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ORGANIZATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Department of Organization and Information Systems managed the technical resources used to handle information and oversaw the institution's working methods. It consisted of five units: organization, archives, data processing, information and document systems, and telecommunications.

Organization

In 1991 a blueprint was drawn up listing and planning the ICRC's requirements in the coming five years as regards computer applications, data banks and the communications network, as well as the most appropriate form of organization to meet the challenges facing the institution in its endeavours to protect and assist the victims of conflict and to strengthen international humanitarian law.

Archives

The ICRC's archive policy, adopted in 1990, continued to be put into practice, particularly as concerned the decentralization of current archives.

Facts and figures:

- The overall figure for headquarters correspondence (990,000 exchanges) increased last year by 35%, largely as a result of the upsurge in operational activities.
- The amount of archives material increased by 276 linear metres, i.e. 123 linear metres filed directly in the centralized archives still in use, and 153 linear metres of decentralized archive materials transferred

to the central archives from headquarters and the field.

- As of 31 December 1991, the amount of material on file in the ICRC's archives came to 3,427 linear metres, an 8.6% increase with respect to 1990.
- 60 requests for information of a historical nature were received from individuals and organizations from outside the ICRC.

Data Processing

The Data Processing Division devoted most of its operational efforts this year to developments for the Central Tracing Agency: a system was installed for processing information relative to the conflict in the Gulf, and a new version of the application used to process tracing requests was introduced, in line with the Agency's recently redefined work concept.

Document data banks

Work on the computerized document system begun in 1988 centred in 1991 on:

- development of a data bank on the National Societies;
- preparation of a CD-ROM (an optical disc which can be read using a PC) to give certain sectors of the public access to the data bank on international humanitarian law treaties.

The entire system of document data bases was given a trial run by the ICRC Africa zone.

with direct links to Geneva

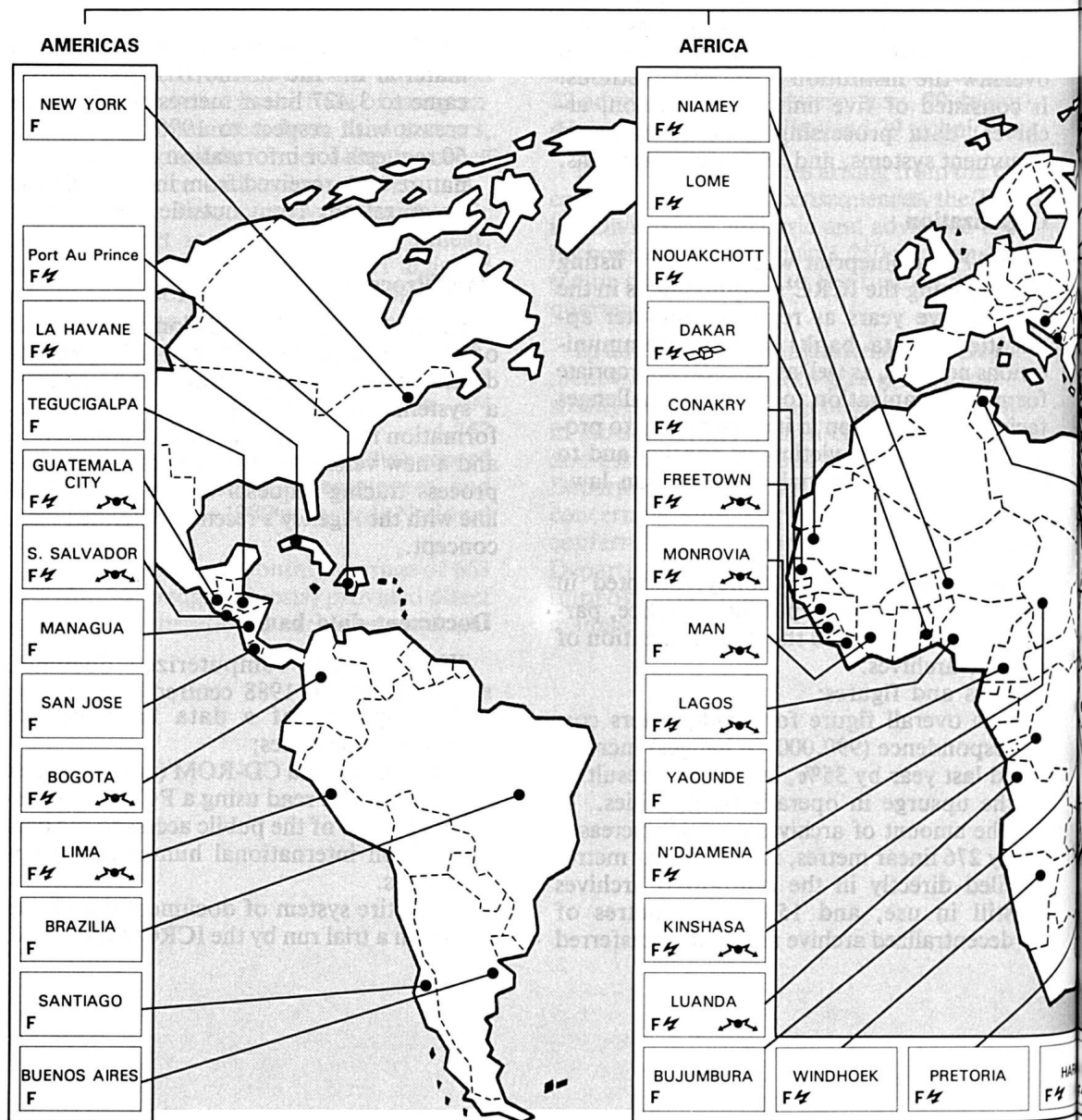
ICRC TELECOMMUNICATIONS

DISPATCH

The ICRC's telecommunications network, which is entirely independent of commercial channels, provides reliable links worldwide between headquarters in Geneva and the delegations and sub-delegations in the field.

