

Confidence Building, Peace-Making and Aerial Inspections in the Middle East¹

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Confidence-building measures (CBMs) have been defined as “arrangements designed to enhance . . . assurance of mind and belief in the trustworthiness of states and the facts they creat.”² CBMs, by definition, must promote confidence on both sides of any dispute. Non-symmetrical or unilateral measures not acceptable to the other side tend to increase rather than decrease tensions.³

If states in the Middle East wish to create facts associated with trustworthiness and peace-making, a wide range of CBMs might be employed to lessen tensions, quiet borders, or introduce a measured degree of transparency that does not impinge on the security of any participating state. A significant number of these measures—some acknowledged, some not—have already been employed in various parts of the Middle East to mitigate the Arab–Israeli dispute and tensions in other parts of the region as well.

Aerial inspections are a unique type of confidence-building measure. In theory, aerial inspections can have broad applicability as a CBM. They can be used to ease tension along borders, provide early warning of troubling activities, or confirm data exchanges about the disposition of military forces and the conduct of military exercises. Aerial inspections can also be used to monitor multilateral agreements barring or limiting certain types of weapons. Most important, they can be used to verify formal troop disengagement agreements, thin-out zones, and peace treaties between states.

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²Johan Jorgen Holst, “Confidence-Building Measures: A Conceptual Framework,” *Survival* 25, no. 1 (January/February 1983), 2.

³The use of aerial inspections within Iraq constitute an entirely separate case of unilateral measures carried out under resolutions adopted by the Security Council directed against a state constituting a threat to the entire region that had waged an aggressive war against a neighbor. While these aerial operations appear to be quite useful in carry out the mandate of the UN Special Commission, they do not fall under the scope of this essay.

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Treaty calls for the use of highly capable sensors and far-ranging overflights by foreign nationals, it has logically followed less intrusive or more restrictive CBMs. Only after a long list of CBMs had been agreed to in bilateral and multilateral accords, ranging from the establishment of communication links to the provision of observers and inspectors at military exercises, did negotiators turn in earnest to Open Skies in the fora of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

This progression is understandable given deeply rooted concerns about the intelligence-gathering potential of surveillance aircraft and the sensors carried by them. The “reach” of aerial inspections is potentially far greater than that of inspections on the ground. Aircraft that provide transparency also can provide targeting information, and states that have sophisticated sensors and processing equipment can easily secure advantages in times of war or peace over states with lesser capabilities. When sophisticated offensive capabilities exist in large numbers and at close proximity in regions of tension, as was the case in Central Europe and continues to be the case in the Middle East and the Korean peninsula, too much transparency can do more harm than good.

The European progression on CBMs, however, need not be the model for other regions. More limited forms of cooperative aerial inspections may precede data exchanges, formal crisis communication links, and on-site inspections, depending on the unique conditions within a troubled region. This has, in fact, been the case in the Middle East, where tension levels are appreciably higher than in Europe, where all but one Arab state do not maintain official diplomatic relations with Israel, and where wars with fearsome loss of life occur on the average of once per decade. Nevertheless, in this violence-wracked region, where formal peace treaties are a rarity and where many basic confidence-building measures appear to be unacceptable,

⁴ See Amy Smithson, “Multilateral Aerial Inspection,” in Michael Krepon and Amy Smithson, eds., *Open Skies, Arms Control, and Cooperative Security* (St. Martin’s Press: New York, 1992).

While an “Open Skies” treaty has been difficult to negotiate for the nations of North America, Europe, and the former Soviet Union, more limited forms of cooperative aerial inspections have been carried out quietly and successfully for over three decades.⁴

Because the East–West Open Skies

several countries have accepted and lived with carefully circumscribed aerial inspections on a systematic basis for a decade and a half.

The most public of these arrangements have been carried out by the United Nations peacekeeping operations in Lebanon, along the Iran–Iraq border, and elsewhere in the region, and by peacekeepers in the Sinai implementing formal arrangements enshrined in disengagement agreements and the Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty. As discussed below, third party aerial inspections have also been carried out by the United States to ease tensions over sensitive border areas in the region, but the operation of these arrangements have not been widely acknowledged.⁵

The existence of cooperative aerial inspections in a tension-filled region appears to present many theoretical contradictions, yet these operations have compiled a quietly successful track record. This record suggests that cooperative aerial inspections might play an expanded role in attempts to negotiate solutions to a number of territorial and border disputes between some of the Arab states and Israel.

