

September 25, 1987

U.S. RULES OF ENGAGEMENT IN THE PERSIAN GULF *

(Following are guidelines, as spelled out in a statement by the Department of Defense, under which US forces are authorized to exercise force in self-defense in the Persian Gulf).

US Peacetime Rules of Engagement are based on the inherent right of self-defense. These rules ensure a full range of options consistent with that right and US policy. The Persian Gulf Rules of Engagement have been tailored specifically for that area and provide specific guidance for threats from aircraft, surface/subsurface vessels, and land-based weapons systems.

The following definitions are pertinent to understanding the rules of engagement:

--Hostile intent: The threat of imminent use of force against friendly forces. For instance, any aircraft or surface ship that maneuvers into a position where it could fire a missile, drop a bomb, or use gunfire on a ship is demonstration of hostile intent. Also, a radar lock-on to a ship from any weapons system fire control radar that can guide missiles or gunfire is demonstrating hostile intent.

--Hostile Act: A hostile act occurs whenever an aircraft, ship, or land-based weapon system actually launches a missile, shoots a gun, or drops a bomb toward a ship.

--Self-defense: US ships or aircraft are authorized to defend themselves against an air or surface threat whenever hostile intent or a hostile act occurs.

The rules of engagement provide authority to the on-scene commander to declare a threat hostile and engage that threat (that is, a force demonstrating hostile intent or committing a hostile act) with all forces available to him in self-defense of his unit and US-flagged vessels. Only that force which is required to neutralize the threat or prevent a hostile act is authorized.