

MULTILATERAL VERIFICATION ORGANIZATIONS -CASE OF WEU SATELLITE CENTRE

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Abstract

The Western European Union Satellite Centre (hereinafter WEUSC), which was established in 1993, is now a permanent subsidiary body of Western European Union. The WEUSC is mainly operated for supplying satellite imagery interpretation for treaty verification, crisis management and environmental monitoring, as well as for training imagery analysts. Until now, though, this centre has used only the commercial remote sensing data for those above-mentioned activities, they achieved effective and useful interpretation for European security. And also after acquiring the data from the European reconnaissance satellite, Helios-1, which was launched successfully in 1995 and operated jointly by France, Spain and Italy, and other commercial remote sensing satellites which are planned in the near future, this WEUSC can play more important roles in regional security in the European area. The facts around WEUSC will become a kind of precedent for considering new multilateral verification organizations, not only on a regional but also on a global level, by using remote sensing satellite data.

Introduction

After the Cold War Era, we are now looking for new principles and systems for maintaining world order. The United Nations and regional security organizations will play a significant role as peace keepers in the present and future disputes. And as one of the pillars by which peace and stability are maintained, confidence building measures also have importance for avoiding unnecessary frictions in the world.¹

Western European Union (hereinafter WEU) has established its own satellite centre in 1993. In this paper, its organization, purposes and some other factors are examined.

WEU Satellite Centre

Establishment

WEU which was founded in May, 1955, and slept for almost 30 years. However, a proposal in 1983 addressed by President Mitterrand of France awakened WEU from its long hibernation.² Now, WEU forms the basis of European defense policy in the European Union.³

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WEU has studied the use of outer space for European defense purposes from the 1980's onward. And after the Gulf war in 1990, the WEU Council of Ministers in 1991 decided to establish a satellite centre of its own.⁴ During the Gulf war, it was said that Western European countries could not decide their own foreign policy in relation to their military operations in the Gulf area because of the lack of necessary information from satellites.

The satellite centre was set up at Torrejón, Spain and called the Western European Union Satellite Centre. After the 3 years' experimental phase (the centre inaugurated its operations in April 1993), in 1995 WEU reviewed the activities of the centre and decided it to be a WEU permanent subsidiary facility.⁵

Organization

The satellite centre in Spain is placed under the authority of the WEU Council.⁶ There is one director, and 4 divisions are under him, as well as head of implementation. Those 4 divisions are the Operations and Training Division, the Scientific Support Division, the Informatics Division and the Administration & Personnel Division. Data are interpreted in the Operations and Training Division, where 4 senior interpreters, 15 image interpreters and 3 photo laboratory staff people are working. The WEUSC purchases and uses remote sensing data from SPOT of France, ERS-1 of ESA, LANDSAT of USA. As for the data from Helios-1, the first reconnaissance satellite of Europe which is jointly owned by France, Italy and Spain, these will be used late in 1995.⁷

Purposes and Tasks

The purposes of the WEU Satellite Centre are mainly as follows:

1. Demonstrating the application of space imagery for treaty verification,

crisis monitoring and environmental monitoring

2. Training analysts

3. Developing computer techniques for image interpretation

4. Supply of imagery interpretation for treaty verification, crisis monitoring and environmental monitoring

In 1994, some tasks were for the above-mentioned purposes, actually set. For example, 11 tasks for treaty verification, 10 tasks for crisis monitoring, and 4 tasks for environmental monitoring. Especially in the field of treaty verification, there were 6 tasks in support of inspection visits of the CFE (Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe) and CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe),⁸ 2 tasks in supporting for Open Skies missions (Open Skies Treaty, 1992)⁹ and 3 other tasks. In crisis monitoring, 4 tasks for detection of military activity were included. It should be noted that there were already some tasks for verification and crisis monitoring by using only commercial satellite data.

Analysis

Multilateral Verification Organization

In 1978, France proposed an International Satellite Monitoring Agency (ISMA). The functions of proposed the ISMA were: monitoring the implementation of international disarmament and security agreements and investigating specific situations which seem to be in danger.¹⁰ However, there was no successful international organization such as ISMA, because the USA and the former USSR, which had the necessary technology for ISMA implementation at that time, did not give positive support to this proposal, while the other countries did not have enough technical feasibility for ISMA.¹¹ The WEUSC, in that sense, seems the

first multilateral (though on a regional level) verification organization since 1978. The present satellite centre is a centre for processing data and interpretation, which is equal to Stage 1 of the 1978 ISMA proposal. Though the ISMA proposal also included establishing its own data-receiving stations in Stage 2 and launching the original observation satellites in Stage 3, now WEU considers to have its own observation satellite in future.¹²

