

PhotoSat WorldView-2 stereo satellite surveying accuracy study, Asmara, Eritrea, 2 GCP, RMSE 20cm

- **400 km² surveyed using only two ground reference survey points**
- **This WorldView-2 satellite elevation surveying accuracy is accurate to 20cm RMSE, determined by 3,293 survey checkpoints**
- **January, 2010 WorldView-2 stereo satellite photos processed by PhotoSat in June 2016**

Gerry Mitchell, P. Geo, Geophysicist, President PhotoSat
June, 2016

A 1m grid of elevation values, covering an area of 400 square kilometres, was produced over the PhotoSat test area in Eritrea. The elevation grid was made using geophysical processing of 50cm ground resolution stereo satellite photos taken by the DigitalGlobe WorldView-2 satellite. The stereo satellite elevation processing was referenced two ground survey points. The elevation surveying accuracy was measured with over 3,000 survey checkpoints.

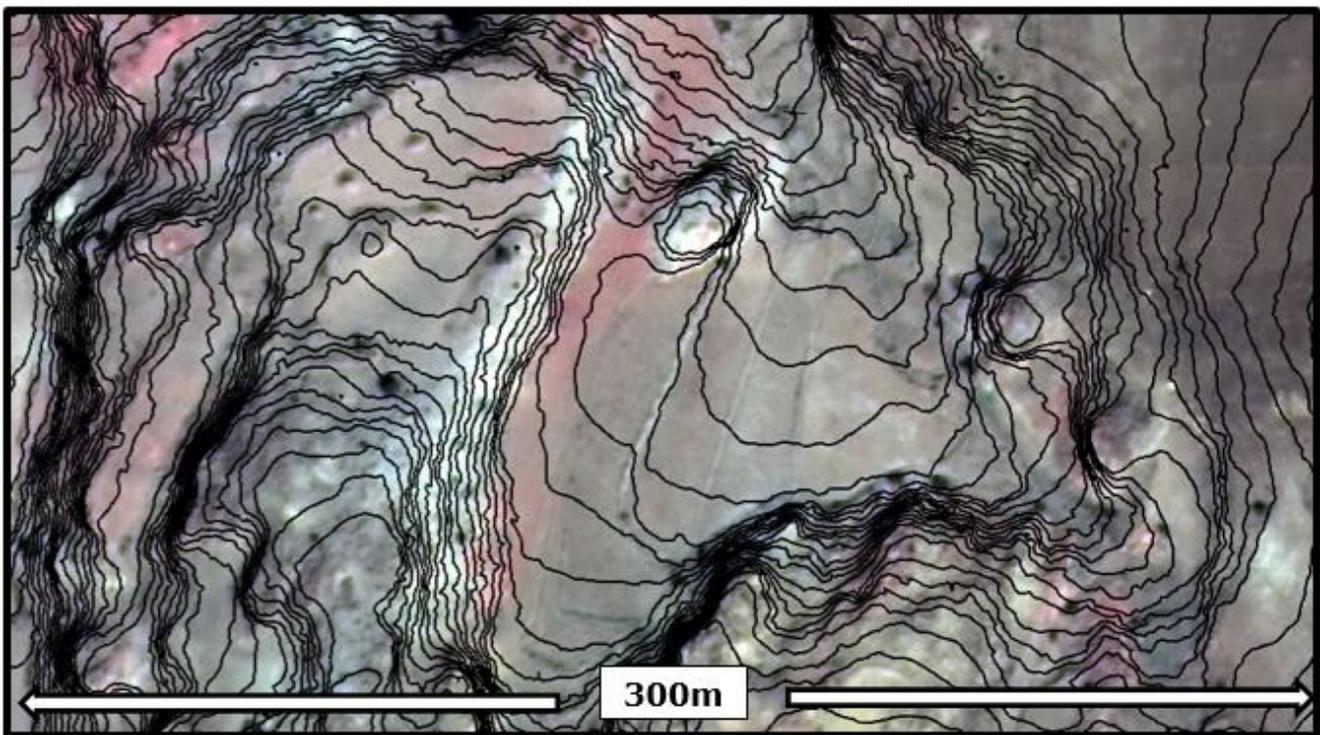


Figure 1. WorldView-2 color image with 50cm contours from the PhotoSat WorldView-2 survey of the Eritrea test area.

Stereo satellite photos:

PhotoSat satellite surveying uses high quality stereo satellite photos. These photos are taken by the satellite as it passes over the survey area along a north to south satellite orbit. The process of taking the stereo photos is illustrated in Figure 2.

The satellite photographs the same ground area within a minute or two. The ground conditions are close to identical on the two photos. The difference in appearance of ground features on the photos is due to the different look directions of the satellite camera.