This essay will provide a conceptual framework for the expanded use of aerial inspections for four related tasks: (1) enhancing border security; (2) observing areas where levels of military personnel and equipment have

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been limited by agreement; (3) monitoring exclusion or demilitarized zones; and (4) monitoring facilities of special interest. Finally, the essay will suggest specific ways in which aerial inspections might be useful in possible scenarios for peace in the years ahead.

⁵ In this essay, the term “third party” reflects the activities of a single country or a group of countries acting collectively as part of a multinational organization.

EXISTING PRACTICES

Three general types of agreed aerial inspections are carried out on a regular basis in the Middle East. First, arrangements are in place—either formally agreed to or tacitly accepted between former combatants—to allow each side’s specially-equipped aircraft to fly alongside, but not over, border areas that have been the scene of considerable bloodshed.⁶ These unilateral flights on one’s own side of the border use sophisticated photographic equipment, some with considerable range. Less sophisticated sensors which are available commercially from a number of sources including the United States, the USSR, France, Germany, and perhaps others, presumably are also employed in the region.

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These flights can provide a degree of confidence building by demonstrating the absence of attack preparations. Used in this way, they are clearly better than no flights at all.

Just as the “non-interference” provision in the Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty (SALT) eventually led to intrusive verification measures, tacitly or formally approved reconnaissance operations in the Middle East may be considered precursor CBMs, if they help produce political conditions leading to more substantive measures. The value of these reconnaissance missions is limited, however, by terrain features, weather, and the lack of on-site inspections to confirm that no significant concealment of forces is underway.

In effect, these compacts not to interfere with “national technical means” (NTM) are a regional analog to similar provisions formally negotiated in agreements to limit US and Soviet strategic offensive and defensive arms. One state in the region—Israel—appears intent on having space-based NTM. Given the expense and sporadic coverage of such a limited photoreconnaissance satellite network, however, all states in the region will surely continue to rely heavily on aerial reconnaissance operations for a myriad of reasons including, perhaps, greater confidence building and peace-making.

⁶ See Itshak Lederman, “The Arab–Israeli Experience in Verification and Its Relevance to Conventional Arms Control in Europe,” Occasional Paper 2, Center for International Security Studies, University of Maryland, 1989; “An Evaluation of the US Early Warning System in the Sinai,” Comptroller General Report to Congress, ID-77-11, June 6, 1977; and “Sinai Agreement,” Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, 97th Congress, on S.J. Res. 100, July 20, 1981.

The second form of agreed aerial inspections have been carried out by multinational forces under the auspices of the United Nations or, in the case of the Sinai and a slim strip of Israeli territory adjacent to it, by the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), with important support and assistance from the United States. The relatively unsophisticated aircraft for these overflights are based in the region, and they do not carry sensors.⁷

In the case of the work of the MFO, aerial inspections are a complement to regular on-site inspections (OSIs), thus providing a large measure of assurance to the other side that there are no unauthorized build-ups underway. The combination has demonstrated its worth in reinforcing the security provisions of the Egyptian–Israeli Peace Treaty. Regardless of how much Israelis may lament the so-called “cold peace” with Egypt, there is no question that they also understand and value the assurances they gain from aerial inspection and OSIs that a repeat of the 1973 Yom Kippur surprise from the West is almost impossible to mount.

Third, Israel, Egypt and Syria are said to have agreed to third party overflights originating from outside the region along sensitive border areas.⁸ Little can be verified about the procedures employed, but presumably they include as a key element

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symmetry in sharing (or not sharing) the photographic output of these flights. For such operations to succeed, there must be considerable confidence that the third party will conduct these overflights with impartiality and in strict accordance within an agreed framework. Such arrangements also imply that the third party will be trusted to interpret accurately the photographic results and, most importantly, to use its influence with the other parties to deal with any untoward, unauthorized or otherwise dangerous developments captured in the photography. As the sparseness of the reportable information on these overflights suggests, discretion is often a crucial element in their success.

⁷ For more on the MFO see “The Multinational Force and Observers: Servants of Peace,” MFO Office of Public Affairs, Rome, November 1990; and “Peace in the Sinai,” United States Department of State Publication, undated.

⁸ See Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), 1254 and the testimony of Ambassador Michael Sterner, “Sinai Agreement,” 10.

Any expanded use of cooperative aerial inspections in the region presumes commitments on the part of political leaders to move toward a reduced level of tension. Aerial inspections cannot possibly substitute for such political commitments. If, however, political leaders are willing to extend themselves in this way, aerial inspections can provide multiple dividends. They can, for example, allow states in the region a “cooling off” period in which other diplomatic efforts may be undertaken to alleviate security concerns. Just as states may engage in a stage of “pre-negotiations” prior to formal talks on security issues, tacit or formal agreements to acknowledge stabilizing activities already underway—such as aerial reconnaissance operations within one’s boundaries—may serve as precursors to more substantive measures.

