

1.0 Introduction

The Clouds and the Earth's Radiant Energy System (CERES) is a key component of the Earth Observing System (EOS) program. The CERES instrument provides radiometric measurements of the Earth's atmosphere from three broadband channels: a shortwave channel (0.3 - 5 μm), a total channel (0.3 - 200 μm), and an infrared window channel (8 - 12 μm). The CERES instruments are improved models of the Earth Radiation Budget Experiment (ERBE) scanner instruments, which operated from 1984 through 1990 on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Earth Radiation Budget Satellite (ERBS) and on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) operational weather satellites NOAA-9 and NOAA-10. The strategy of flying instruments on Sun-synchronous, polar orbiting satellites, such as NOAA-9 and NOAA-10, simultaneously with instruments on satellites that have precessing orbits in lower inclinations, such as ERBS, was successfully developed in ERBE to reduce time sampling errors. CERES continues that strategy by flying instruments on the polar orbiting EOS platforms simultaneously with an instrument on the Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission (TRMM) spacecraft, which has an orbital inclination of 35 degrees. In addition, to reduce the uncertainty in data interpretation and to improve the consistency between the cloud parameters and the radiation fields, CERES includes cloud imager data and other atmospheric parameters. The TRMM satellite carries one CERES instrument while the EOS satellites carry two CERES instruments, one operating in a fixed azimuth plane scanning mode (FAPS) for continuous Earth sampling and the other operating in a rotating azimuth plane scan mode (RAPS) for improved angular sampling.