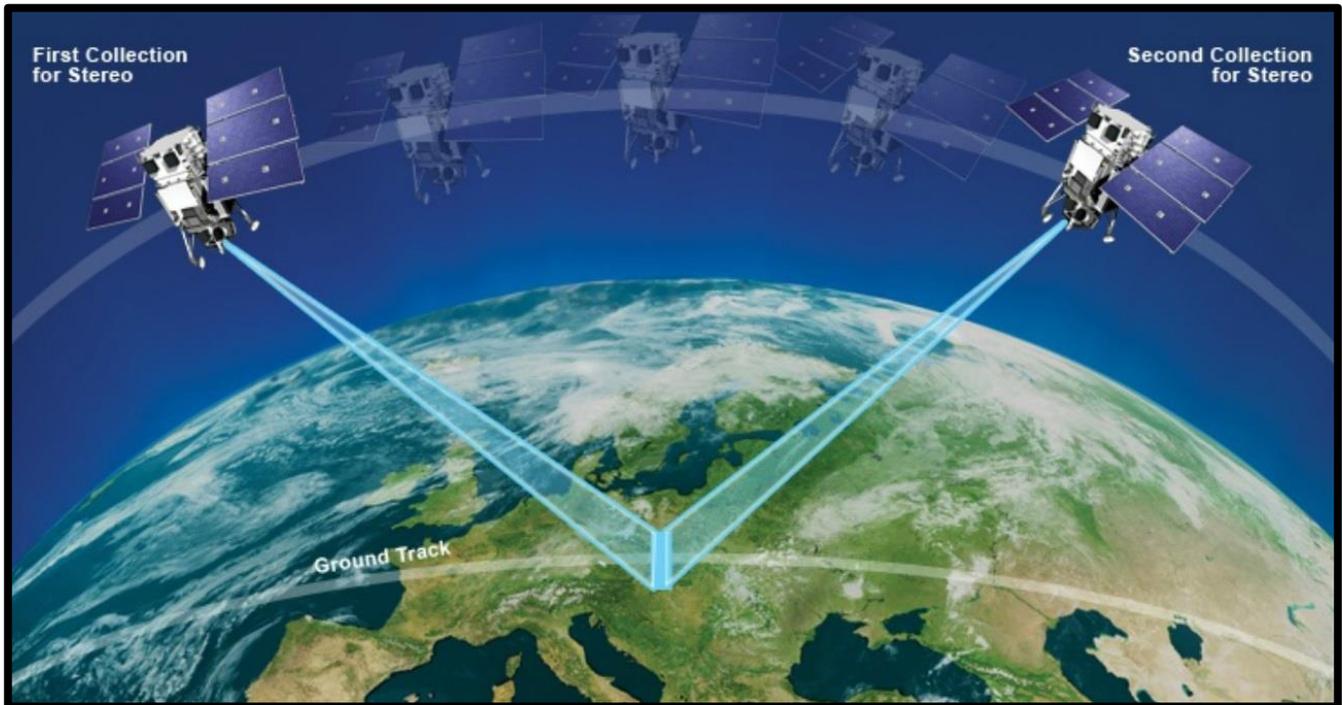


Figure 2. Illustration showing the process of taking satellite stereo photos. The satellite points forward to take the first photo. About one minute later, and 300 km further along its orbital track, the satellite rotates to take the second photo looking backwards along the track. Hundreds of km² can be accurately surveyed with a single pair of stereo satellite photos.

PhotoSat geophysical stereo satellite processing system:

Survey coordinates of ground features are determined by measuring the apparent shift in location of the features between the two satellite photos. PhotoSat uses a proprietary geophysical processing system to generate survey coordinates from stereo satellite photos. This system is described in a PhotoSat [white paper](#) published at a 2010 ASPRS conference.