Such measures might include the use of cooperative aerial inspections to provide additional indications and warnings of troubling developments in the field. In a narrow range of cases, aerial inspections could help deter violations of agreements reached, or at least raise the cost and increase the difficulty of militarily significant violations. Aerial inspections can help reinforce OSIs, orienting inspectors for site visits, allowing them to make the most effective and efficient use of their time on the ground, and providing back-up when they get into difficult situations. Ultimately, aerial inspections can play a critical role in monitoring peace treaties between former combatants in the region, as they now do in reinforcing the peace between Egypt and Israel.

If successfully carried out, aerial inspections can provide reassurance, reinforcement, and added effectiveness for peacekeeping forces. Several conditions for successful aerial inspections will be reviewed in the first section of the essay. Operational considerations will be addressed, and safeguards will be discussed to alleviate concerns over military targeting and intelligence-gathering and to accentuate the confidence building nature of aerial inspections. Finally, several ideas to promote the peace process will be presented for the expanded use of aerial inspections in the region.

MAXIMIZING PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESSFUL AERIAL INSPECTIONS

There is a marked, and not surprising, correlation between the conditions for successful peacekeeping operations and the conditions for successful aerial inspections in the Middle East.⁹

⁹ See, for example, Robert B. Houghton and Frank G. Trinko, *Multinational Peacekeeping in the Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: US Department of State, Foreign Service Institute, 1984) 84–88; Paul F. Diehl, “Peacekeeping Operations in the Quest for Peace,” *Political Science Quarterly* 103, no. 3 (1988), 489–504;

Of the various factors bearing on success, five stand out. Above all, there must be the political consent of those states whose territory is to be overflown. Second, participating states must have positive control over ground and air forces that could interfere with aerial inspections with tragic consequences. Third, aerial inspections are best carried out under a clear mandate with precise guidelines approved by all participating states. Fourth, the topography of the region to be overflown must be amenable to aerial inspections. Finally, financing must be adequate or donations in kind must be provided for aerial inspections to get off the ground. An additional consideration in the Middle East, although not necessarily a requirement, is discretion. Aerial inspections are by definition intrusive and always raise the specter of “spy missions.” To the extent that they can be negotiated and implemented quietly in the always suspicious and even paranoid environment of the Middle East, the chances for success are enhanced.

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The first condition listed above provides the basis for all that follow: cooperative aerial inspections obviously require the political consent of national leaders and their military organizations.¹⁰ Political consent need not imply the expectation that a peace treaty ultimately will result from overflights; instead, political leaders may simply wish to promote a cooling off period in which the central issues in dispute remain unresolved. Between these two poles, there is considerable room for diplomatic maneuver, if national leaders are willing to expend the political capital required to reduce tensions.

Even in the absence of peacemaking efforts, experience in the Middle East suggests that aerial inspections can play a critical role in the maintenance of a cooling off period between nations that maintain a formal state of belligerency. It is at least arguable that there would have

Michael Krepon and Jeffrey P. Tracey, “‘Open Skies’ and UN Peace-keeping,” *Survival* 32, no. 3 (May/June 1990), 252–253; and “Overhead Remote Sensing for United Nations Peacekeeping,” *External Affairs and International Trade, Canada* (April 1990), 3–7.

¹⁰ Lebanon poses an exception in this regard, as it has not had political leaders with sufficient national authority for much of the period in which overflights have been carried out in the Middle East. Political consent also does not bar overflights conducted unilaterally by interested parties, but these practices are beyond the scope of this essay.

been no disengagement agreements between Egypt and Israel and between Israel and Syria in the 1970s if the parties had not been able to agree on provisions for third party aerial inspections. Properly configured aerial inspections can be helpful simply in preventing conflicts arising from inadvertent actions or accidents. A formal state of belligerency that does not result in actual combat provides time in which creative diplomacy can be carried out and in which new political leaders who may be more oriented toward peace-making can assume power.

Ideally, aerial inspections can become a tool in larger peace-making efforts when conditions are ripe for diplomatic settlement.¹¹ The role of aerial inspection in the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel is the most prominent and complete example. But this level of commitment is not necessary in order to initiate aerial inspections. States may accept carefully circumscribed overflights as long as they conclude that their security posture has not been worsened by such operations. When viewed in terms of this minimal requirement, political consent need not be a significant hurdle, as long as procedures and safeguards associated with aerial inspections are carefully crafted and scrupulously followed.

