ASSESSING EVENT LOCATION CAPABILITY WITH GROUND TRUTH EVENTS AT THE DEGELEN MOUNTAIN TEST SITE, KAZAKHSTAN

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ABSTRACT

We are investigating seismic event location capability in Kazakhstan using first-P arrivals from nuclear explosions with relatively precise or exact ground truth information. We use a waveform cross-correlation (WCC) method to determine high-precision relative arrival times. We then use the improved arrival times to examine several issues regarding location accuracy and precision. Since the true explosion locations are known precisely, we can evaluate both relative (joint hypocenter determination, JHD) and absolute (single-event) location capability. Aspects we are currently investigating include relative and absolute location accuracy, in particular using sparse regional-distance observations, the spatial variability of derived source-specific station corrections (that is, path corrections), and the influence of global heterogeneity on absolute location accuracy.

We have combined information from several sources in order to establish adequate ground truth information for Degelen Mountain. Locations and origin times for 68 Degelen explosions were published by Bocharov et al. (1989). Tunnel portal coordinates for all Degelen explosions were released as part of a tunnel closure project (Leith, 1998). In addition, we obtained sections of a map showing all of the Degelen tunnels, albeit with some apparent distortions and no coordinates (W. Leith, pers. comm.). By combining the true portal coordinates with the tunnel maps, we were able to determine approximately the complete location and geometry of all the tunnels. Using the Bocharov et al. (1989) ground truth information, we then verified our estimated tunnel geometry for those events, and determined that the explosions all took place at essentially the tunnel ends. We then adopted the other tunnel ends as our best estimates of the locations for the remaining Degelen explosions.

We were able to obtain sufficient digital data for 19 Degelen explosions to carry out our WCC-JHD analysis. Each event had between 4 and 17 observations. Using all the digital data and fixing one event location at ground truth, we can locate the other 18 with a mean mislocation of only 2 km. If we restrict the data to stations within 40° , resulting in only 7 usable events with between 3 and 8 observations, fixing one location and solving for the other 6 yields an average mislocation of about 7 km. We have also carried out single-event locations using our WCC data. If no station corrections are applied, the mean mislocation is about 12 km, with a significant southward location bias. Using the station corrections derived from our JHD analysis, the mean mislocation decreases to about 2 km.

For location using path corrections to be accurate and effective in practice, the rate at which the corrections change with changing source location must be relatively modest. Otherwise, the standard interpolation and extrapolation approach will yield erroneous results. We compared the sets of JHD path corrections we derived for events at Degelen with our previous results for Balapan. The corrections are very highly correlated (r = 0.98) with a linear least-squares fit slope of 0.97 and an intercept of 0.3 s. This might suggest that the corrections should be readily transportable between the two nearby regions. However, we find that using the Balapan corrections to locate Degelen events results in a mean mislocation of about 5 km, with a general bias to the northeast. Examining the path correction differences more closely, we find that they have a strong azimuthal pattern. This effect could possibly be due to either local or global heterogeneity.

We are also investigating the contributions of global 3-D structure to mislocation. We present the preliminary results of an analysis of single-event location accuracy using a high-resolution global 3-D model. The resulting location accuracy using the 3-D model does not approach that obtained using JHD-derived path corrections.

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OBJECTIVE

We are carrying out investigations of seismic event location capability using events that have ground truth information to allow a direct assessment of actual location errors and computed precision estimates. The objectives are to determine the most effective approaches for precise and accurate event location for CTBT monitoring purposes. Waveform cross-correlation methods have been applied to determine more accurate relative arrival times for available digital seismic data from nuclear explosions at Degelen Mountain, Kazakhstan. These arrival times, along with the original bulletin times, are used for a comparison of two strategies for improving absolute location accuracy and reducing estimated location uncertainty, one "calibration-based" and the other "model-based." The calibration-based approach involves joint hypocenter determination (JHD), including the estimation of path corrections. The model-based approach involves the use of a global three-dimensional (3D) velocity model to provide improved travel time estimates.

