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Joint Epicentre Determination of Soviet Underground  
Nuclear Explosions 1973-89 at the Semipalatinsk Test Site

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## SUMMARY

This report gives estimated epicentres for underground nuclear tests at the Soviet Semipalatinsk test site for the period 1973-1989 inclusive. These estimates are obtained using the Joint Epicentre Determination technique on tests in the Shagan, Degelen and Konystan areas of the test site restrained using data released on the locations of some tests all of which took place before 1973. The estimated epicentres should therefore be free from bias which can result from incorrect assumptions regarding the restrained epicentres required to fix the overall location of each group.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Locations of underground nuclear tests are important to seismologists investigating the structure of the earth as well as those researching into the size and nature of the explosion sources using the generated seismic signals. The release in 1989 in the paper by Bocharov, Zelentsov & Mikhailov, (1) of epicentre, depth and yield information for many Soviet tests at the Semipalatinsk test site for the period 1961-72 is thus to be welcomed. Clearly knowledge of the true epicentres of tests since 1972 would also be useful but until they are released it is important to have reliable estimated values. To satisfy this need, this report gives estimates of epicentres obtained by a joint epicentre determination (JED) technique, of many explosions not included in the paper of Bocharov et al (1).

### 2. JOINT EPICENTRE DETERMINATION

The Joint Epicentre Determination (JED) method described by Douglas 1967 (2) was used to relocate the explosions. Data used are the P wave arrival time data taken from the International Seismological Centre (ISC) bulletin tapes for the period 1964-87. For the more recent period 1988-89 the data were taken from the Earthquake Data reports (EDR's) published by the US Department of the Interior, Geological Survey. JED is most effective when all the events are from a small area so that deviations from the assumed travel time curve can be corrected by a single term for each station. The explosions for the Shagan, Degelen and Konystan sites were therefore relocated as three separate groups. To obtain stable solutions the epicentre and origin time of at least one explosion from each group must be restrained. The data given by Bocharov et al (1) were used for this purpose thus giving unbiased absolute locations for all 3 groups. The number of restrained epicentres and origin times were 7 for Shagan, 68 for Degelen and 14 for Konystan.

A system of weighting the arrival time readings was used to remove gross errors and to allow for variations in the quality of the arrival time measurements between stations. Gross errors were removed by the method of uniform reduction (Jeffreys (3)). The standard deviation (SD) of the residuals for all sites are small (0.20 for Shagan, 0.24 for Degelen and Konystan). Arrival times with residuals in excess of about 2 SD are effectively given zero weight. With the Shagan and Degelen data the large number of readings enable the SD of the residuals to individual stations to be estimated and each station's data were weighted to allow for variation in this.

### 3. RESULTS

The epicentres for Shagan, Degelen and Konystan are given in tables 1-3 and plotted in figures 1-3 respectively. The restrained epicentres are also included and are plotted as stars in the figures. The 95% confidence limits and areas for the Shagan epicentres suggest that the most location errors should be no more than 1 km. The smaller number of arrival readings available for most Degelen and Konystan relocations result in somewhat larger limits but most should be within 2 km of true.

It is interesting to compare results presented here with those published in Marshall, Bache & Lilwall(4). Marshall et al (4) located many of the epicentres in the Semipalatinsk site for the period up to 1982 using the same technique used here but did not have the large number of epicentres given in Bocharov et al (1) to restrain the groups. Instead the overall positions of all three sites were restrained using a single explosion (650115) in the Shagan test site whose location was inferred from the crater visible on satellite photographs. Considering only the events common to both reports we find that for Shagan the mean epicentre of the group in this report is only 0.75 km N of that in Marshall et al (4). For the Degelen and Konystan sites the differences are 3.0 km N 250 E and 3.1 km N 240 E respectively. As might be expected the cratering shot (650115) is appropriate for constraining the Shagan tests but results in a slight bias for the other more distant sites.

#### REFERENCES

1. V S Bocharov, S A Zelentsoz, V N Mikhailov: "Characteristics of 96 Underground Nuclear Explosions at the Semipalatinsk Test Site". Atomic Energy (Atomnaya Energiya) 67(3), 1989.
2. A Douglas: "Joint Epicentre Determination". Nature 215, 47-48, 1967.
3. H Jeffreys: "The Theory of Probability". 3rd Ed Oxford University Press, 1961.
4. P D Marshall, T C Bache, R C Lilwall: "Body Wave Magnitudes and Locations of Soviet Underground Explosions at the Semipalatinsk Test Site". AWRE Report No. O 16/84, HMSO London, 1985.