In the context of the turbulent Middle East, the second condition for successful aerial inspections—positive command and control over military forces—is almost if not equally as important as the need for political consent at the highest levels. The consent of national leaders will be of little solace to pilots and inspectors if such leaders cannot guarantee the safety and security of the overflights. Unfortunately, a sad precedent already exists for this concern, as nine Canadians were killed in 1974 when their UN aircraft was shot down by anti-aircraft fire in Syria.¹² Given, however, the very large number of missions that have been flown in dangerous conditions, the overall safety record is good and suggests that the requirement to assure a secure flight environment can be met.

To guard against a recurrence of such unfortunate accidents, a clear mandate and guidelines for aerial inspections are essential. For example, it is worth noting that the first Sinai

¹¹ Richard N. Haass defines the prerequisites of “ripeness” as a shared perception of the desirability of an accord, an ability to agree to one, an ability to compromise in order to reach agreement, and the existence of a mutually acceptable approach or process. *Conflicts Unending: The United States and Regional Disputes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 27–29.

¹² The aircraft in this case was not on an aerial inspection flight. See “The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping,” United Nations Department of Public Information (August 1990), 109; John Mackinlay, *The Peacekeepers: An Assessment of Peacekeeping Operations at the Arab–Israeli Interface* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 143; and Fred Gaffen, *The Eye of the Storm: A History of Canadian Peacekeeping* (Toronto: Deneau and Wayne, 1987), 133.

disengagement agreement (Appendix I, Article V) expressly provided for the boundaries for aerial reconnaissance by Israel and Egypt (up to the median line of the buffer zone and up to the forward line of each party), flight path restrictions (a straight course along the median line of the buffer zone), six hour prior notification of reconnaissance flights, specification of a four-hour window within which flights would be conducted, and designated days for each country's flights.¹³ The second Sinai disengagement agreement expressly permitted the continuation of these procedures. Similar rules are in place governing the aerial inspection flights of the MFO over both Israel and the Sinai.

When slow-flying, third party aerial inspections are carried out, the possibility of inadvertent accidents can be minimized if the aircraft are distinctly colored and marked. Prior agreement on communications channels between the aircraft and the ground and prior notifications of overflights are essential parts of any aerial inspection regime.

The topography of some parts of the Middle East are quite suitable for aerial inspections. The desert sands that distinguish part of the region, as in the Sinai, do not provide good cover for heavy military equipment or large organized units. Covert infiltration of units and equipment at night can become more difficult if aircraft are able to fly at night equipped with infrared sensors that can detect heat emissions.¹⁴ Nevertheless, other areas of the Middle East, such as mist-covered valleys and mountainous regions, could pose difficulties for aerial inspectors, particularly if logistical problems have not been carefully addressed and if established ground-rules do not permit the use of appropriate sensors.¹⁵ Parts of Southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights are cases in point and underscore the importance of complementary OSIs in many settings.

¹³ US General Accounting Office, "An Evaluation of the US Early Warning System in the Sinai," (Washington, D.C.: June 6, 1977), 59.

¹⁴ The authors are unaware of any night-time aerial inspection missions that have been flown in the Middle East, and suspect that these may be difficult to negotiate. For a discussion of sensors, see "Overhead Remote Sensing for United Nations Peace-keeping" 8–32; Allen Banner, "Open Skies: Sensors and Platforms," in Michael Slack and Heather Chestnutt, eds., *Open Skies, Technical Organizational Operational Legal and Political Aspects* (Toronto: Center for International and Strategic Studies, York University, 1990), 3–21; and Krepon and Tracey, "Open Skies," 255–258.

¹⁵ The necessity for sound logistical and financial support for third party aerial operations was never more apparent than in the UN Yemen Observer Mission in 1963 and 1964. See Major General Carl von Horn, *Soldiering for Peace* (New York: David McKay Company, 1967), 334–356.

Any discussion of preconditions for successful aerial inspections leads inevitably to the conclusion that political considerations are paramount. Aerial inspections are a tool to be used for agreed political purposes. As such, they cannot substitute for the political will to ease tensions across borders. When such will exists, however, aerial inspections can be a powerful instrument to prevent wars arising from accidents or miscalculations and to assist peace-making—as long as sound operational procedures and safeguards are in place.

In cases where these conditions have not been met, the results were predictably unsatisfactory. Despite heroic efforts by highly expert UN personnel, a number of operations in the Middle East (especially UNIFIL in Southern Lebanon and UNIIMOG, established along the Iran–Iraq border at the conclusion of their war) suffered from an inadequately drawn mandate and insufficient resources dedicated to aerial inspection requirements. For example, in UNIIMOG, the UN hoped to have twelve helicopters dedicated to border inspections, but both countries objected to the UN having its own independent resources for the task. The unsatisfactory compromise was the provision of six helicopters from each side piloted by host nationals with flight schedules completely under national control.