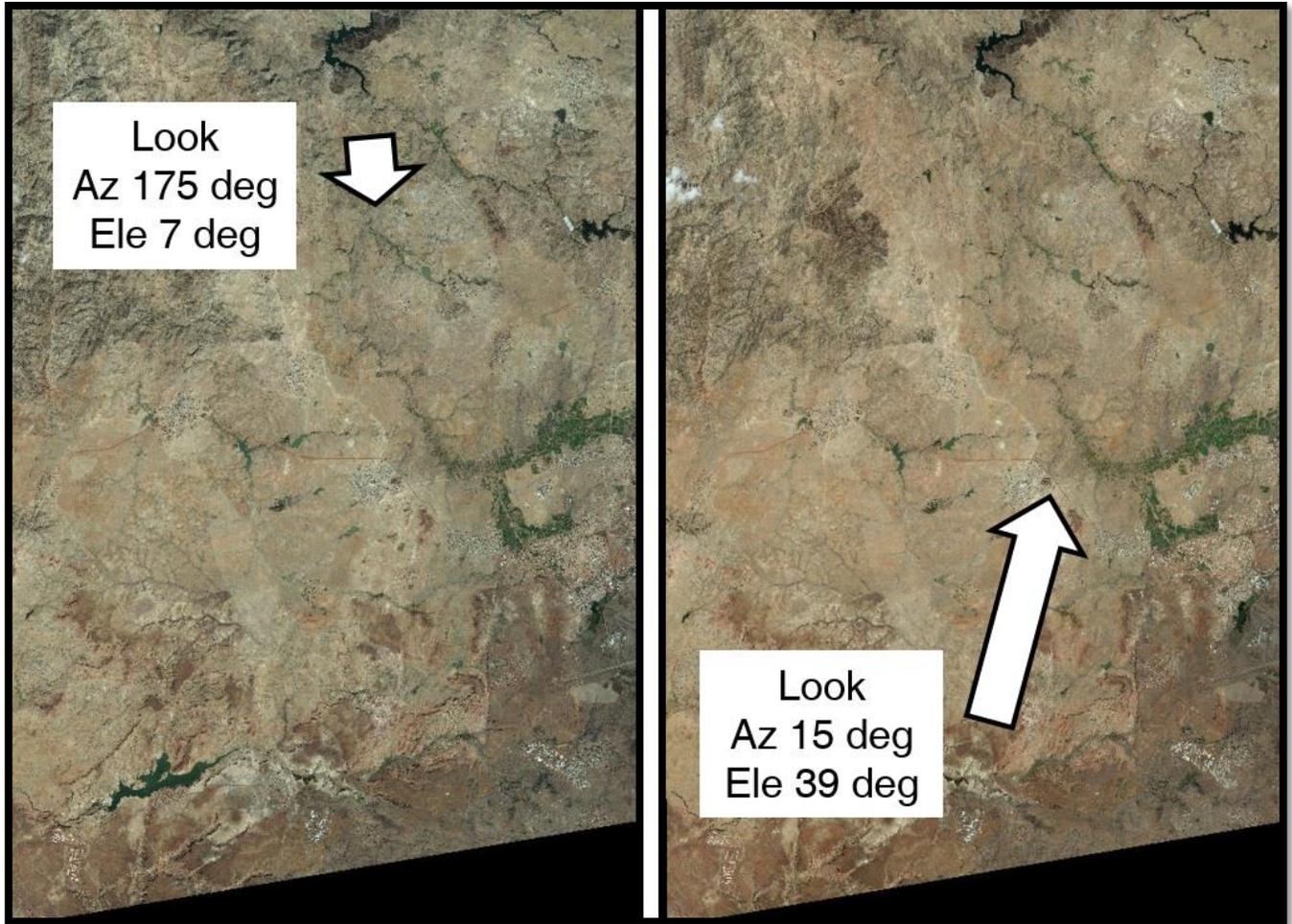


Figure 3. WorldView-2 satellite photos of PhotoSat’s Eritrea test area taken on January 27, 2010 at approximately 10:30 AM local time. The photo on the left was taken looking at an azimuth of 175 deg and angle from vertical of 7 deg. The photo on the right was taken looking at an azimuth of 15 deg and angle from vertical of 39 deg. The arrows on the photos indicate the satellite look direction. The lengths of the arrows are proportional to the look angles from vertical. This stereo pair has a convergence angle of 46 deg, a bisector azimuth of 74 deg and bisector angle of 16 deg from vertical.

Eritrea satellite photos:

The pair of stereo WorldView-2 satellite photos over the Eritrea test area are shown in Figure 3. The photos were taken on January 27, 2010 at approximately 10:30 AM local time. The stereo satellite photo look directions, convergence angle, bisector azimuth and bisector angle from vertical are shown in the Figure caption. The convergence angle of 46 deg is optimum for surveying elevations in level to moderate terrain.

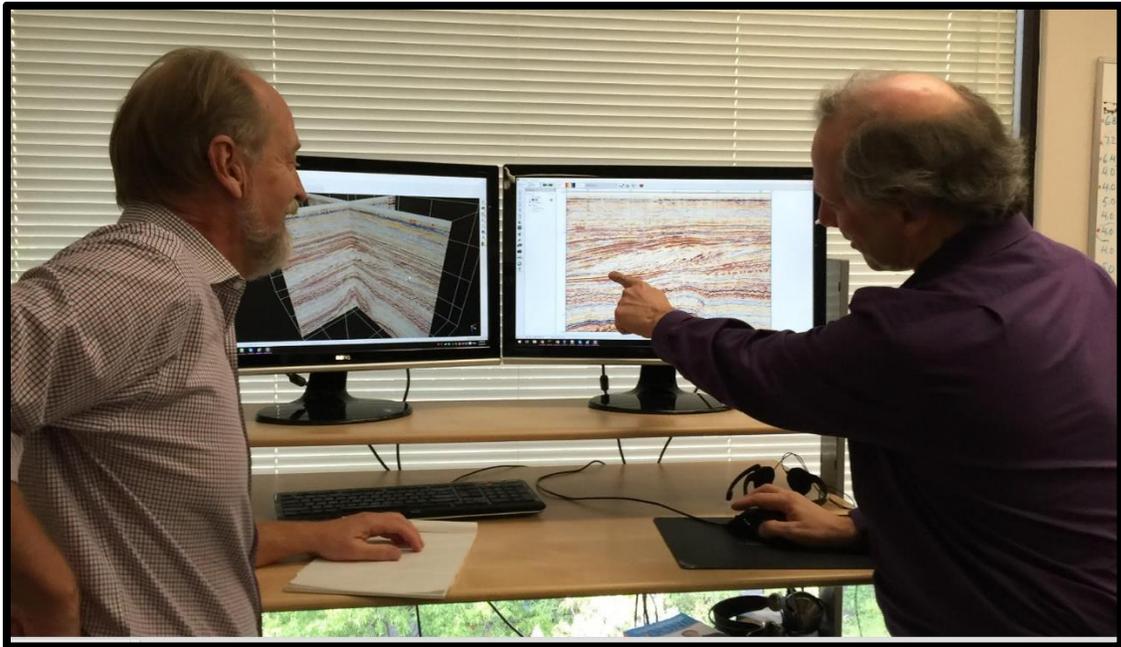


Figure 4. Gerry Mitchell, left and Michael Ehling with an Oil and Gas seismic processing workstation. This technology is the basis for the PhotoSat geophysical stereo satellite processing system named the PhotoSat Process Manager.

