

Information and Communication measures can take many forms. Of these, the acceptance of the need to hold routine formal bilateral naval staff talks is the logical first step. In this respect, as experience attests, **the development of an "Incidents at Sea" INCSEA agreement can easily provide the initial opportunity to begin those talks.** Because of the uniqueness of the situation and the fact that regional navies are largely for coastal defence purposes, the first objective of an INCSEA agreement should be to remove ambiguity, so that naval units of different states can quickly determine the nature of operations and intentions of each other. Much of this can be done by simple flag hoists and lights by night. In time, when the basic procedures have become well entrenched, a more complex system of signals, even using radios, could be accepted if necessary. As noted, however, the main point is to provide the means of quickly determining what another vessel is doing. In much the same way the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea prescribes a logical set of rules and signals for ensuring the safety of mariners, an INCSEA agreement can provide a framework for military safety.

Constraint measures will be much harder to implement, particularly in a Middle East setting where sovereign rights have greater symbolic value. Hence, governments are less likely to accept measures that might be seen as impinging on their ability to react to a potentially volatile situation. In this, greater regional stability is probably a precursor to any regime involving constraint measures. Nevertheless, such measures have the potential to further stability and should thus not be overlooked in a future initiative.

CONCLUSION

In the belief that any significant initiative must start from a humble beginning, it seems that a progressive approach to