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SECTION 1 OF 10

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WARNING: TOPIC: DOMESTIC POLITICAL, FOUO, INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL

SERIAL: AFP20090414636017

/***** THIS IS A COMBINED MESSAGE *****/

BODY

COUNTRY: UNITED STATES

SUBJ: GERMANY: AFRICOM-RELATED PRESS SUMMARY 14 APRIL 09

(U//FOUO)

SOURCE: STUTTGART AFRICA COMMAND PRESS SUMMARY IN ENGLISH 14 APR

09 (U//FOUO)

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE
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(Attachment not included: AFP20090414636017001.jpg) United States Africa Command

Public Affairs Office

14 April 2009

AFRICOM-related news stories

A summary of news stories related to United States Africa Command Washington Wrestles with the Real **Somali Pirate** Problem--on Land

TIME - By Mark Thompson

14 April 2009

<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1891129,00.html>

Obama promises look at US options to combat piracy

Associated Press - By Anne Gearan

13 April 2009

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gSXyAok3YrJTZLKD31SAjC9pfvkgD97HSPHG1>

In Praise of Snipers

Washington Post - By David Ignatius

13 April 2009

<http://voices.washingtonpost.com/postpartisan/2009/04/in>

(-UNDERSCORE-)praise(-UNDERSCORE-)of

(-UNDERSCORE-)snipers.html?hpid(-EQUAL-)opinionsbox1

U.S. weighs fate of surviving **Somali pirate**

CNN - By Terry Frieden

13 April 2009

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/04/13/u.s.pirate.prosecution/>

Calls mount for solutions to Somalia

USA Today - By Ken Dilanian, David Jackson, and Jim Michaels

14 April 2009

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2009-04-13-somalia-pirates>

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US congressman comes under mortar fire as he leaves Somalia

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Telegraph - By Mike Pflanz

13 April 2009

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/somalia/5149000/US-congressman-comes-under-mortar-fire-as-he-leaves-Somalia.html>

Navy snipers had multiple chances to shoot **Somali pirates**

LA Times - By Julian E. Barnes and Greg Miller

13 April 2009

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-pirates14-2009apr14,0,7994401.story>

10 killed in Nigeria speedboat clashes

AFP - By non-attributed author

13 April 2009

[http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jcGuSOBhS0MeWgGcsJUI\(-UNDERSCORE-\)SitqoDw](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jcGuSOBhS0MeWgGcsJUI(-UNDERSCORE-)SitqoDw)

Mauritania Junta Leader Announces Candidacy for June Elections

/***** BEGINNING OF SECTION 2 *****/

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VOA - By James Butty

12 April 2009

<http://www.voanews.com/english/Africa/2009-04-13-voa5.cfm>

Ghana Government Encouraged by Obama's Cooperation Promise

VOA - By Peter Clotey

13 April 2009

<http://www.voanews.com/english/Africa/2009-04-13-voa3.cfm>

UN News Service Africa Briefs

Full Articles on UN Website

13 April 2009

[http://www.un.org/apps/news/region.asp?Region\(-EQUAL-\)AFRICA](http://www.un.org/apps/news/region.asp?Region(-EQUAL-)AFRICA)

(-VERTICAL-BAR-) DR Congo: UN envoy to push for children's rights in peace process

(-VERTICAL-BAR-) UN-African Union mission reports return to relative calm in Darfur

Washington Wrestles with the Real **Somali Pirate Problem**--on Land

TIME - By Mark Thompson

14 April 2009

The celebrating over Sunday's daring rescue of Richard Phillips, the ship captain held hostage by **Somali pirates**, didn't last too long at the Pentagon.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates acknowledged Monday that the kind of Navy snipers who took out the three captors are only a stopgap

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way of dealing with pirates now sailing the Gulf of Aden. "There is no purely military solution to it," Gates told an audience of the Marine Corps War College in Quantico, Va. "It is a serious international problem, and it's probably going to get worse."

There's been talk in the Pentagon of dispatching more warships to the region to beef up protective patrols. And President Barack Obama talked tough on Monday, saying, "I want to be very clear that we are resolved to halt the rise of piracy in that region."

But Gates made it clear that the real solution isn't on the high seas. Instead, it's back along the Somali coast in the impoverished villages and towns that the pirates call home. "As long as you've got this incredible number of poor people and the risks are relatively small," he said, "there's really no way in my view to control it unless you get something on land that begins to change the equation for these kids."

Responsibility for changing that equation belongs to the new U.S. African Command (Africom), set up 18 months ago to help provide security to permit the rebuilding of shattered nations like Somalia. But don't look for quick action. "We do not have a military presence in Somalia," the command's chief, Army General William Ward, told Congress last month. In fact, the military's in no rush to head back to that lawless nation in the Horn of Africa. That's where President Clinton's Pentagon was first bloodied when 18 soldiers died in a 1993 firefight memorialized in *Black Hawk Down*. As a reminder of the volatile environment, local insurgents on Monday fired mortar rounds at a private plane ferrying U.S. Congressman Donald Payne out of Mogadishu after he had visited with the head of the country's weak new transitional government.

