a powerful monitoring tool was unprecedented.

Less powerful but nonetheless significant air monitoring capabilities are envisaged under the 1992 Open Skies Agreement. The agreement, which is likely to enter into force in the near future, opens the entire territory of each state party to aerial observation by any other state party, using unarmed fixed-wing aircraft with an agreed suite of sensors and fixed-imagery resolutions.[10] Day and night capability is available. In addition to using such capabilities for monitoring compliance with arms control and disarmament agreements, Open Skies can also be used to monitor peace agreements involving the parties. Although the sensor resolutions have been set to permit detection and identification of heavy conventional weaponry, such as tanks, helicopters and artillery pieces, they could also detect large-scale troop movements. In addition to the 25 European states that negotiated the treaty, Open Skies is currently open to any former Soviet state that did not participate in the negotiations and, after it enters into force, any member of the OSCE. In future any state may apply to the Open Skies Consultative Commission to join.

Monitoring and intelligence

Since monitoring is essentially the gathering of information, it has some similarities with intelligence-gathering. Traditionally, the UN and other international bodies have officially been averse to intelligence-gathering to support their verification functions. However, the UN has often collected information surreptitiously and unofficially, as in the case of its peacekeeping mission in the Congo in the 1960s, or relied on national contingents to provide the necessary information. Increasingly it is being recognised by the UN that intelligence information, whether it calls it that or not, is essential in the most difficult monitoring cases, such as that of Iraq. Quite apart from helping to ensure the safety of its personnel, intelligence information can immeasurably bolster the UN's credibility in determining compliance with a peace agreement.

Yet there remain continuing dilemmas over the UN's use of intelligence information and its involvement in collecting it, especially with regard to the tension between the UN's advocacy of transparency and the requirement for secrecy in intelligence-gathering. Since peace operations are designed to increase the confidence of the parties involved that the implementation of a peace process is proceeding fairly and effectively, particularly by encouraging transparency in military matters, it would appear to be counterproductive for the UN to be gathering and using secret information. The UN in any event often lacks personnel who are competent to interpret intelligence information, especially that which may be foisted on it by a party with its own agenda. It may, moreover, be impossible to use secret information for verification purposes, since a decision on non-compliance has to be based on information that can be released. A determination that a party is in serious breach of its obligations needs to be shown to be just and safe in the court of international opinion.

The use of force

The increasing use of force in peace operations, both by parties to the conflict and by the military component of peace operations, can have a profound effect on the monitoring and verification environment. The substantial use of force can render monitoring and verification activities completely useless (because conditions are changing too quickly) or impossible (because access is completely denied). The parties to a conflict may be unable or unwilling to distinguish between military observers and normal peacekeeping troops, regarding them all as part of the UN 'machine'. Military observers are vulnerable to being taken hostage or killed, as in Sierra Leone and Bosnia. They are more vulnerable even than lightly armed peacekeepers because they are unarmed and often deployed in small numbers in remote locations. States have increasingly proved unwilling to provide MilObs for UN missions as a result of the apparent increase in the dangers they face. Providing military protection for MilObs would draw resources away from other peacekeeping tasks or require larger deployments of armed peacekeepers. While technology may be able to supplant or supplement some of the monitoring functions of human observers, thereby lessening the element of danger, they are unlikely ever to be entirely replaced.

Techniques and technology

It is perhaps surprising, given the capacity of new technologies, that the monitoring and verification of the military aspects of peace operations is still so dependent on the humble human observer. Apart from improved military surveillance capabilities which come with national troop contingents (for example, night vision goggles and better communications), there has been little recognition that technology may play a larger, more systematic role in cooperative multilateral verification missions.[11] One notable exception is the long-standing non-UN mission in the Sinai, the Multilateral Force and Observers (MFO), which from its inception in 1982 has used relatively high technology, including ground sensors and aerial imagery, for monitoring and verification purposes.[12]

There are a number of ways in which technology could help improve monitoring and verification of the military aspects of peace missions in the future:

- the use of satellite reconnaissance with increasingly sophisticated sensors and improved resolution (commercial satellites are now supplying information comparable to that of the early military satellites, at low cost and to any customer);[13]
- manned or unmanned overflights at high altitudes, using such aircraft as the U-2 employed by UNSCOM, or at lower levels using such craft as the US Global Hawk unmanned vehicle or, better still, the cheap micro-craft currently under development;[14]
- ground sensors and automatic sentries, linked to monitoring centres, which can help reduce the number of ground troops needed;[15]
- information technology (IT), including data fusion techniques;
- use of the Global Positioning System (GPS), which is no longer subject to signal degradation by the US military, to pinpoint monitoring stations, objects of observation and violations more accurately;[16]
- electronic communications, including the Internet, e-mail and mobile telephony, to speed the monitoring process, the verification decision-making process and the implementation of compliance measures;
- hand-held detectors for detecting and monitoring landmines, unexploded ordnance and chemical and biological warfare agents; and
- underground radar to detect hidden caches of weapons.[17]

There are several problems for UN and other multilateral forces in attempting to deploy and use new monitoring and verification technologies. First, it can be expensive, although the cost of new technology often declines rapidly once it becomes widely available. Second, expert training is needed to permit personnel to use advanced technology, especially when troops are drawn from a wide variety of countries and military backgrounds. In UN operations training is often seriously lacking even for conventional military tasks. Third, new technology may produce information overload, overwhelming the capacity of missions in the field to successfully use the information that becomes available. Peace missions will need to invest in analytical capabilities as well as data-gathering ones. Fourth, technology may come to be deployed and used for its own sake, rather than as a useful adjunct to human capabilities. Technology may not be as flexible or creative as human monitors, who can be readily switched to different tasks, who may notice activities for which they are not programmed and who will understand the subtleties of situations better.

