



# End Piracy: A Call to Action

*"We will never forget the Quest!"*

2 March 2011

# 1. Call to Action

Over recent years, the Board of Directors and the 9,000 cruisers associated with the Seven Seas Cruising Association, have grown increasingly concerned over the escalating rate and danger of piracy. Sadly, it has taken the brutal murders of four cruisers off Somalia, two of whom were Commodores in the Seven Seas Cruising Association, to move us to action. We cannot, and will not, allow these peaceful sailors to have died in vain. We implore our political leaders, both in the United States and around the world, to ensure that action is taken to protect the lives and vessels of all sailors needing to pass through dangerous areas. We urge you to consider not only the critical commerce that must pass through these waters, but just as importantly the lives and welfare of the private sailors who must also pass through these same areas, with a particular emphasis upon those now making their way to and from the Mediterranean Sea. **We will be relentless in our urging of appropriate authorities to ACT NOW upon our proposal for specific actions to eliminate the nightmare of rampant piracy. We will never forget the crew of the *Quest*.**

This proposal is a call to action for the United States, along with all the civilized nations of the world, to join together and aggressively challenge and defeat the reemergence of the scourge of piracy that now increasingly threatens peaceful seafarers around the globe. Just in the vicinity of the Horn of Africa alone, there are over 30 private and commercial vessels, with nearly 700 crew members, that have been recently seized in international waters and who are being held hostage by armed pirates in search of ransoms. Families with young children are now being taken and threatened with death. We have reports that Somali pirates have reached a multi-million-dollar deal with Islamic militants, allowing them a cut of future ransom payouts in return for safe anchorage at a port controlled by the al-Qa'ida-linked al-Shabaab fighters. The horrendous nature of this threat was driven home again by the recent, senseless slaughter of four innocent American sailors on the *S/V Quest*, an act of barbarity that should outrage every American and every peace-loving member of the human race.

Pirates are fundamentally motivated by two things – money and survival. Survival is tough in many parts of the world, particularly in Somalia. Geography has created a natural choke point there that forces both private and commercial vessels to transit off its shores, providing easy targets for potential pirates. Yet, the explosion of piracy in those waters over the last few years did not occur until the seafaring nations of the world chose to respond to the first few acts of piracy with the so-called cost effective response of paying ransoms – first relatively modest and then increasing with each new transgression. Piracy off the Somali coast evolved from a few poor fisherman seeking ransoms when fish were scarce into an organized, methodical operation more akin to the Mafia and drug cartels. Hostages are now tortured, and in the latest case, killed even while negotiations were underway for their release.

Instead of being punished for these acts of piracy, the perpetrators have been rewarded for it, creating a business model whose growth knows no bounds and which has directly led to the crisis that we face today. With each new ransom paid, the pirates grow in capability, expand in reach, and thirst for ever greater wealth. Profits from piracy now fuel terrorism and criminal enterprises far more than they feed the families of destitute fisherman. These vast riches give them access to technical expertise and sophisticated weapons and equipment, providing them with far greater destructive power and range in attacking commercial and private vessels. Competition within their own ranks has led to ever-increasing brutality and aggressiveness.

Sadly, Somalia is certainly not unique in combining the two characteristics of tough survival conditions ashore and maritime choke points. Similar combinations can be found along the Straits of Malacca and in many other places around the globe. Failure to effectively defeat this scourge of piracy will only allow it to expand and threaten an ever-widening expanse of our oceans. There are potential predators all around the globe watching to see if they should also adopt what appears to be working for the pirates near Somalia. The apparent linkage of piracy to global terrorist groups raises the threat to a whole new level. It is long overdue for the seafaring nations of the world to put an end to this madness.

The responsibility for action to counter this rising threat is clear. The International Law of the Sea evolved over thousands of years to clearly establish the right of innocent free passage for both private and commercial vessels in international waters. One of the driving impulses that led to the founding of the United States was the need to protect its citizens as they ventured out upon the high seas, be it for private or commercial reasons. It is no accident that Section 8 of Article I of the Constitution specifically charges the Federal government “To define and punish Piracies and Felonies committed on the high Seas, and Offences against the Law of Nations”. Protection of the right of passage for American citizens on the high seas is one of the primary reasons we established the United States Navy and what led to the creation of the United States Marine Corps. It remains the fundamental reason for their existence today. It is why we fought the War of 1812, the conflict that affirmed that we were in fact a free and independent nation. **The responsibility of the United States government, and of the freedom-loving governments of the world, is to protect its citizens from piracy and ensure their right of free passage on the oceans of the world. It is not a choice; it is a fundamental and unyielding obligation.**

## 2. Recommendations

It has been asserted by some that punitive military action alone will be insufficient to defeat the rise in piracy. This is undoubtedly true. It will take a determined combination of diplomatic, private, commercial, and military actions to once again establish safe

passage over international waters. In order to protect lives and reduce loss of private and corporate revenue, the United States should:

- **Implement a policy to quickly and aggressively rescue hostages from pirate control.** When possible, act before hostages can be taken ashore from their vessels.
- **Immediately take whatever actions are necessary to protect the lives and vessels, both commercial and private, which are currently vulnerable to pirate attacks as they attempt to reach the Red Sea and the Suez Canal.** We must offer assistance to the more than 100 private vessels, both US-flagged and foreign, who have little choice but to use this route and who are currently trapped by the sudden escalation and expansion of pirate activity affecting the approaches to the Horn of Africa. Many ideas have been proposed, including armed escorts and convoys, and we recognize any idea needs to be carefully considered for cost and feasibility. Nevertheless, there should be an absolute commitment to protecting the safety of those needing to voyage through these waters. Warnings to avoid the area are of no value to those who are already there!
- **Execute a binding agreement among the seafaring nations of the world and their commercial entities to immediately stop all current and future payment of ransoms to pirates for the release of individuals or vessels, and publish this fact far and wide.** This is a particularly painful, yet absolutely vital step. It is highly likely that ruthless and desperate pirates will test our will and resolve in this matter, and they have stated that they will kill hostages if rescue attempts are made or ransoms are not paid. While we deeply regret any loss of life, more ransom money paid means that even more lives will be lost, and the pirates will grow ever stronger. It is absolutely necessary to break the current business model where piracy provides a fast path to great wealth. Ransom money equals increased piracy, escalating costs, more hostages and greater loss of life.
- **Work through the United Nations to establish a multi-national naval quarantine of the Somali coast that forbids armaments aboard Somali vessels, authorizes the boarding and search of any vessel operating in the quarantined area and authorizes the seizure of any armaments found on Somali vessels.** Build upon current military agreements to establish a multi-national coalition of naval forces to enforce the quarantine.
- **Focus anti-piracy efforts on the sources of piracy.** Lead a strategic communications campaign to tell the Somali people that any action to conduct or support piracy will no longer be tolerated and that any such actions will invite swift punishment. Use military technological reconnaissance capabilities to conduct comprehensive surveillance of the Somali coast to identify piracy support bases and activities. Where such bases and activities are found, act against them to disrupt any future attempts at piracy. Take steps, where possible, to encourage all Somalis to return to peaceful pursuits.

It is envisioned that these steps taken together with the cooperation of seafaring nations will effectively address the twin motivations of wealth and survival that are fueling the radical growth of piracy. Strong international action is essential to the reestablishment of safe passage over international waters for both private and commercial vessels.

**Unanimously supported and endorsed by the  
Board of Directors  
Seven Seas Cruising Association**