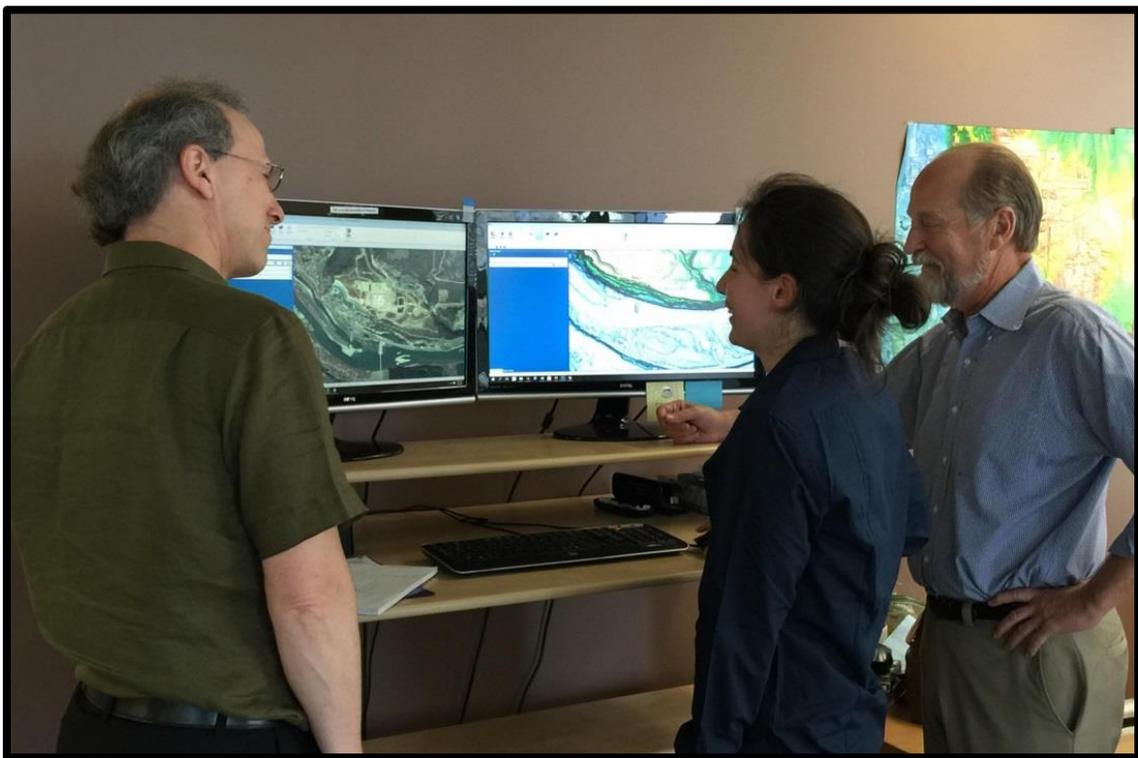


Figure 5. Michael, Gerry and Jayda Akatsuka with the PhotoSat Process Manager.

Eritrea elevation grid:

PhotoSat produced a 1m grid of elevations over the entire project area. We processed the stereo WorldView photos with our geophysical stereo satellite processing system in June, 2016. An image of the 1m elevation grid is shown in Figure 7.

Ground reference points:

With this accuracy study we are demonstrating that we can produce highly accurate WorldView-2 surveys with only two ground reference points. Having as little as two ground reference points for a 400 km² satellite surveying project is not uncommon in mining exploration projects.

The locations of the ground reference points are shown in Figure 6. The northern point was a photo recognizable point. The surveying of this point is shown in Figure 8. The southern ground reference point was determined by fitting the satellite elevation grid to a dense set of ground survey points around a topographic high. This fit was within 25 cm horizontal and 5 cm vertical.

Global shift of stereo satellite survey to match ground reference:

The WorldView ortho photo and elevation grid needed a constant shift of only 20 cm E, 30 cm N and -9 cm in elevation to match the ground surveying. The global accuracy of most WorldView stereo satellite photos is better than 3m.

Accuracy evaluation check points:

The accuracy of the PhotoSat 1m survey grid was evaluated with 3,293 ground survey check points. These points were originally surveyed for a large mining exploration gravity survey conducted between 2004 and 2008 by MWH Geophysics. The distribution of the elevation check points is shown in Figure 9.

The elevation check points were surveyed to an accuracy of 2 cm using Real Time Kinematic GPS survey equipment. One of the MWH Geophysics survey teams and their equipment are shown in Figure 8. The accuracy check points consist of a 250 m by 250 m regional grid of points.