Such experiences clearly raise the issue of whether third parties can reasonably carry out effective aerial inspections (or peacekeeping operations in general) if the parties themselves are less than fully dedicated to these tasks. The loosely drawn mandates for UNIFIL and UNIIMOG stand in sharp relief to those for UNDOF—the Israeli–Syrian disengagement agreement—and for the MFO’s oversight of the peace between Egypt and Israel. These accords were tightly constructed and have permitted these third party peacekeeping operations to work quietly and effectively for years without major incidents.

When conditions are ripe for successful peacekeeping operations in the Middle East—when political will is solidly oriented toward a cessation of hostilities or a reduction in tensions, when command and control over forces in the field are strong, when clear operational rules have been agreed upon, and when the topography and financing are appropriate—conditions are also ripe for successful aerial inspections. Conversely, when conditions are not ripe for successful peacekeeping in the

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Middle East, aerial inspections can be extremely dangerous to crew members and can only be done unilaterally when one side dominates the skies, as with Israeli operations in Southern Lebanon. Such flights, by definition, do not qualify as confidence building for both sides. Nor would inadequately conducted aerial inspections build confidence if gaps in coverage can be easily exploited.

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Impartiality

If third parties are to conduct agreed aerial inspections, they need not be members of the neutral and nonaligned bloc of nations. Nor do they necessarily have to be neutral with respect to the degree of political affinity, economic ties, or even military support shown for the countries that have agreed to third party overflights. As long as third parties have the confidence of all participating states to conduct overflights in an impartial manner they can succeed in this role. Of course, third parties must strive to demonstrate impartiality on every overflight to maintain the trust of the countries that have accepted aerial inspections. One way to do this is to rigorously adhere to the same method of handling concerns over noncompliance with all parties. Another is to judiciously follow the same data reporting procedures for all parties. Impartiality can be reinforced by allowing liaison officers of the state overflown to accompany each third party flight, if there is sufficient room in the aircraft.

Symmetry

The obvious way for third parties to demonstrate impartiality is to assiduously follow the principle of symmetry.¹⁶ Symmetry need not require equal quotas of overflights, if other factors, such as the extent of geography to be covered or the number of prospective treaty-limited items in various zones, suggest otherwise. In other words, asymmetrical overflight requirements keyed to dissimilar constraints on force disposition are possible as long as they provide mutual benefits and do not lead to asymmetrical risks to the parties involved.

Nevertheless, symmetry with regard to overflight quotas has obvious political appeal. For this reason asymmetrical geography might be addressed by negotiating equal quotas of aerial inspections of differing lengths. For example, since Israel is about one-fourth the size of Jordan,

¹⁶ See the United States Sinai Support Mission, "Watch in the Sinai," Department of State Publication Number 9131, General Foreign Policy Series 321 (June 1980), 16.

equal quotas of bilateral overflights might permit Israeli missions to be four times as long. Symmetry is absolutely essential with respect to how the data collected by third parties is distributed to the countries overflowed, and how concerns over compliance are dealt with. The need for symmetry is no less essential when overflights are conducted by participating states in the region, either in conjunction with or in lieu of third party aerial inspections.

Synergy

Like other monitoring tools, aerial inspections work best when they are used in conjunction with other measures and sources of information. In the context of peace-making in the Middle East, the best example of synergistic monitoring approaches have been the Sinai

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disengagement agreements which relied on aerial inspections in conjunction with nationally-flown surveillance missions, multinational OSIs, and ground-based sensors to confirm data exchanges for demilitarized or thin-out zones.

This synergy can work in several ways. Inspectors on the ground need information about where to best focus their investigations when large tracts of land are to be covered.

Aerial inspections can provide a synoptic view of the region to be covered, something inspectors on the ground are unable to do. The use of aircraft can thus help orient inspectors, as well as familiarize them with areas and facilities that will be the subject of OSIs.¹⁷ In some cases, inspection aircraft might be employed to come to the aid of peacekeepers when they are faced with difficulties on the ground.

Aerial inspections prior to OSIs can also assist inspectors in pinpointing new areas that require investigation and permit them to make the most effective and efficient use of their time during site visits. This benefit was clearly evident in the second Sinai disengagement agreement, where the number of ground inspectors declined to 4,000 from the 7,000 figure authorized for the first disengagement agreement, while the area to be inspected grew from less than 1,000 to

¹⁷ United States Sinai Field Mission, "Peace in the Sinai" (undated), 9.

almost 40,000 square kilometers.¹⁸ Finally, third party aerial inspections can provide a “second opinion” and reinforce the conclusions of other inspectors. For example, if one party, e.g. Israel, has less than full confidence in the impartiality of international inspectors, a cross-check by a third party aerial inspection can have concrete utility in maintaining confidence.

