

**Statement of John D. Rockefeller, IV**  
**Hearing: Piracy on the High Seas: Protecting our Ships, Crews, and Passengers**  
Tuesday, May 5, 2009

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I am excited about today's hearing and regret that I cannot be in attendance. I would like to thank Senator Lautenberg for calling this critical hearing to examine Piracy on the High Seas today. We both believe it is our duty to protect American mariners, vessels and right of access to the shipping lanes around the Horn of Africa. The Commerce Committee will use today's hearing to examine issues within its jurisdiction spanning the operations of the commercial maritime industry, the Coast Guard, and the safety and security of our merchant fleet and their crews.

I would also like to thank all of our witnesses for agreeing to testify today. I appreciate each of you taking the time to be here, and I'm honored to have two American heroes among us today. Joining us are the Master of the M/V Maersk Alabama, Captain Richard Phillips, and the vessel's Chief Engineer, Mr. Michael Perry. These men have dedicated their lives to service at sea in support of our national and economic security. I want to personally thank you and your families for being with us and for the selfless service and countless sacrifices you make for our country.

As a maritime nation it is imperative that the United States and our trading partners maintain unimpeded access to the world's shipping lanes. It is this access that enables us to move commerce, provide humanitarian assistance and, when necessary, fight and win wars. It is unacceptable for our ships, crews, and passengers to be threatened and put at risk in international waters by various groups of unsophisticated pirates from unstable nations. I will not sit by as men in speed boats abuse the most powerful and advanced Navy in the world. We have the ability and responsibility to end all piracy: specifically around the Horn of Africa and along the Coast of Somalia.

With the full force of the U.S. Navy alongside a coalition of nearly twenty other nations, we can take back these critical shipping lanes. It is of the utmost importance that we keep our U.S. mariners, passengers and vessels free from harm and free to move about international waters.

Arming the crew is not an option. Instead the U.S. military should provide the support and protection of our men and women at sea. And let us not forget there are still roughly 18 vessels and another 300 people still being held hostage in Somalia.

I realize the Maritime Industry has been facing this threat for several years now, especially as attacks began to escalate in the summer of 2008. Our maritime community took responsibility and worked together to share best practices for avoiding and disrupting pirate attacks.

Yet this is not enough. U.S. officials and international experts believe that addressing the threat of piracy will require strengthening regional security capabilities, improving intelligence gathering and sharing, and enhanced multilateral coordination, both at sea and on land.

The absence of a functioning government in Somalia and the ability to prosecute captured pirates are the greatest challenges to maritime security in the region. By all accounts, pirates will likely continue to find sanctuary in Somalia until basic governance and security conditions there change.

The international community has responded with multinational naval patrols, diplomatic efforts, and enhanced private security by members of the commercial shipping industry. I believe we must do more. As a nation we have a responsibility to take action and protect our citizens. And as history shows, without a forceful response pirates reign supreme in the high seas.

Today our witnesses will paint a fuller picture of what we've done so far and guide us on the road ahead. We will bear witness to the personal impact of piracy on our citizens at sea, and listen to their advice on what more needs to be done.

I look forward to hearing from all the witnesses.

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