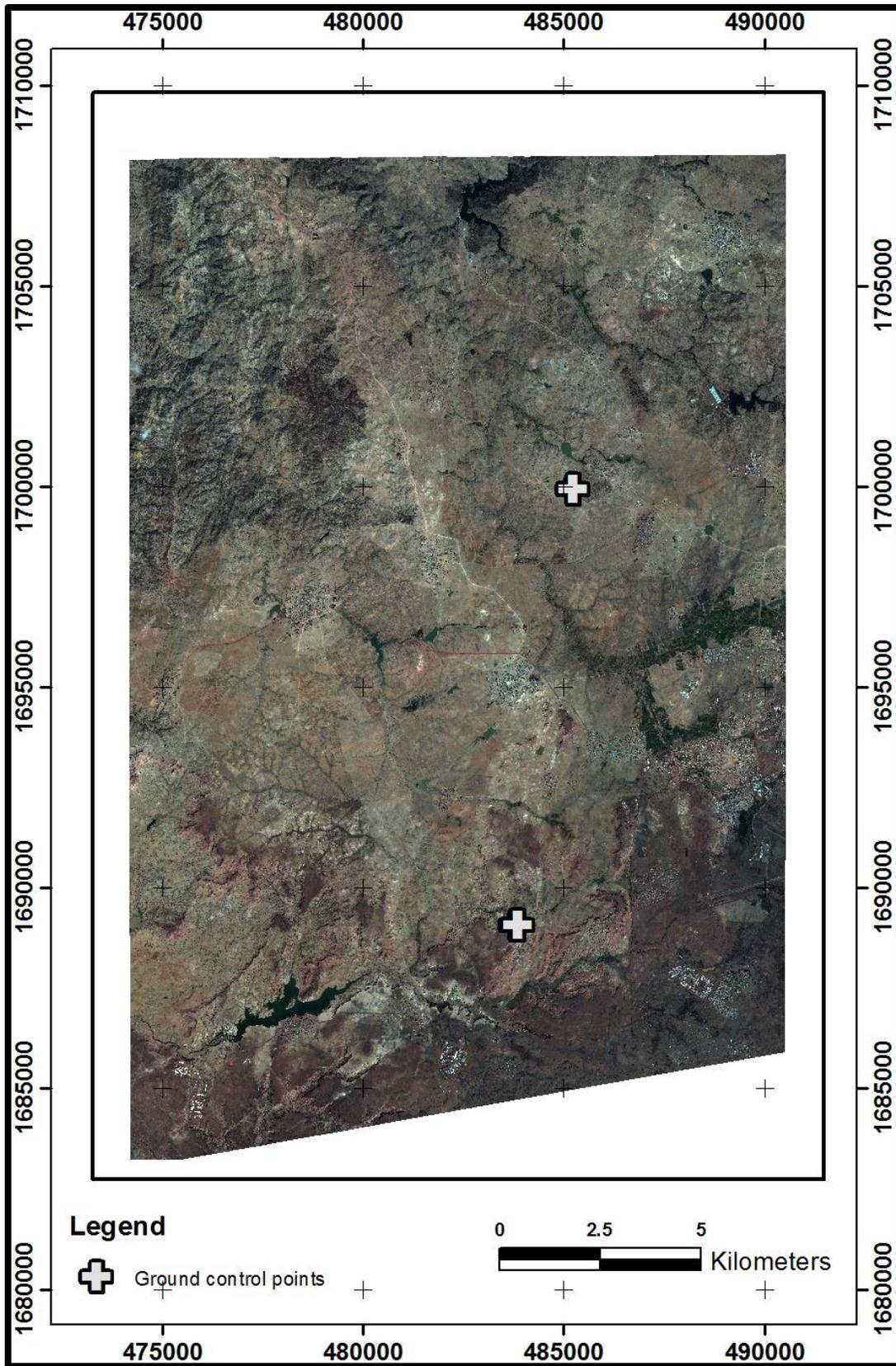


Figure 6. WorldView-2 50cm stereo satellite photo. Asmara, Eritrea.

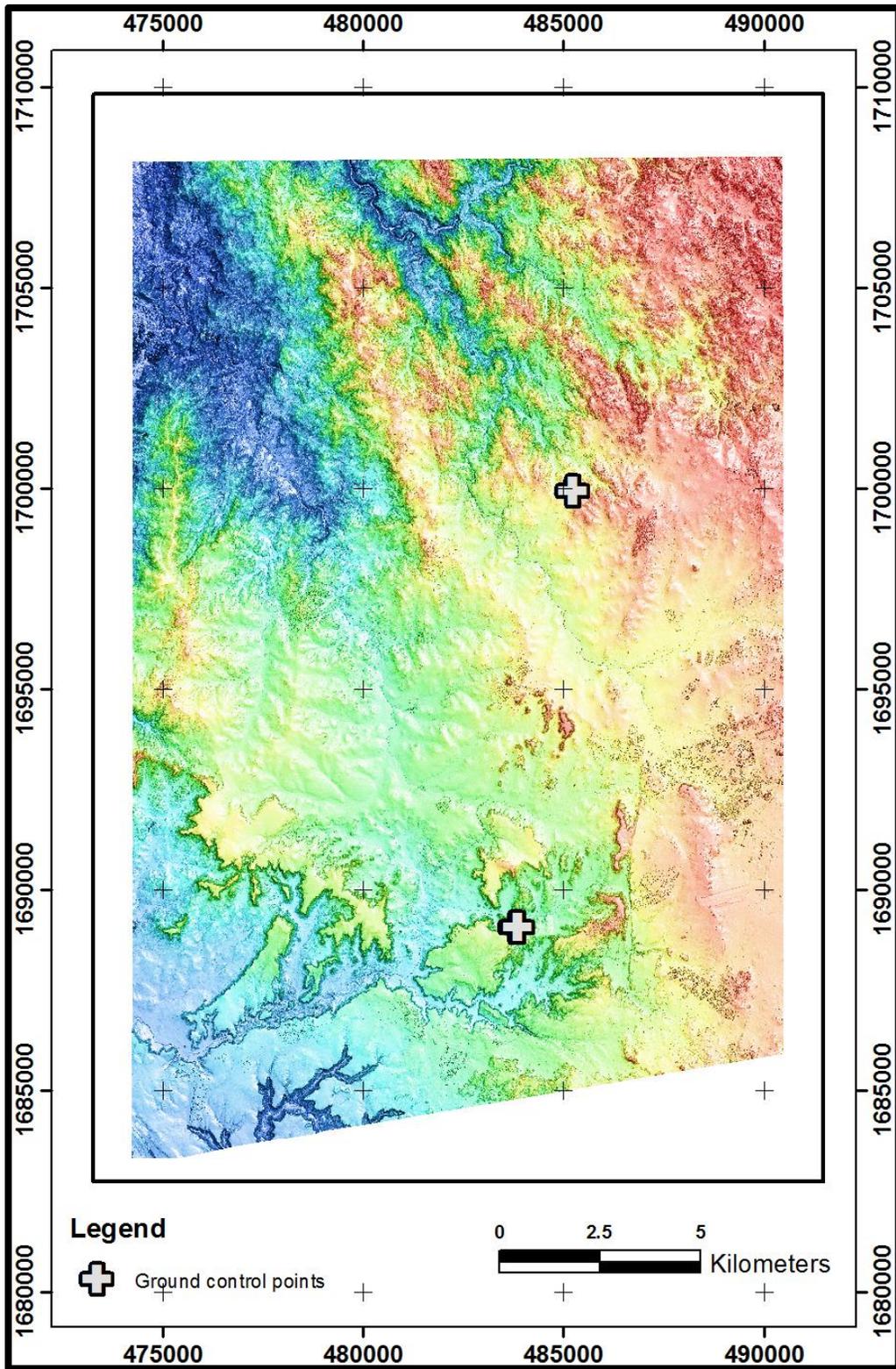


Figure 7. Stereo WorldView-2 elevation image created from the 1 m PhotoSat Asmara, Eritrea satellite survey grid. The Figure shows the locations of the two ground control points.