RESEARCH ACCOMPLISHED

All of the Degelen Mountain nuclear tests were conducted in tunnels that had been bored roughly horizontal into the mountain. Excellent sources of Degelen Mountain ground truth information exist for tunnel entrances, or portals (Leith, 1998), but few sources exist for coordinates of the explosions aside from Bocharov et al. (1989). Bocharov et al. (1989) only reports ground truth for events between 1961 and 1972. Unfortunately, the events for which sufficient waveform data for cross-correlation are available occurred between 1977 and 1988. In order to bridge this gap and establish adequate ground truth for many of the later explosions, we obtained two maps of the Degelen Mountain tunnel complex (W. Leith, pers. comm.). One map is larger and composed of four different map sections, the other is smaller and a single sheet. We were informed that the smaller map should be considered less accurate, therefore we used the larger sectioned map for the ground truth estimate. The large map illustrates many of the reported Degelen Mountain tunnels, albeit with some apparent distortions and no coordinates. An absolute framework for the large map is determined by overlaying GPS-estimated tunnel portal locations of Leith (1998). The approximate locations and orientations of all tunnels on the map sections is shown in Figure 1. Tunnel labels used in the figure correspond to those listed from the KNNC Tunnel Data Volumes in Leith (1998). Even though very good locations are known for the tunnel portals, this process was deemed necessary because most explosions probably occurred at, or much closer to, the tunnel ends as opposed to tunnel portals.

In order to test our ground truth estimates, our tunnel portal estimates are compared to the GPS-determined portals of Leith (1998). The 142 portals corresponding to Leith (1998) compared well, with a median difference of 77 meters. For this comparison there were 6 notably large differences (larger than 900 meters) between the map-based estimate and the locations in Leith (1998). The tunnels in question are those labeled 104, 151, 152, 200M-bis, 806, and E-2 in Figure 1. All 6 of the discrepant portals appear in the same general location, relative to the other tunnels, on both the large and small maps. Additionally, one of them (tunnel E-2) has a tunnel end, based on our estimate, that corresponds to one of the Bocharov et al. (1989) reported explosion locations (event 680929). Because of this, we believe the map-based estimate to be generally closer to the true portal location for these 6 tunnels. The source of the discrepancy is currently under investigation.

To further test our ground truth estimates, our tunnel locations are compared to explosion locations reported by Bocharov et al. (1989). Bocharov et al. (1989) reported locations of 53 events that occurred in 46 different tunnels on our maps. All of these events located very close to our estimates of their corresponding tunnels with the majority at the ends of the estimated tunnels. Based on the close proximity of Bocharov et al. (1989) reported events to the ends of our estimated tunnels and the assumption that tests could not be conducted farther into a tunnel than the previous test was conducted, it follows that the first detonation in a tunnel was usually at the tunnel end. These initial tunnel explosions, determined by the chronological order of tests in a given tunnel, had a median distance of 80 meters from their corresponding tunnel end. In the case where multiple explosions occurred in a single tunnel, each event location was equally close to their corresponding tunnels. Approximately 75% of the events listed in Leith (1998) occurred in unique tunnels. Unfortunately, given current information, we cannot determine where multiple detonations in a single tunnel occurred. Since most tunnels only had one explosion that was most likely at the tunnel end, and the mean tunnel length was only 685 meters, the tunnel ends are adopted as our ground truth estimate for events that were not reported by Bocharov et al. (1989).

Origin times for the 84 Degelen Mountain events in the ISC catalog not reported by Bocharov et al. (1989) are refined using published ground truth locations and our map-based ground truth location estimates, origin times reported by Bocharov et al. (1989), and ISC catalog arrival times. The objective is to restrain a portion of the origin times in order to sufficiently constrain the remaining origin times to give very good absolute estimates. This procedure involves applying JHD with epicenters restrained to ground truth estimates and only the origin times reported by Bocharov et al. (1989) restrained. The JHD technique then solves solely for path corrections and the remaining unrestrained origin times relative to our reference velocity model ak135.

To evaluate this procedure, a data set is constructed from only the 68 Degelen Mountain events reported by Bocharov et al. (1989). With the event epicenters restrained to their absolute locations, the origin times are restrained in different ratios to test the accuracy with which the unrestrained origin times can be recovered. With 23 of 68 origin times restrained, all of the remaining origin times are recovered within 0.4 seconds with an RMS error of 0.13 seconds. The same recovery is observed when 46 of 68 origin times are restrained. Based on this exercise, the origin times estimated in this manner are assumed to be within 0.4 seconds of their true values. The resulting origin times for each event are listed in Table 1 along with 95% confidence limits and our map-based location estimates.