Data from Commercial Satellites

Because there was no reconnaissance satellite which was operated by WEU member states, it is natural that the WEU satellite centre has used data from commercial remote sensing satellites. However, even under that condition, the centre has played an important role in treaty verification, crisis monitoring and environmental monitoring with those commercial data. Although the highest resolution which they use now is 10 metre (SPOT), the staff of the WEUSC can make the necessary interpretations by using satellite data and other related information. Of course, Helios-1 reconnaissance satellite will provide the centre with more precise data, while new commercial remote sensing satellites will also provide higher resolution data in the near future.¹³ Those data will make the interpretation by the WEUSC more beneficial.

No Participation of Superpower

The other feature to be noted is that the USA and the USSR do not play any actual role in establishing and operating this WEUSC. Of course, the WEUSC now uses the data from LANDSAT (USA). This LANDSAT data, however, are the totally open data which are marketed worldwide and accessible to everyone. The existence of the WEUSC shows us the possibility of the regional and global organizations without any influence of

superpower like the USA and the former USSR.¹⁴

Promoting Collective Security

According to the task procedure of the WEUSC, the copy of interpretation file which was requested by one member state will be provided to other members. All WEU member states know other member states' security interests automatically by this procedure. And this function of the WEUSC, along with other confidence building measures and mutual understanding endeavours, will be considered to lead to a common security policy and promote collective security of the European region.

Conclusion

The achievement by the WEUSC offers a good example in considering the revival of the ISMA proposal of 1978. It should be noted that the WEUSC contributes to European security in some degree by using only commercial remote sensing data. Further study and exchange of opinions seem necessary.

References

1. Y. Hashimoto "Verification Systems from Outer Space -Revival of International Satellite Monitoring Agency" in *The Proceedings of the 37th Colloquium on the Law of Outer Space*, IISL-94-IISL.4.846, pp.250-254, AIAA, Washington, DC.
2. The present members of WEU are Belgium, France, Italy, Germany, Greece, Luxemburg, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, Portugal and Spain. Austria, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Ireland are observers. Iceland, Norway and Turkey are associate members and Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland,

- Romania, Slovakia and The Czech Republic have the status of associate partners. This list of states shows that WEU is a society of not only the Western European countries but all European countries.
3. According to the DECLARATION ON WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION in 1991, WEU will be developed as the defence component of the European Union, and to this end, it (WEU) will formulate common European defence policy. And also in 1992, the Treaty on European Union, Article J.4.2, provided that WEU is an integral part of the development of the Union (EU).
 4. COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, MINISTERIAL DECISION SETTING UP A WEU SATELLITE CENTRE, Vianden (Luxembourg), 27 June 1991.
 5. PETER B. de SELDING, "WEU Postpones Satellite Decision", *SPACE NEWS*, May 22-28, 1995, p.3 and p.21.
 6. The Council of Western European Union shall set up its subsidiary bodies as may be considered necessary, under Article VIII.2. of TREATY OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COLLABORATION AND COLLECTIVE SELF-DEFENCE, SIGNED AT BRUSSELS ON MARCH 17, 1948, AS AMENDED BY THE 'PROTOCOL MODIFYING AND COMPLETING THE BRUSSELS TREATY'. Signed at Paris on 23 October 1954.
 7. Helios-1 was launched on 7 July, 1995. Though there is no announcement about the resolution because Helios is a military satellite, the resolution is thought to reach around 1 metre.
 8. Now Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)
 9. *supra*, note 1, p.251.
 10. *supra*, note 1, pp.251-252.
 11. Other proposals, such as an International Satellite Monitoring Agency proposed by the USSR, Paksat proposed by Canada in 1988 and Satellite Image Processing Agency by France in 1989 also could not bear any fruit.
 12. The ad hoc Sub-Group on Space under the Permanent Council of WEU continuously studies the European space-based observation system. PETER B. de SELDING, "WEU Favors European Spy Satellite Program", *SPACE NEWS*, June 26-July 2, 1995, p.1 and p.28.
 13. For example, ADEOS (1996:Japan) will have 8 metre resolution, LANDSAT-7 (1997:USA) will have 5 metre resolution, SPOT-5 (2000:France) will have 5 metre resolution.
 14. This possibility was already mentioned in 1987. William B. Wirin, *REFLECTIONS ON ARMS CONTROL AND SPACE SURVEILLANCE VERIFICATION*, presented to the McGill Institute and Center of Air and Space Law, Montreal, Canada, October 23, 1987.