Figure 8. The Asmara, Eritrea WorldView-2 PhotoSat satellite survey project was referenced to two ground control points. Point one is shown in this photo.

Elevation survey accuracy statistics:

The *Guidelines for Digital Elevation Data* of the US National Digital Elevation Program (NDEP) recommends that elevation checkpoints should be chosen in areas with slopes less than 20% grade. The 3,293 elevation checkpoints with slopes less than 20% grade have an RMSE of 20cm as shown in Figure 11.

A histogram of the elevation differences between the PhotoSat WorldView survey grid and all 3,989 ground survey check points is shown in Figure 12. The RMSE using all of the points is 20cm.

The points on slopes over 20% grade have an RMSE of 25cm as shown in Figure 13.

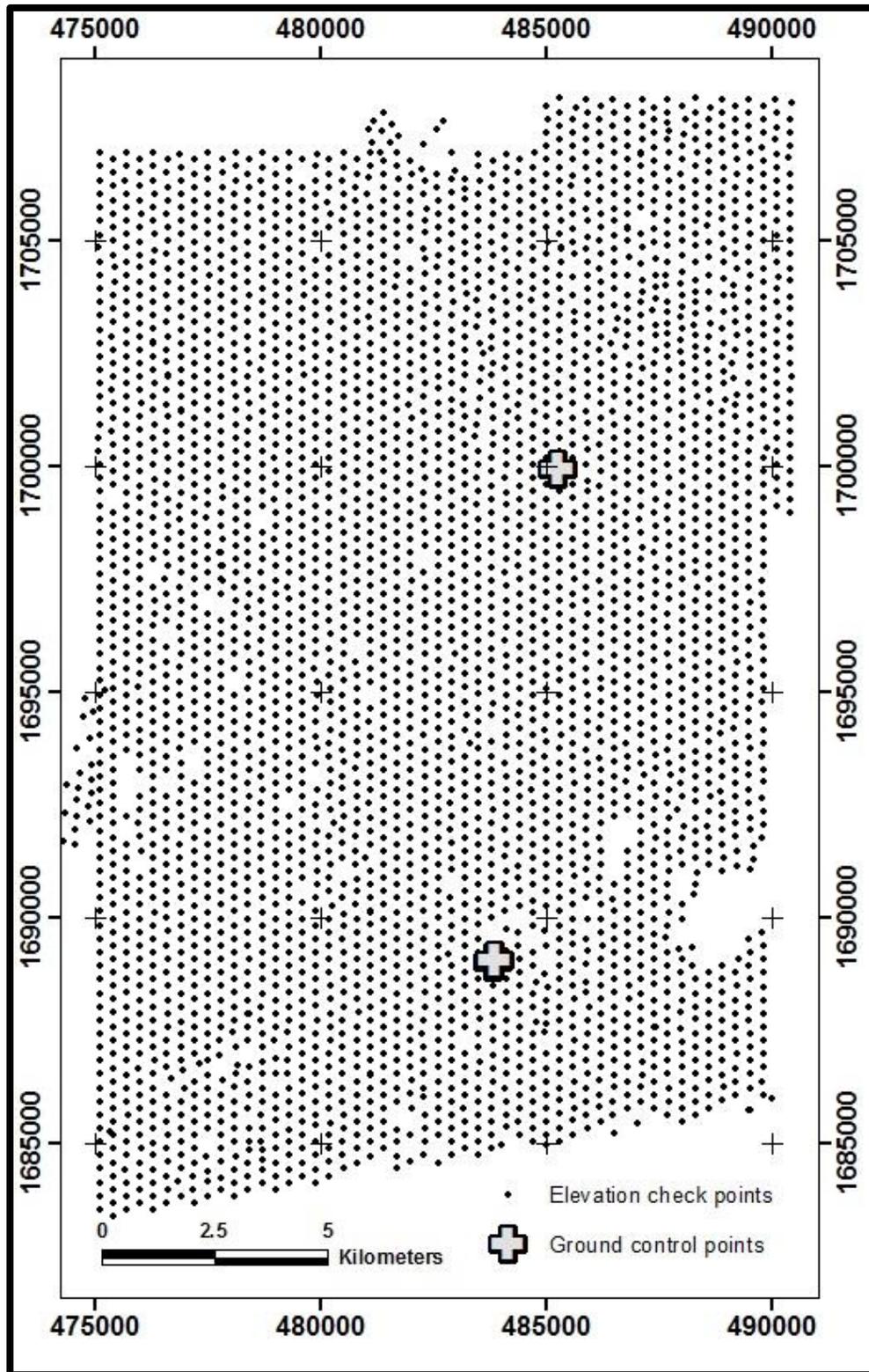


Figure 9. Area of the 25 km by 16 km Eritrea Stereo WorldView-2 1m elevation grid showing the two ground control points and the 3,293 gravity survey stations used as elevation checkpoints to determine the accuracy of the stereo satellite survey.