N	DATE	ORIGIN	TIME	DOT	LAT	DLAT	LON	DLON	DEPTH	AREA
										sqkm
1	661218		4 58 0.00		49.925N		77.747E		0.427	
2	670916		4 4 0.30		49.937N		77.728E		0.230	
3	670922		5 4 0.00		49.960N		77.691E		0.229	
4	671122		4 3 59.90		49.942N		77.687E		0.227	
5	690531		5 1 59.40		49.950N		77.694E		0.258	
6	691228		3 47 0.20		49.937N		77.714E		0.388	
7	700721		3 2 59.70		49.952N		77.673E		0.225	
8	701104		6 2 59.80		49.989N		77.762E		0.249	
9	710606		4 2 59.70		49.975N		77.660E		0.299	
10	710619		4 4 0.10		49.969N		77.641E		0.290	
11	711009		6 2 59.70		49.978N		77.641E		0.237	
12	711021		6 2 59.70		49.974N		77.597E		0.324	
13	720826		3 46 59.70		49.982N		77.717E		0.285	
14	720902		8 56 59.90		49.959N		77.641E		0.185	
15	730419		4 32 59.92	0.07	49.984N	1.4	77.614E	0.8	0.000	5.3
16	741207		6 0 0.03	0.22	49.916N	2.5	77.605E	2.6	0.000	31.6
17	780319		3 46 59.82	0.06	49.945N	1.3	77.704E	0.8	0.000	5.0
18	790216		4 4 0.50	0.07	49.974N	1.4	77.668E	0.8	0.000	5.1
19	790718		3 17 4.92	0.07	49.919N	1.4	77.812E	0.9	0.000	6.1
20	800404		5 32 59.83	0.12	50.000N	2.2	77.823E	1.7	0.000	15.7

Table 3 Konystan test site epicentres. Nos 1-14 are those given by Bocharov et al (1) with coordinates rounded to nearest 0.001 degrees. Columns headed DOT, DLAT, DLON and AREA refer to 95% confidence limits

