

# CONFIDENCE BUILDING AND THE FALKLANDS DISPUTE

## INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with confidence building measures (CBMs) in the context of the dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic. It addresses specifically those CBMs put in place over the decade 1989-1999, when such measures were found useful by both sides to help defuse elements of the conflict in light of the aftermath of the 1982 Falklands War. Its aim is to answer several questions in this little studied case of CBM use:

- what is the background to the context of confidence building in the South Atlantic region?
- what has been the evolution of such confidence building as has gone on?
- what is the current state of such confidence building?
- how well have confidence building measures worked so far?
- what lessons can be learned from the Falklands CBM experience for:
  - the parties involved in the bilateral dispute
  - the inter-American community
  - the international community at large

This is a case study of a particular context for confidence building. It is not proposed to enter into the theoretical debate on the utility of such measures in general, the various views of what they are, or the like. Instead, confidence building measures, for the purposes of this study, will be taken to be those actions referred to in the definition developed by Canadian expert James Macintosh in his early five-part description:

“CBMs involve a variety of arms control measures entailing state actions that can be unilateral, bilateral or multilateral;  
CBMs attempt to reduce or eliminate misperceptions about specific military threats or concerns by communicating verifiable evidence that those concerns are groundless;  
CBMs demonstrate that military and political intentions are not aggressive;  
CBMs provide early-warning indicators to create confidence that surprise will be difficult to achieve;  
CBMs restrict the opportunities for the use of military force by adopting restrictions on the activities and deployments of those forces within the sensitive areas.”<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See James Macintosh, *Confidence (and Security) Building Measures: a Canadian Perspective* (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, Arms Control and Disarmament Study No. 1, 1985), pp. 64-5 for this early definition. For the evolution of his thinking on these themes, see also his thoughtful *Confidence Building in the Arms Control Process: a Transformation View* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1996).