Monitoring the monitors: regional peace operations with UN oversight

There have now been several instances of regional peacekeeping operations being monitored by small UN monitoring missions to ensure that they fulfil their mandate properly and act according to agreed peacekeeping procedures and standards. The regional missions have in all these instances been dominated by the military component and military tasks rather than the full range of personnel and activities found in comprehensive UN missions. Hence these are mostly cases of (UN) military personnel observing the activities of other (regional) military personnel. One of the most prominent and controversial examples to date is the UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), which from 1993–97 observed the troubled peacekeeping operation mounted by a regional organisation, the Economic Organization of West African States (ECOMOG). Another example is the UN Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT), which to this day monitors the activities of a peacekeeping mission fielded by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). These are difficult undertakings, since regional organisations are often dominated by a local hegemon—Nigeria and Russia in the aforementioned cases—making the regional operations less multilateral than the UN would normally counte-

nance. The regional operation is thus inevitably less impartial and more subject to national political and military agendas than a pure UN operation. While the presence of another monitoring mission fielded by the UN may add an extra layer of complexity to what might already be a complex monitoring environment, by 'monitoring the monitors' such UN missions can be a cost-effective use of limited UN resources. The alternative may be the deployment of a full-scale UN mission.

Conclusion

Monitoring and verification are playing increasingly important roles in the military aspects of peace operations. As comprehensive efforts are made to resolve armed conflict through substantial peace operations, so it becomes more necessary to ensure that compliance difficulties do not jeopardise the major investment that the international community is obliged to make. Despite their increased importance, however, the basic concepts behind monitoring and verification have remained the same over the past decade. Like peacekeeping in general, monitoring missions always start from scratch, they are assembled piece by piece using voluntary contributions and they rarely have sufficient human or financial resources to undertake their mission effectively and efficiently. They tend to be low-technology operations, reliant on the unarmed, often untrained, military observer for their effectiveness. This can no longer be acceptable in situations where the stakes in achieving a successful conflict resolution outcome are so high. Hence there is a need for professionalisation, training, lessons-learned activities, centres of excellence, the drafting of operational manuals and concepts of operation, and the use of appropriate technology. There is also a need for the yawning gap in academic studies to be filled and the issues of verification and monitoring should be placed higher on the research agenda.

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Endnotes

[1] A. Blixt, *Kashmir's Forgotten Guardians: United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan,* Stockholm: SWEDINT, 1994.

[2] See Trevor Findlay, 'Introduction' in Trevor Findlay (ed.), *Challenges for the New Peacekeepers*, SIPRI Research Report no. 12, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996.

[3] Trevor Findlay, *Cambodia: the Legacy and Lessons of UNTAC,* SIPRI Research Report no. 9, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 43–45.

[4] Findlay, *Cambodia: the Legacy and Lessons of UNTAC*, p. 37.

[5] See David Lister and Phillip Webster, 'Peace Gets Another Chance', *The Times,* 24 October 2001, p. 1.

[6] Jane Boulden, 'Monitoring and Verifying the Military Aspects of Peace Accords' in Trevor Findlay (ed.), *Verification Yearbook 2000,* Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC), London, December 2000, pp. 175–176.

[7] See J. L. Hirsch and Robert B. Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping,* US Institute of Peace Press, Washington, DC, 1995.

[8] For example, the members of the International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), first deployed in 1997, wear distinctive white uniforms.

[9] See J. Ginifer, 'The UN At Sea? The New Relevance of Maritime Pperations', *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 1, no. 3, autumn 1994, pp. 320–335.

[10] See Michael Miggins, 'Whatever happened to Open Skies', *Trust & Verify,* no. 91, May 2000, pp. 5–6.

[11] For an early work on this subject see 'Weapons of Peace: How New Technology Can Revitalize Peacekeeping', Report no. 8, International Peace Academy, New York, 1980.

[12] Brian S. Mandell, *The Sinai Experience: Lessons in Multimethod Arms Control Verification and Risk Management,* Arms Control Verification Studies no. 3, Department of External Affairs, Ottawa, 1987.

[13] See Bhupendra Jasani, 'Remote Monitoring from Space' in *Verification Yearbook 2000,* pp. 200–213. The US government in December 2000 licensed a Colorado company, Space Imaging, to sell extremely high-resolution photographs to customers worldwide, effectively relinquishing the monopoly that the intelligence agencies previously had over precision imagery from space (*International Herald Tribune,* 18 December 2000, p. 3).

[14] See 'Backpack Drone that Sees behind Enemy Lines', *New Scientist,* 21 October 2000, p. 10.

[15] See the report on British research into remote sentries in H. McManners, *The Times,* 4 October 1998, p. 8.

[16] US President Bill Clinton announced on 1 May 2000 that the US had switched off the built-in error signal—called Selective Availability—in the GPS. This makes the system10 times more accurate for all users. The US maintains the ability to deny access to GPS in future if it believes that US national security is threatened. See 'Getting a Better Fix', *New Scientist,* 6 May 2000, p. 5 and Statement by the President Regarding the United States Decision to Stop Degrading Global Positioning System Accuracy, White House Press Release, 1 May 2000.

[17] B. Bender, 'Radar Breakthrough Could Help DoD "See" Underground', *Jane's Defence Weekly,* 22 December 1999, p. 8.