Figure 10. Asmara Project, Eritrea. MWH Geo-Surveys differential GPS survey crew and equipment. The Magellan RTK base with a ProMark™ 500 GPS rover are shown in this photo.

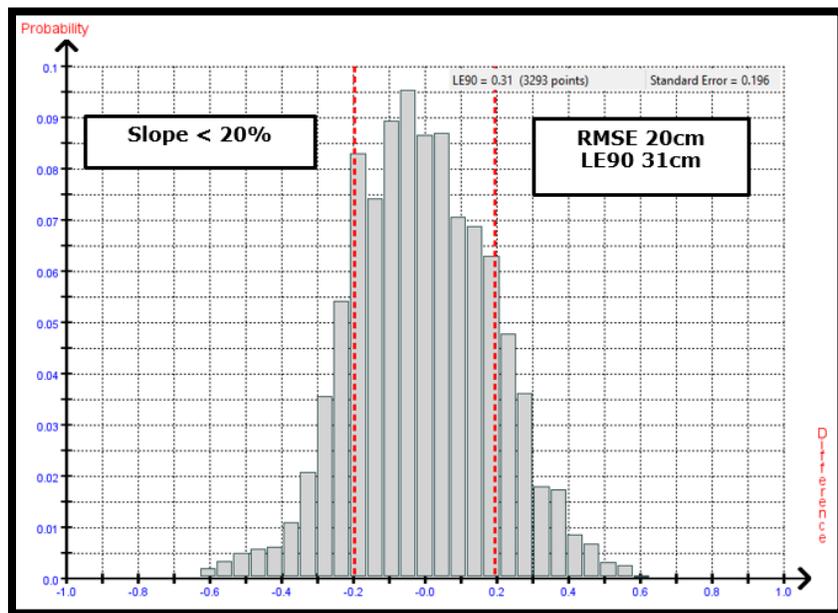


Figure 11. Histogram of the elevation differences between the WorldView-2 stereo satellite elevations for the 25 km by 16 km area and the 3,293 elevation checkpoints with slopes less than 20% grade. The *Guidelines for Digital Elevation Data* of the US National Digital Elevation Program (NDEP) recommends that elevation checkpoints should be chosen in areas with slopes less than 20% grade. RMSE 20cm, LE90 31cm.

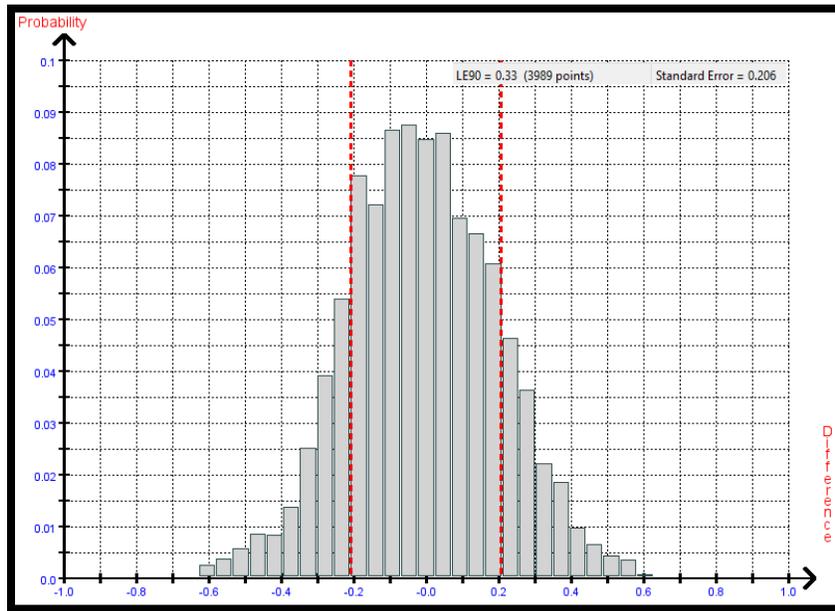


Figure 12. Histogram of the elevation differences between the WorldView-2 stereo satellite elevations for the 25km by 16km area and all 3,989 elevation checkpoints. RMSE 21cm, LE90 33cm.

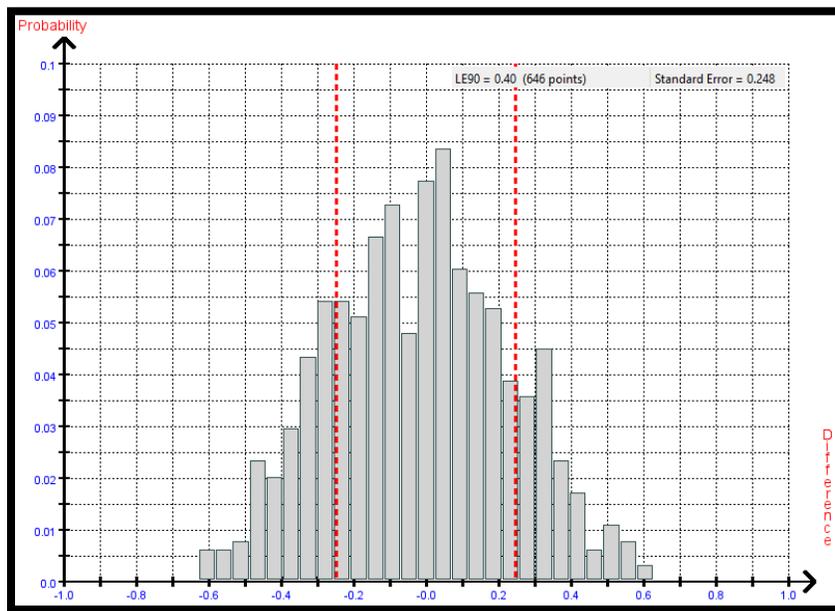


Figure 13. Histogram of the elevation differences between the WorldView-2 stereo satellite elevations for the 25 km by 16 km area and the 646 elevation checkpoints with slopes between 20% and 100% grade. RMSE 25cm, LE90 40cm.