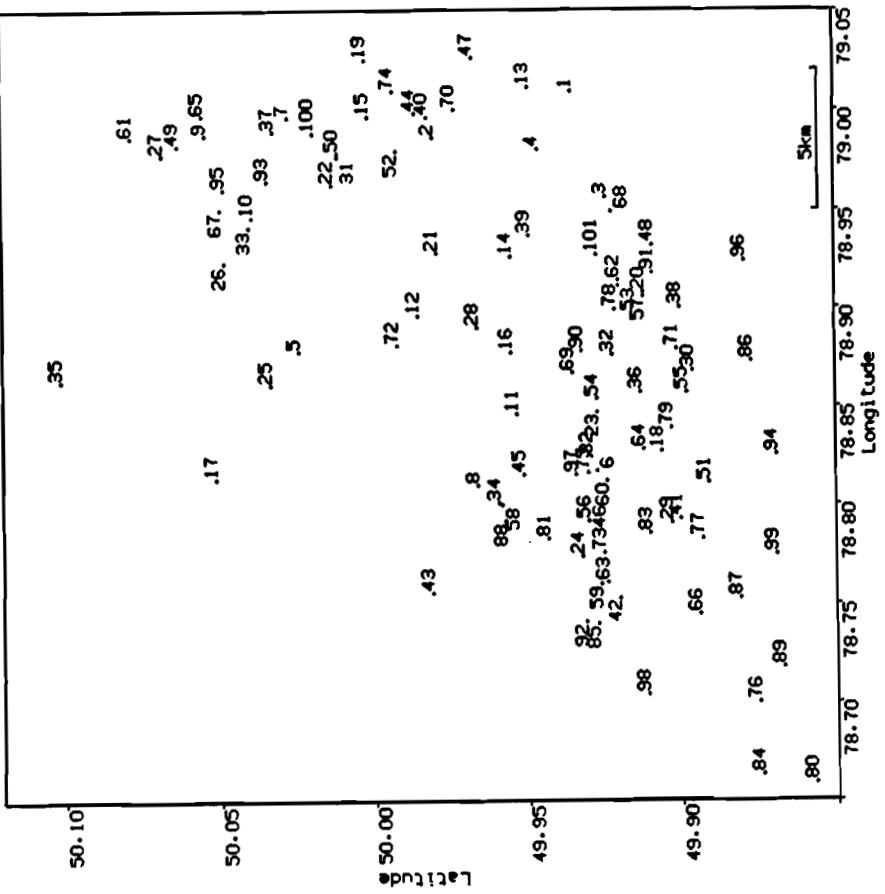
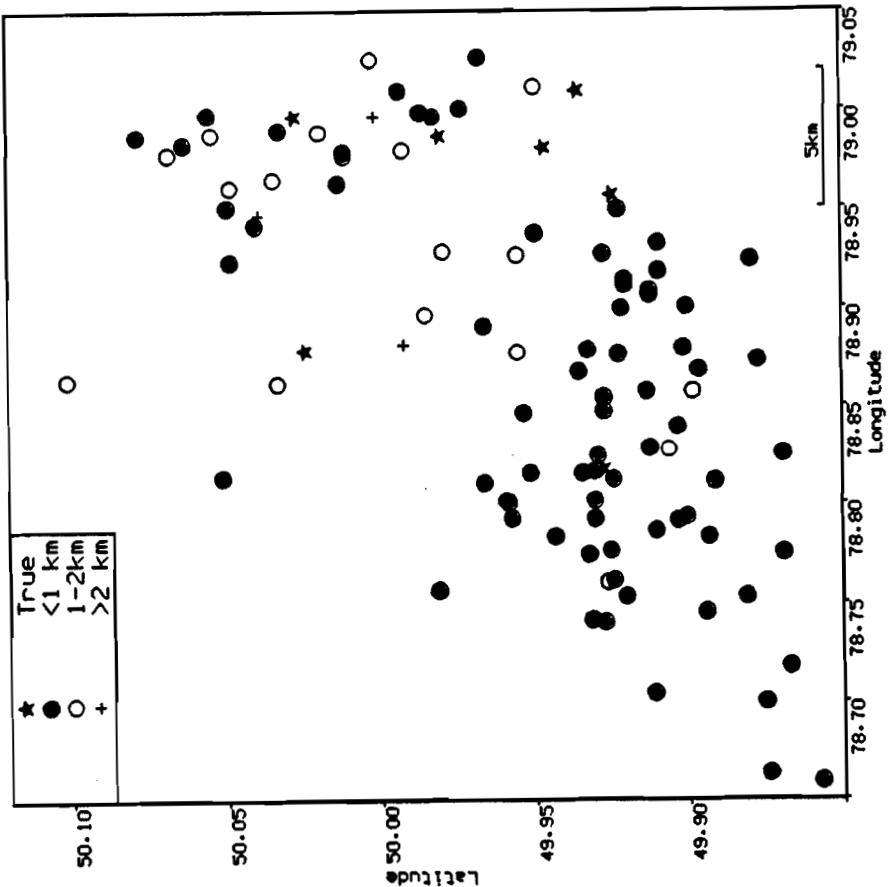


Fig 1. Epicentres of Explosions at the Shagan test site 1964-89. Numbers in key box refer to location accuracy Based on 95% confidence limits and areas. Numbers in right plot correspond to those in Table 1.