Cost

Without adequate financing, aerial inspections are not feasible. In the Middle East, many states need not incur the considerable expense of purchasing new aircraft for this mission, as they already possess suitable platforms and sensors to carry out aerial inspections. Combat aircraft that have been equipped for reconnaissance missions and which pose no threat of offensive military action can be used, or small commercial aircraft can be employed, with modest modifications. For symbolic as well as other reasons, these options are inferior to aircraft that connote confidence building rather than narrow military or civilian purposes. For third party overflights, aircraft could be seconded from operational units stationed elsewhere. If based in the region, third party aircraft should have distinctive markings for the aerial inspection mission. Additional costs would accrue from the operation and maintenance of these aircraft, as well as any data and image processing required. Costs will grow along with the length of the aerial inspection missions.

While some may balk at these costs, they are minimal in comparison with the expense of carrying out combat operations. Thus, if states wish to avoid these far greater costs and see value in aerial inspections, they should be willing to pay appropriate shares of the “earnest”

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money associated with them. The international community, which has such a vital stake in Middle East peace, as it demonstrated in the Gulf War, also has a large responsibility for helping to fund those arrangements which may be critical to peace-making. Whether these costs should be assigned through the

United Nations or on the basis of other arrangements, as with the Multinational Force and Observers, is beyond the scope of this paper. The point is that the inability of the regional parties

¹⁸ “The Blue Helmets,” 82, 423.

to fund the whole cost of peace-keeping arrangements such as aerial inspections should not stand as an impediment to their adoption.

Logistics

Given the number of airfields, trained pilots and maintenance personnel in the Middle East, the logistics of aerial inspections can hardly be a problem for many states in the region. In contrast, the logistics for third party aerial inspections in the Middle East will invariably pose problems, although not nearly as significant as the problems associated with gaining political consent for these missions. Put another way, if participating states in the Middle East have the will to accept aerial inspections, third parties will find a way to carry them out.

Third party aircraft could be based in the region and rotated to all of the countries participating in aerial inspections. Despite the complications this would entail, it might prove to be necessary if participating states reserve the right to inspect the aircraft prior to overflights, based on stipulations that only specific types of sensors within agreed parameters be permitted on such overflights. Alternatively, third party aircraft that are not terribly sophisticated could be based inside the region but not be subject to inspections by the states over whose territory they fly. A third option would be to base more sophisticated aircraft outside the region, such as in Cyprus, with participating states foregoing inspections of the platform in lieu of constraints on flight paths, altitudes, and other safeguards, as discussed below.

Safeguards

The need for safeguards is directly proportional to the intrusiveness of the aerial inspection regime. Safeguards were an important agenda item in the Open Skies talks and in the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) negotiations because the anticipated overflights were quite far-ranging. To date, aerial inspections in the Middle East have not been precluded by these disputes for at least two reasons. First, United Nations and MFO overflights have not carried sensors, relying instead on the eyeballs of the airborne inspectors aided by close passes, when needed.¹⁹ Second, participating states appear to have agreed not to inspect US reconnaissance aircraft that overfly the region along sensitive border regions. To date, all parties appear to be

¹⁹ "Peace in the Sinai," 9.

satisfied with receiving the same imagery or summary reports generated by such overflights.²⁰ In the future, as in the past, a variety of safeguards are available for states that wish to accept aerial inspections without adding to their security concerns. Safeguards could relate to the platforms and sensors utilized, as well as to the operational practices employed on overflights.

Platforms

The size and characteristics of the aerial inspection platform will necessarily depend on the nature of the mission and the types of safeguards participating states deem essential.

The size and characteristics of the aerial inspection platform will necessarily depend on the nature of the mission and the types of safeguards participating states deem essential. If the use of combat aircraft (or fighter aircraft that have

been converted for reconnaissance missions) are barred by agreement, a wide range of platforms could be used, including small private or commercial jets (e.g. Gulfstreams or Cessnas) to larger transport aircraft modified to carry inspectors. If sensors were allowed, their weight and carriage would become factors in the choice of aircraft. More relevant for the sizing of the aircraft would be agreed procedures that required liaison officers from all of the participating states to accompany third party inspectors. Procedures for periodic inspections of third party aircraft could be agreed upon. Alternatively, participating states could permit platforms of trusted third parties to carry out aerial inspection missions without periodic inspections.