In 1991, the number of stations rose from 103 to 128, i.e. 34 bases in contact with Geneva (51,000 messages exchanged) and 94 mission stations for local communications (70,000 messages exchanged).

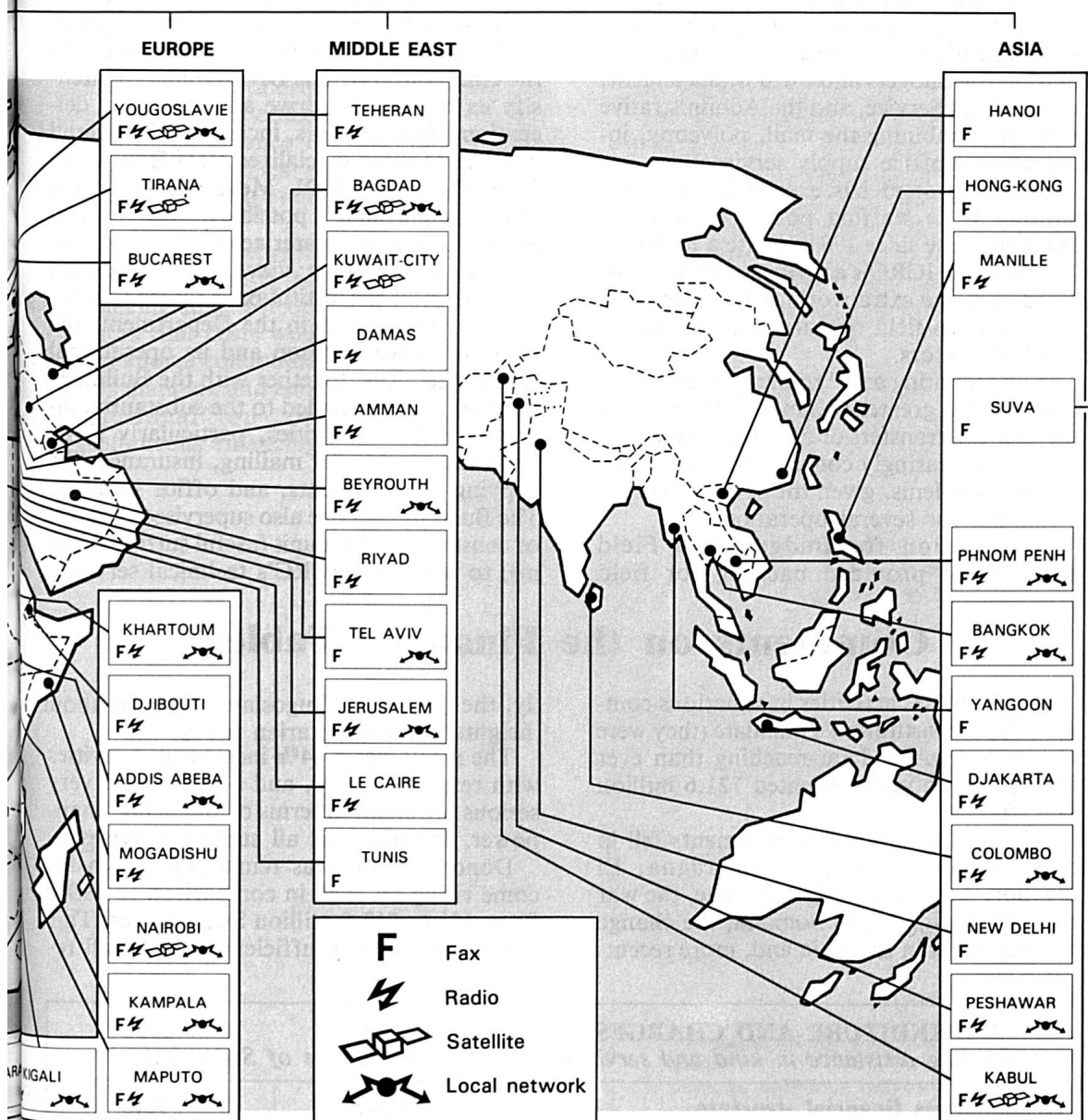
In addition to these traditional means, in use at the ICRC since 1963, the institution has increasingly relied on satellite link-ups: to the first three stations, used during the Gulf conflict, have been added nine others, in



COMMUNICATION NETWORK

(Situation at 31 December 1991)

CENTRE



Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe (Yugoslavia). This new technology is invaluable in an emergency and functions as a back-up for the ICRC's traditional network.

When all the messages received and sent by telex, telefax, satellite and radio are counted, the overall total comes to 240,000 messages processed in 1991 — an astonishing 67% increase since the previous year.

There are now 19 staff at headquarters in Geneva; they run the network almost independently. In the field, an average of 25 expatriate technicians, assisted by about 100 specially trained local personnel, kept the radio and satellite networks functioning to service some 40 ICRC operations.