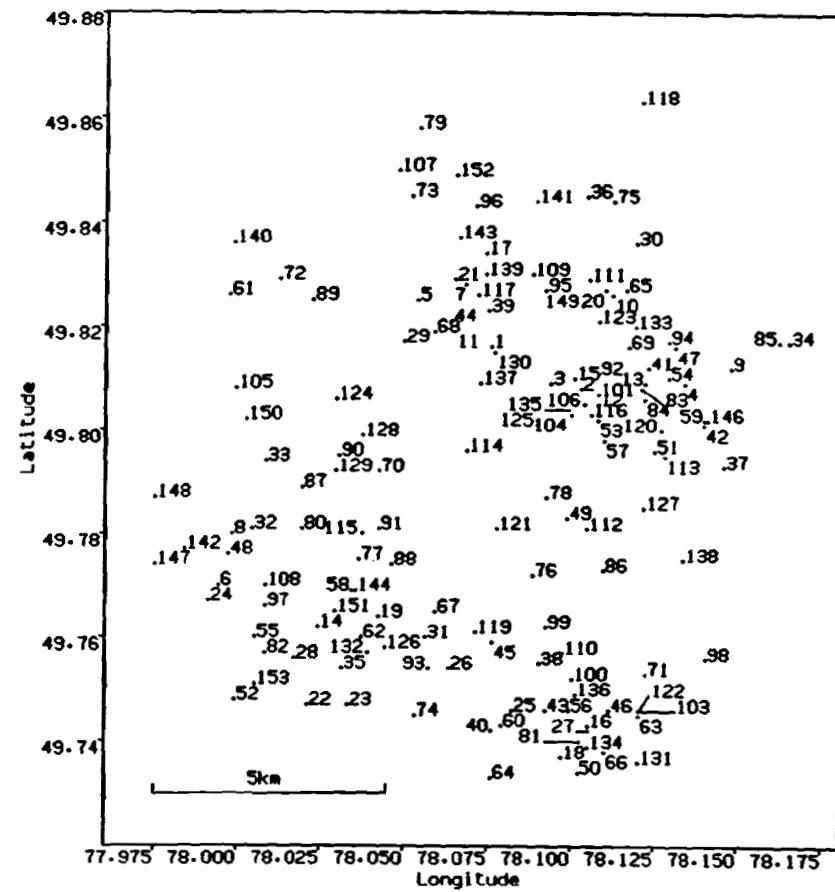
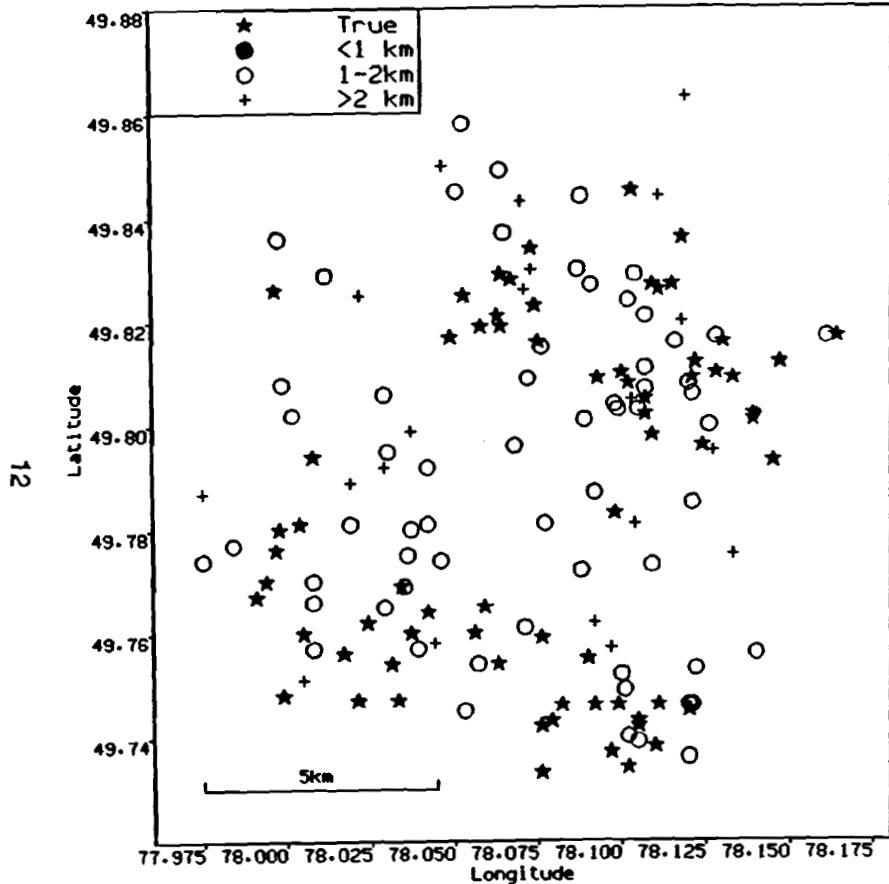


Fig 2. Epicentres of Explosions at the Degelen test site 1964-89. Numbers in key box refer to location accuracy based on 95% confidence limits and areas. Numbers in right plot correspond to those in Table 2. Note that explosions numbered 102 and 145 plot outside this area.

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