Sensors

If sensors were permitted on third party aircraft based within the region, there are a variety of safeguards that could be employed to ease concerns over the data collected. To begin with, limitations on types of sensors and operating parameters could be negotiated. For example, only film rather than electro-optical cameras might be permitted to ease concerns over one side

²⁰ See Brian S. Mandell, "The Sinai Experience: Lessons in Multimethod Arms Control Verification and Risk Management" (Ottawa: The Arms Control and Disarmament Division, Department of External Affairs), 13; and David Barton, "The Sinai Peacekeeping Experience: a Verification Paradigm for Europe," *SIPRI Yearbook, 1985* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1985), 543, 549. Arguably, participating states may have accepted these ground rules on the basis that the United States already had the means to carry out aircraft and satellite surveillance of the region, as well as established patterns of intelligence cooperation. As such, agreed overflights by the United States simply reflected the status quo, except to add a new requirement for symmetrical distribution of data or summary information derived from the overflights to the participating states. The Open Skies and CFE negotiations have been far more complicated, in that many countries with quite disparate sensor and processing capabilities would carry out overflights.

having a superior data processing capability than another. Restrictions on camera focal lengths and aircraft operating altitudes could also be negotiated to provide range limitations on the data collected. This approach could be applied to the choice of other sensors. Among the criteria for selection might be operability (including sensors that might be jointly operated), durability, and exportability to all participating states. As guiding principles, the sensors chosen should provide enough data for the mission at hand but not so much as to generate concerns over the collection of collateral intelligence or the generation of multiple false alarms.

If liaison officers from participating states are on board, constraints on sensor operations could be monitored during the mission. If the territory of two nations are to be overflown, three sets of each sensor could be carried on board the aircraft, with each state as well as the third party randomly choosing which sensor or data package to analyze. A simpler approach would have the third party responsible for providing the same data or summary analysis to all participating states, with periodic inspections of sensor pallets and aircraft to build confidence that only agreed sensors are being flown. In theory, similar procedures could be worked out for third party aircraft operating from bases outside the region, although this may prove to be difficult to implement. Alternatively, participating states may choose not to concern themselves with the sensors employed by a trusted third party, as long as they are assured of receiving the same data or summary reports.

Procedures

Operational procedures can be devised to allay concerns over the compromise of national security information unrelated to negotiated agreements. For example, as in the Sinai agreements, prenotification of overflights could be required, with timeliness sufficient to allow participating states to remove sensitive equipment from the field but too short for participating states to hide militarily significant violations of the accords. States or third parties conducting overflights might also be required to submit flight profile information, such as transit routes, flight lines and altitudes, and blocks of time within which the flights are to be conducted. If for some reason (such as mechanical difficulties or bad weather), an overflight cannot take place within the period of time specified, it could be postponed in the interest of safety. If necessary, participating states could prohibit loitering, but allow “close looks” of agreed sites or installations. Other ideas developed from prior operations in the Middle East and in the Open Skies negotiations could also be utilized.

NEW AND EXPANDED AREAS FOR AERIAL INSPECTIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Border Security

Aerial inspection provisions that have worked successfully between Israel and its neighbors could also be employed in disputes between Arab states. If a government in Iraq wishes to demonstrate its peaceful intentions towards its neighbors, it could agree to help alleviate concerns over border security in this way. Aerial inspections under agreed procedures could be carried out along Iraq's borders with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, and Syria. The United Nations, which carried out aerial inspections along the Iran–Iraq border prior to the 1990 Gulf War, could reconstitute and strengthen its operations there.

Short of formal agreement on third party flights, there is substantial scope for the expanded use of informal or tacit arrangements that allow each side's specially-equipped aircraft to fly alongside border areas in the Gulf.²¹ States that have demonstrated good faith efforts to reduce tensions and engage in peace-making which now lack the technical means to undertake such flights might be encouraged to acquire them and to develop a framework of understandings on their use.

As is done elsewhere in the region, these flights could be undertaken by aircraft of participating states as well as by third party aircraft based inside or outside the region. Third party flights along national borders—perhaps under the auspices of the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council—could have important symbolic value, as they might underscore multinational interest in maintaining peace between Iraq and its neighbors. Safeguards against the misuse of the information acquired on overflights would be essential. Perhaps to begin with, overflights might be undertaken without the use of sensors, as is currently the case with UN peacekeeping missions in the region.