JHD is applied to relocate the events using 144 cross-correlation (C-C) derived teleseismic and regional arrival times from 19 nuclear explosions at Degelen Mountain. The initial locations for these events are set to the ground truth estimate described above. Each event had between 4 and 17 observations. For all of the Degelen Mountain relocation analyses, event 870717 is restrained as the master event. This event was chosen because it had a relatively large number of observations (12) and the largest magnitude (6.4 mb) of the group as reported in the pIDC's Nuclear Explosion Database (NEDB). Most events relocated to within 3 km of our ground truth estimate, and all relocated to within 4.5 km, with a mean mislocation of 2.0 km (Figure 2). All 95% confidence ellipses covered less than 16.5 km², with most being less than 8 km², and a mean coverage of 6.6 km². Only 5 of the 18 relocated events had confidence ellipses that covered their ground truth location estimate. This underestimation of location uncertainties is expected given the very small number of observations (Evernden, 1969) and is a well-known problem in such location scenarios. No correlation exists between azimuthal gap and mislocation for our locations using waveform cross-correlation picks, despite having a large average azimuthal gap of 146°. This is contrary to the trend observed by Thurber and Engdahl (2000) wherein mislocation increases with increasing azimuthal gap using worldwide ground truth events and ISC data. We attribute this difference to the accuracy of our arrival times.

In a more realistic CTBT-like monitoring situation, far fewer events would normally be available for JHD and the event magnitudes would most likely be small, resulting in observations being made only out to regional distances or slightly beyond. This scenario is especially challenging for seismic location due to the fact that regional seismic phases pass through significant portions of the Earth's crust and uppermost mantle, which have a laterally heterogeneous velocity structure that is poorly represented by our 1-D reference velocity model. In order to investigate location capability in such a situation, the full C-C Degelen Mountain data set is limited to phases arriving from less than 40° epicentral distance. Imposing this limitation eliminates 12 events because they have less than 3 observations, and reduces the number of observations to between 3 and 8 for the 7 remaining events. Again, 870717 is chosen as the master event. As expected, both mislocations and uncertainties increase substantially for the unrestrained 6 events (Figure 3). The mean mislocation is 7.43 km with the largest being 15.4 km. Four of the events have associated 95% confidence ellipses covering less than 570 km², well within the CTBT 1000 km² goal. The other two events have ellipses covering 1730 and 8869 km², which is not surprising as each event had only three observations. The average azimuthal gap for this "regional" data set is 165°.

We also use the software package LocSAT of the International Data Centre to locate the explosions in the 1-D reference earth model ak135 both without and with station corrections. The station corrections were obtained from our JHD of explosions at Degelen Mountain and Balapan. We test to what extent these two sets of station corrections are transportable; can we use them to locate events that occurred in the general vicinity of the two sites? To be able to compare the locations estimated using both sets of corrections, we only include stations for which both corrections are available, that is, stations that recorded at least three Balapan and three Degelen Mountain explosions. Using only the resulting set of twenty stations, the number of observations per event ranges from 4 to 16, and is 8 on average. The azimuthal gap ranges from 90° to 240°, with an average gap of 190°.

Figure 4 shows the ground truth locations (solid dots) and our estimated locations (open squares) of Degelen Mountain explosions without and with station corrections. On the top (Figure 4a) we show our estimates without using any station corrections. A systematic bias of the estimated locations is evident; the median mislocation distance is 14.4 km. When we apply the source region specific station corrections for Degelen (middle, Figure 4b) we obtain much improved locations, with the median mislocation distance reduced to 2.7 km. Note that if we do not restrict the data set to stations that have observations of both Balapan and Degelen Mountain explosions, the median mislocation distances are11.8 km without and 1.7 km with station corrections, respectively.

There is a strong linear correlation between the Degelen Mountain and Balapan station corrections, suggesting that the station corrections might be transportable. Degelen Mountain corrections are systematically 0.3 s larger than the Balapan corrections. This offset could be due to a difference in structure beneath the two sites, for example a different crustal structure, however, it could also be due to a difference in the origin time estimates used in the JHD procedure. The estimated origin times are assumed accurate to within 0.4 seconds, so we cannot resolve whether the offset is due to structure or not. However, when we plot the difference between the two station corrections as a function of azimuth to the station, a smoothly varying pattern, resembling a sinusoid, becomes apparent. Indeed, if we locate Degelen Mountain events using the Balapan corrections, the estimated locations are slightly displaced

towards Balapan (Figure 4c). We interpret these systematic mislocations as due to a difference in structure between Degelen Mountain and Balapan. However, the median mislocation distance is only 4.7 km, still a significant improvement compared to just locating in ak135 with no station corrections (Figure 4a).

