

**U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**Chairman John F. Kerry**  
**Opening Statement for “Confronting Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia”**  
**April 30, 2009**

## **Chairman Kerry Statement At Hearing On The Growing Threat Of Maritime Piracy**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry (D-MA) released the following opening remarks at the hearing titled, “Confronting Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia”.

*Full text as prepared is below:*

Just a few years ago, most Americans viewed piracy as a scourge of centuries past. Even those aware of modern piracy largely thought of it as contained to Southeast Asia, and no longer a serious problem even there.

Recent events off the coast of Somalia, however, have made piracy not just front-page news but a major concern once again for shippers and policymakers alike. Almost every day brings news of yet another attack on a cargo ship or tanker carrying humanitarian supplies, oil, or even weapons—not to mention a usually defenseless crew.

Today the Committee will examine the threat of maritime piracy off the Horn of Africa, and the solutions available to us, to other governments, and to shippers in confronting this growing challenge.

These attacks have claimed innocent lives, and they have imposed a significant financial cost. Forty-two vessels were hijacked last year off the coast of Somalia, earning pirates an estimated \$30 million in ransom. Companies are spending additional millions on new insurance costs, hiring private security, retrofitting ships to protect them from seizure, and rerouting vessels thousands of miles out of their way—sometimes all the way around the African continent—just to avoid pirates.

Nor is the threat contained to a small area off the Somali coast. Pirates are now operating over 1,000 miles from the Somali coast, in an area of more than one million square miles, and in shipping lanes that were even recently considered safe.

To make matters worse, we know that pirates use much of their ransom money to buy better weapons and bigger engines to make it even easier to overtake larger vessels. They also use ransom money to arm and equip private militias. This is a dangerous and vicious cycle.

Piracy goes to the heart of our national security and economic interests. America has always been a seafaring nation, and securing the world’s sea lanes has been a source and a symbol of our strength. In the face of instability and crises around the globe, our ability to project naval power and to help ensure the free passage of goods and humanitarian aid is as important as ever.

International piracy—which thrives on chaos and ungoverned spaces, and is perpetrated by small groups of non-state actors—combines several of the great security challenges of our age. It is noteworthy that while our warships could level a city, it was the precise aim of three Navy snipers that ultimately proved effective in resolving the stand-off with the pirates who held Captain Phillips hostage.

We must also recognize that Somali piracy is in part a by-product of Somalia’s fragmented political situation. As chair of the subcommittee on Africa, Senator Feingold will be holding a hearing shortly that explores the larger question of American policy toward that country.

And, like so many of today's challenges, the renewed threat of piracy demands a multifaceted, multinational effort—one that coordinates the world's naval powers, the United Nations, the international shipping community, and the nations that border Somalia.

We have already made great progress marshalling an international enforcement effort. Combined Task Force 151, which is expected to grow to 22 nations, patrols the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden to try to keep these waters free of pirates and to assist vessels in distress or under attack. The Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia has brought two dozen countries together to improve operational support to anti-piracy operations, strengthen judicial frameworks for arrest and prosecution of pirates, and track their financial activities. America is a leading member of both. Kenya deserves praise for stepping forward to play an important role in the judicial process as well.

I am confident that today's hearing will provide insight into the policy options available to address this immediate challenge, and to lay the necessary groundwork for an effective long-term solution.

We are honored to have with us Captain Richard Phillips of the Maersk Alabama. Captain Phillips personally confronted pirates who held him hostage, threatened his life, and sought to capture his crew as well.

Captain Phillips risked his own life to ensure the safety of his crew, knowing full well the potential consequences of his actions. Scripture tells us, "there is no greater love than sacrificing yourself for a friend." His actions, selfless and heroic, are an example for all of us. Captain, it's a pleasure to have you with us today.

Joining Captain Phillips on our first panel is John Clancey, the Chairman of Maersk. On our second panel, we have Ambassador Stephen Mull, Senior Advisor to the Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs.

I welcome the insights of our witnesses into how best to address what has become a matter of real concern for many of us. We thank all of you for joining us today. I recognize Senator Lugar for his opening statement.

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