If the Iraqi government does not wish to expressly permit cooperative aerial inspections, states in the region as well as third parties have the option to carry them out unilaterally along Iraq's borders. These flights could provide important indications and warning of military build-ups, focusing diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions and making it harder for political leaders in the region to deny troubling developments. Unilateral flights of this kind, however, do not qualify as a confidence-building measure in the strict sense of the term.

²¹ See pages 5-6 in this essay.

Zones of Limitation for Armament and Military Personnel

Border security aerial inspections will not generate confidence in security if they reveal large concentrations of opposing forces nearby. As a result, states may wish to reaffirm national borders by agreeing to limitations on the extent and disposition of military manpower or equipment behind them. As in the case of the Sinai disengagement agreements, aerial and ground inspections can help to confirm agreed limitations on the number of personnel and associated equipment in sensitive regions. Over time, expanded “thin-out” zones could be negotiated if states were so inclined. Thin-out zones need not be symmetrical to increase confidence between states, as long as agreed arrangements served common security objectives. Such agreements could help stabilize the Iran–Iraq border as well as the borders between Iraq and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Thin-out zones could be monitored by third party aircraft based within or outside of the region.

Exclusion or Demilitarized Zones

Another way for states in the Middle East to indicate peaceful intentions towards their neighbors would be to accept exclusion or demilitarized zones for specific kinds of weapon systems. Such zones could be characterized as steps toward the ultimate goal of eliminating all weapons with particular characteristics from the region.

For example, states that wish to associate themselves with the objective of eliminating the threat posed by medium-range ballistic missiles might begin by designating exclusion zones for such weapons within the region. Wherever

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possible, these zones might be configured in such a way as protect large cities in the region against the threat of weapons of mass destruction carried by ballistic missiles. These zones could be monitored by NTM possessed by states outside the region, with assessments provided to all participating states. Third party and national aerial inspections could also be carried out to confirm exclusion or demilitarized zones.

In any of the negotiated outcomes to the Palestinian question (except the status quo), Israel will almost certainly insist on a virtual demilitarization of the West Bank and Gaza, except for security points held by Israeli military. Should such conditions ultimately be accepted by

Palestinian leaders, one can construct with relative ease a combination of aerial and ground inspections conducted by mutually agreed third parties or by joint Palestinian–Israeli patrols.

Similarly, any agreements reached on force dispositions between Israel and Syria, Jordan and Lebanon as elements in a peace treaty will require verification. Aerial inspection carried out openly by a regionally-based third party or discreetly from outside the region can play a key part in making such agreements possible and credible. To the extent that all sides can also agree to on-site inspection, the accords will be that much stronger and enhance their credibility.

Monitoring Facilities of Special Interest

Attempts to negotiate a nuclear- and a chemical-weapons-free zone in the Middle East face many hurdles. One place to begin this arduous process is to demonstrate that facilities suspected of producing special nuclear materials for use in nuclear weapons, or facilities suspected of involvement in the production of chemical weapons, have been deactivated or are not currently engaged in such activities.

An ideal way to demonstrate that suspected facilities are not engaged in troubling activities is through on-site inspections. But states in the region are unlikely to permit such inspections, given existing levels of distrust and the sensitivity of the facilities in question. If the activities in question are not heavily and effectively shielded, their deactivation could be

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monitored by aircraft employing sensors to observe heat emissions.²²

In this way, remote confirmation of the shut-down of ground-level facilities at Dimona might be accomplished, as has been suggested by a 1990 United Nations study on the establishment of a nuclear- weapons-free zone in

²² Much useful work has been done in monitoring heat emissions from nuclear facilities by Intera Technologies Ltd. See “Airborne Remote Sensing for Multilateral Verification,” briefing presented to the Multilateral Verification Project of the Henry L. Stimson Center, November 1989.

the Middle East.²³ Steps taken to deactivate facilities suspected of chemical weapons production could also be monitored by such overflights, perhaps by third party aircraft following agreed procedures.

CONCLUSION

The Middle East has known far more warfighting than peace-making. One way to strengthen diplomacy and make the resort to war in the region less likely is for peace-makers to make more use of an essential instrument of military operations—the reconnaissance aircraft. Carefully circumscribed aerial inspections have already been employed in the region to help confirm demilitarized and thin-out zones and to assist in establishing a few relatively quiet borders. When conditions are in place for successful aerial overflights, and with proper appreciation for operational considerations and safeguards, cooperative aerial inspections can be a powerful instrument for peace in the Middle East. The time is appropriate to build on the successful record of the past decade and a half, and to investigate ways in which this proven technique can be duplicated elsewhere in the region.

²³ See Report of the UN Secretary-General, “Establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Region of the Middle East,” A/45/435, October 10, 1990, 31–35.