We also evaluate how well we can locate the Degelen explosions when we use a recent 3D global P wave velocity model, BSE [Bijwaard et al., 1998]. A subset of the events have relatively small mislocations (15 km or less), but the rest have substantially larger mislocations (> 20 km). When we only use teleseismic data, these large mislocations are substantially decreased. Thus, the global model reproduces teleseismic travel times much better than regional travel times, which is not surprising. However, even when only teleseismic data are used, a systematic mislocation to the west-northwest is apparent.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ground truth information is a key to evaluating seismic event location capability. For the Degelen Mountain explosions, where we have developed high-quality ground truth information, the improved arrival times from crosscorrelation analysis and appropriate path corrections yield excellent relative (JHD) and absolute (single-event) location results, even from sparse stations at relatively close distances with large azimuthal gaps. In both cases, we obtain location accuracies that are adequate for CTBT monitoring. Path corrections vary modestly from the adjacent Balapan area, but the variations are enough to cause significant location bias if corrections from one site are applied to the other. Preliminary locations using an existing global 3-D model are much less accurate, but the accuracy can be improved substantially if regional-distance data are excluded. The calibration-based approach yields superior accuracy, but the model-based approach should be more transportable.

Key Words: Location, Ground Truth, Corrections, Calibration, Waveform Cross-Correlation

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Table 1. 152 ISC-reported Degelen Mountain nuclear explosions including our estimated origin times and their uncertainties (+/- value, 95% confidence), ground truth location estimates, and body-wave magnitudes (pIDC). The first 68 events are from Bocharov et al. (1989).

YRMODAHRMN SEC +/-	LATITUD LONGITU	MAG	YRMODAHRMN	N SEC	+/-	LATITUD	LONGITU	MAG
640315 8 0 0.4 0.00	49.8160 78.0752	62	701217 7	1 0 0	0 00	49.7456	78 0992	6 1
	49.8077 78.1020					49.7985		
	49.8091 78.0929					49.7685		
	49.8087 78.1334					49.8016		
	49.8247 78.0527					49.7434		
	49.7702 77.9943					49.8264		
	49.8284 78.0669					49.7600		
	49.7797 77.9981					49.7453		
	49.8116 78.1467					49.7331		
	49.8259 78.1114					49.8267		
	49.8192 78.0636					49.7375		
	49.8045 78.1067					49.7655		
	49.8089 78.1210					49.8194		
	49.7616 78.0239					49.8061		
	49.8097 78.1000					49.7730		
	49.7429 78.1050					49.7469		
	49.8344 78.0734					49.8158		
	49.7367 78.0970					49.7459		
	49.7643 78.0424					49.7791		
	49.8271 78.1088					49.7653		
	49.8288 78.0637					49.7598		
	49.7471 78.0205					49.8329		
	49.7469 78.0334					49.7965		
	49.7674 77.9914					49.7462		
	49.7457 78.0823					49.7606		
	49.7536 78.0630					49.8038		
	49.7416 78.1054					49.8076		
	49.7564 78.0169					49.8120		
	49.8167 78.0490					49.7462		
	49.8359 78.1182					49.7770		
670804 658 0.3 0.00	49.7603 78.0555	5.8	760723 23	33 0.0	0.06	49.7492	78.0617	5.1
671017 5 4 0.2 0.00	49.7809 78.0038	6.1	761030 45	57 0.1	0.10	49.8285	78.0516	4.9
671030 6 4 0.0 0.00	49.7944 78.0079	6.0	761230 35	57 0.2	0.06	49.7686	78.0331	5.2
671208 6 359.8 0.00	49.8171 78.1638	5.4	770329 35	57 0.0	0.05	49.7704	78.0136	5.4
680107 34659.9 0.00	49.7544 78.0309	5.3	770425 4	7 0.1	0.06	49.8076	78.1144	5.1
680424 103559.7 0.00	49.8452 78.1032	5.0	770730 15	57 0.1	0.05	49.7500	78.0399	5.3
680611 3 559.7 0.00	49.7930 78.1451	5.8	770817 42	2659.9	0.06	49.8200	78.1400	5.1
680712 12 8 0.0 0.00	49.7547 78.0899	5.9	771029 3	7 0.0	0.04	49.8265	78.0801	5.6
680820 4 559.6 0.00	49.8226 78.0774	4.8	771226 4	259.9	0.07	49.8038	78.1234	4.9
680905 4 559.6 0.00	49.7416 78.0756	6.2	780326 35	57 0.0	0.04	49.7643	77.9993	5.6
	49.8120 78.1219		780422 3	7 0.0	0.04	49.7469	78.1251	5.3
681109 254 0.1 0.00	49.8005 78.1391	4.9	780529 45	5660.0	0.07	49.7986	78.1022	4.7
681218 5 159.7 0.00	49.7459 78.0920	5.7	780728 24	4659.9	0.04	49.7488	78.0893	5.7
690307 82659.8 0.00	49.8215 78.0627	6.3	780829 23	3659.9	0.05	49.8074	78.1091	5.2
690516 4 259.7 0.00	49.7594 78.0758	6.0	780920 5	3 0.1	0.13	49.7934	78.1447	4.3
690704 24659.6 0.00	49.7460 78.1113	6.0	781015 53	37 0.1	0.05	49.7395	78.1127	5.2
	49.8156 78.1296		781031 41	17 0.1	0.05	49.7875	78.0974	5.2
	49.7763 77.9967					49.7826		
	49.7825 78.0983					49.8061		
	49.7337 78.1022					49.8169		
	49.7956 78.1239					49.7643		
	49.7478 77.9990					49.8265		
	49.8015 78.1068					49.7791		
	49.8097 78.1284					49.7500		
700906 4 259.9 0.00	49.7597 78.0054	6.0	791018 41	17 0.1	0.05	49.8200	78.1003	5.2