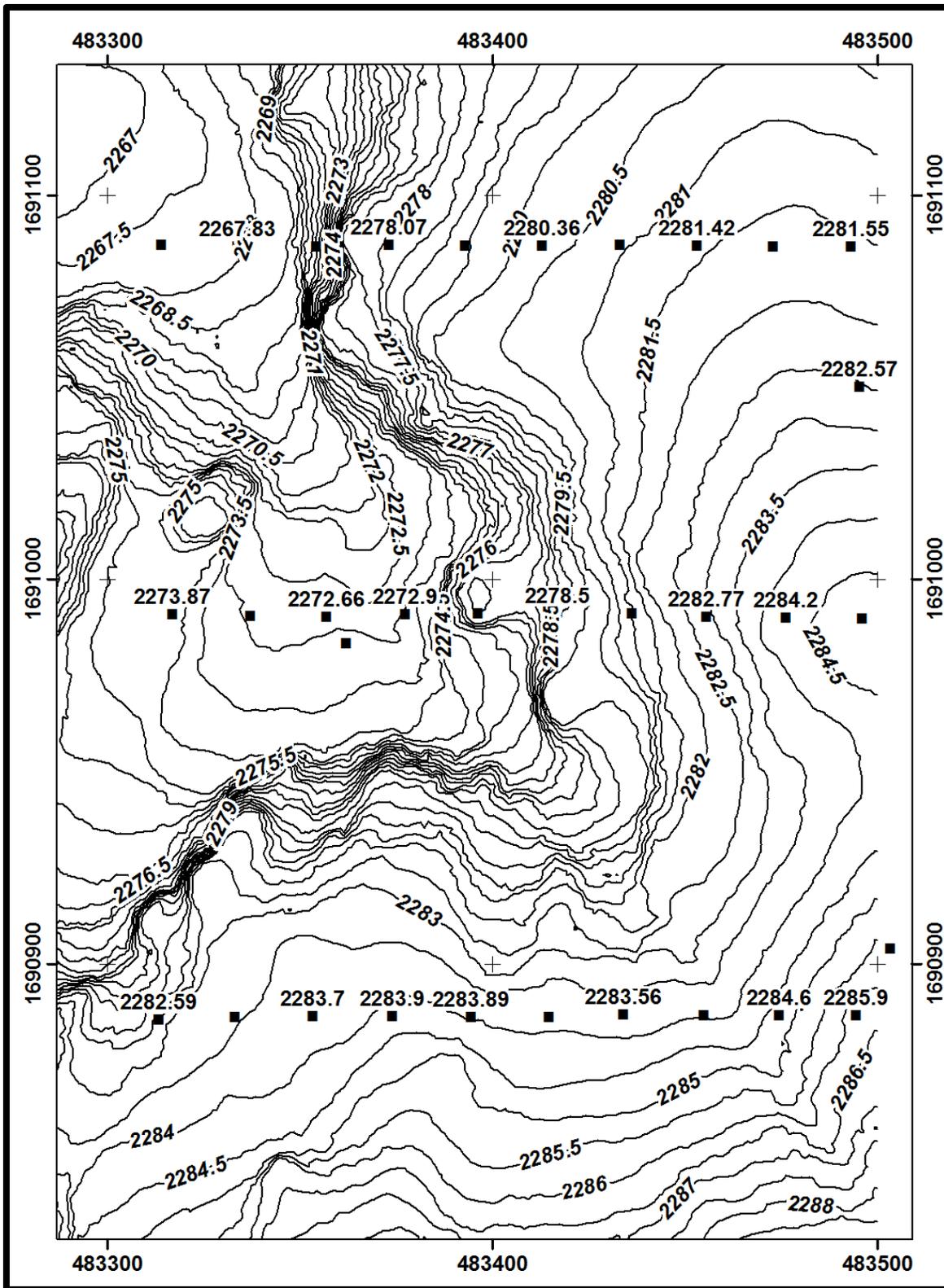


Figure 14. 50cm contours from the stereo WorldView-2 elevation survey showing the elevations of some of the 3,293 elevation checkpoints used to determine the stereo satellite elevation mapping accuracy of better than 20 cm RMSE.

Comparison between elevation check points and 50cm PhotoSat contours:

The very close agreement between the satellite survey elevations and the ground survey check points can be seen in Figure 14. Labeled 50 cm contours are shown with the posted elevations of the ground survey points for a small area of one of the dense survey grids. This figure is typical of the agreement between the PhotoSat survey and the ground survey over the entire survey area.

Cautionary Statement:

This is an accuracy assessment for elevation mapping from a single stereo pair of WorldView-2 satellite photos. While in our experience these results are typical for most WorldView-2 stereo photos, these results may not apply to any specific pair of WorldView-2 stereo photos.

References:

A Geophysical Stereo Satellite Elevation Mapping System, Mitchell G & Ehling M, ASPRS 2010 Annual Convention, San Diego, California, USA
http://www.photosat.ca/pdf/asprs_geophysical_mapping_system_2010.pdf

NDEP Guidelines for Digital Elevation Data.
http://www.ndep.gov/NDEP_Elevation_Guidelines_Ver1_10May2004.pdf