



Written by on April 29, 2009

Somali Vigilantes Capture Pirates

The leaders of the militia reported their success to the BBC on April 28. Though — for want of a better word — the militiamen have been described as “vigilantes” by the media. Given the state of lawlessness in Somalia, they probably have as legitimate a mandate to deal with the piracy problem as any other entity in the beleaguered state on the Horn of Africa.

“They decided to confront ... the problems of the sea piracy,” traditional leader Faarah Mohammed was quoted by the BBC. “There is a security committee set up by the communities who live in Bargaal and Alula. And they decided to confront whatever was creating problems in their areas and particularly, the problems of the sea piracy. Eventually their effort led to the capture of three boats and 12 men with their weapons. One boat got away.”



The BBC’s Somali Service reported that the militia will have to hand the pirates over to the local authorities, where they could possibly face the death penalty.

The day after the Somalis captured the pirates, the Indian Navy’s *INS Nirdeshak*, on patrol with Spanish and French ships near the Seychelles islands, captured nine suspected pirates. UPI reported that the government of Seychelles had asked for India’s assistance after pirates, who had been operating off Somalia, moved their piracy activities to the Seychelles in order to avoid the increased number of naval vessels patrolling the Gulf of Aden.

And on the same day, Russia’s state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported that Russian authorities had detained 29 suspected Somali pirates in waters off the Horn of Africa. CNN reported that Russia has just deployed a missile destroyer to a new anti-piracy task force off the coast of Somalia.

As incidences of piracy have increased this year, pirates have played cat-and-mouse games with the increased naval patrols in the region, which admittedly are insufficient to protect the many ships that travel through the vast oceans and seas that lie between Asia and Africa. It has become evident that the best solution would be to allow private shipping companies to take greater responsibility for their own protection. But they are prevented from doing so by the world’s nations.

An excellent example of what can be done when ships are armed occurred on April 25, when an Italian cruise ship, the *MSC Melody*, successfully averted a hijacking attempt by Somali pirates. The reason the attempted boarding was repelled was that the ship had hired armed Israeli security guards, all military veterans, who opened fire on the pirates’ speed boat when the six would-be hijackers armed with Kalashnikov rifles tried to put a ladder on the ship’s bow.



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Domenico Pellegrino, the managing director of the *Melody's* parent company, was pleased with the effectiveness of the Israeli security team. "We use them because they are the best," he told reporters. "And we have had a demonstration of that."

In "Cruise ship security team fights pirates," a report posted on this website, writer Alex Newman observed:

The incident is believed to be one of the first times a non-military ship with private security has used guns to prevent a pirate attack. This is partly because ships with arms on board are generally barred from docking at non-military ports. That restriction, of course, is well known to Somali pirates and makes nonmilitary ships tempting targets. But to get around this restriction, some vessel owners are hiring private security firms to board as a ship enters risky waters and then leave when the danger has passed.

The article cited Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas), a firm believer in allowing commercial ships to carry weapons to protect themselves against pirates. Said Rep. Paul in a recent speech posted on YouTube: "We shouldn't say that they can't carry guns, because quite frankly, I think the companies are capable of dealing with this." We think you will find the congressman's comments to be fascinating:

Rep. Paul has also advocated reviving the ancient practice of "marque and reprisal," which is referred to in our Constitution. Article I, Section 8 of the document states: "The Congress shall have power ... To define and punish piracies and felonies committed on the high seas,... To declare war, grant letters of marque and reprisal, and make rules concerning captures on land and water."

Rep. Paul made the same proposal in 2001, introducing the "Marque and Reprisal Act of 2001" to target Osama bin Laden and other terrorists involved in the 9/11 terror attacks.

We live in a world where governments do not trust any entities other than themselves to solve problems that might more efficiently and effectively be handled by private enterprise. If economics were the only consideration, governments would eagerly take advantage of plans like arming commercial ships and issuing letters of marque and reprisal to privateers.

Such sensible actions, however, would defy the agenda of those who regard big government — both national and international — not as servants of the people who created them, but as rulers of a new international order.

Until citizens put government bureaucrats in their proper places, piracy will be only one of many threats to the peace, security, and freedom of the world's peoples.

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