Table 1 (continued)

YRMODAHRMN SEC +/-	LATITUD LONGITU MAG	YRMODAHRMN	SEC +/-	LATITUD LONGITU MAG
791130 453 0.6 0.09	49.7794 78.0953 4.5	831129 219	8.8 0.05	49.7355 78.0994 5.5
791221 442 0.1 0.09		831226 429	9.2 0.04	49.7975 78.1036 5.7
800410 4 7 0.2 0.06		840415 317	11.5 0.04	49.7499 78.0824 5.9
800522 357 0.1 0.04	49.7739 78.0287 5.8	840909 259	8.7 0.06	49.8060 78.0997 5.1
800731 333 0.1 0.05	49.7955 78.0907 5.5	841018 457	8.3 0.11	49.7328 78.0987 4.5
800925 62112.9 0.08	49.7855 78.0805 4.9	841123 355	7.5 0.10	49.8176 78.0551 4.7
810630 15715.3 0.05	49.7669 78.0744 5.4	850725 311	9.1 0.06	49.8157 78.0096 5.3
810717 23718.1 0.05	49.8064 78.1352 5.3		24.3 0.04	
810814 22715.2 0.06	49.7587 78.0565 5.3			49.7467 78.1162 7.3
811120 457 5.1 0.06	49.7401 78.0965 5.2	870506 4 2	8.0 0.04	
811222 431 5.4 0.07	49.8267 78.0757 5.1	870606 237	9.2 0.04	49.8327 78.0704 5.4
820219 35613.4 0.05	49.8136 78.0319 5.4	870717 117	9.1 0.03	49.7664 78.0287 6.4
820625 2 3 7.0 0.07	49.7749 78.0996 5.0	870918 232	8.9 0.20	49.8060 78.0997 4.4
820823 243 6.7 0.08	49.7473 78.0331 5.0	871016 66	7.0 0.15	49.7313 78.0906 4.6
820921 257 3.1 0.05	49.7839 78.1347 5.5	871220 255	9.1 0.07	49.7742 77.9986 5.2
821225 423 8.4 0.10	49.7763 78.0280 4.9	880206 419	8.9 0.10	49.7664 78.0287 4.8
830330 41710.1 0.09	49.7810 78.0413 5.0	880422 930	9.3 0.07	49.7942 78.1000 5.1
830412 341 8.2 0.08	49.7910 78.0807 5.0	881018 340	9.1 0.07	49.7799 78.0079 5.2
830530 33347.1 0.04	49.7439 78.1127 5.5	881123 357	9.0 0.04	49.7726 78.0378 5.6
830624 25613.8 0.08	49.7459 78.0374 5.0	890217 4 1	9.1 0.05	49.8235 78.0680 5.3
830911 63313.1 0.10	49.7854 78.0806 4.9	891004 1130	0.1 0.09	49.7498 78.0117 5.2

Figure 1. Tunnel portals (triangles) (Leith, 1998) and actual (Bocharov et al., 1989) or estimated (this study) ground-truth explosion locations (circles) for Degelen Mountain.

Figure 2. Degelen Mountain JHD mislocations and 95% confidence ellipses for 19 events using all digital data.

Figure 3. Degelen Mountain JHD mislocations and 95% confidence ellipses for 7 events (one fixed) using stations within 40°.

Figure 4. Estimated (open squares) and ground truth (solid circles) locations of 19 Degelen Mountain explosions, using only stations (20) that recorded at least three Balapan and three Degelen Mountain

explosions. a) Without station corrections, b) with station corrections obtained from Degelen Mountain data, and c) with station corrections obtained from Balapan data.