Even if the Pentagon had the stomach for this kind of fight, the confused command structure for the region would make it hard to succeed. You might think, after all, that Africom would be front and center in battling the piracy now rampant off Somalia's coast. But in fact Africom deals only with African territory, and not the seas surrounding it. Those are monitored by U.S. Central Command, also responsible for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This disconnect -- Centcom if by sea, Africom if by land -- highlights the challenge facing the Pentagon as it tries to grapple with 21st century pirates who thrive amid chaos. Africom's only role in battling pirates is helping Centcom hand over the captured ones -- 130 so far this year -- to east African nations for trial. Africom still has a lot of kinks to work out.

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At that House hearing on March 19, Ward acknowledged that he has only a "very small command" -- headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany -- to deal with Africa, and not a soul on Somali soil. But things are getting better. "Every day improvements are made," Ward said. "I count it a victory when I can pick up the phone or -- and send an e-mail and it goes to the same address, and we are getting more and more that way."

The growing piracy problem highlights Gates' smarts -- it was only a week ago that he boosted the Navy's buy of the small and fast Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) from two to three next year, with a total planned buy of 55. The defense chief termed the LCS "a key capability for presence, stability and counterinsurgency operations in coastal regions." With its ability to sail into shallow waters, an LCS vessel can chase pirates into places bigger warships could never go. The LCS is "an ideal platform" for unconventional Navy missions, including "counterpiracy operations," Rear Admiral Victor Guillory, director of the Navy's surface-warfare division, told a House panel on March 10. But at 400 feet in length and \$500 million each -- and initial production plagued by problems -- the Navy's not going to be able to buy enough to stamp out piracy anytime soon.

The pirates, largely from lawless coastal Somali towns, have basically turned the heavily traveled route through the Gulf of

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Aden into a toll road that shippers' insurance firms have been willing to pay for (up to \$3 million for a single vessel). About 20,000 merchant ships traverse the waterway each year; there have already been 74 attacks and 15 hijackings in 2009, compared to 111 attacks last year. The pirates generally have wanted cash, not trouble. They've treated their hostages well, and violence has been rare. All of that changed, of course, last week when a quartet of Somalis seized Phillips from the U.S.-flagged Maersk Alabama. In the wake of the U.S. action, some pirates and Somali warlords pledged to take revenge on some of the more than 200 international sailors currently being held captive on the seas. Somalia's extreme poverty and lack of effective central government make it an ideal breeding ground for piracy, and the Cold War's end helped make it possible. Like Afghanistan, Somalia was a rope for decades in a tug-of-war between the Soviet Union and the United States, abandoned and left to rot as the superpower rivalry ebbed. It's the latest warning that the 21st century's

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dangers are more likely to come from failed states and their desperate young men, rather than modern militaries boasting flotillas of warships, formations of tanks and fleets of aircraft.

Obama promises look at US options to combat piracy

Associated Press - By Anne Gearan

13 April 2009

The United States is considering new military and diplomatic strategies in the aftermath of the high-seas hostage drama, including adding Navy gunships along the Somali coastline and launching a campaign to disable pirate "mother ships."

The rescue of an American hostage and the killing of three **Somali pirates** by Navy SEAL snipers also increases pressure on U.S. and international leaders to use authority the United Nations granted in December to hunt pirates on land, where they plan and nurture attacks.

One day after his direct order allowing military force ended in success, President Barack Obama committed the United States to "halt the rise of piracy" without saying exactly how his administration and allies would do so. While stopping short of a pledge to eradicate piracy, the new U.S. president added the lawlessness off the coast of Africa to a lengthy must-fix list that already includes two wars and a struggling economy.

"We have to continue to be prepared to confront them when they arise, and we have to ensure that those who commit acts of piracy are held accountable for their crimes," Obama said.

U.S. officials privately outlined several options Monday, even as the Pentagon cautioned that the solution to the piracy scourge won't come at the point of a gun.

The high-stakes discussions come on the heels of a piracy drama that ended Sunday with the freeing of an American cargo ship captain. **Somali pirates** say they will retaliate for the killing of three of the pirates holding captain Richard Phillips, and one pirate told The Associated Press that Americans are now enemy No.

1.

Military officials said the precision of Sunday's rescue may be a testament to the skill of U.S. forces, but it should not become a rationale for a major expansion of the Pentagon's role in what is fundamentally a criminal problem.

One official, reflecting the administration's view, said bluntly that piracy is a crime, not an act of war or even terrorism. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because no decisions

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have been made, including about whether to expand or change the military's current role in fighting piracy.

Defense officials, speaking under the same terms for the same reason, said planners will examine whether Navy ships could or should escort or otherwise expand the protection they provide to private U.S. commercial ships along the Somali coast. The U.S. has already committed several ships to an international patrol force.

There are too many commercial ships and too few military ones to provide full escorts, and additional U.S. or international warships would probably be a temporary response.

As **Somali pirates** have become bolder and more sophisticated they have begun to capture more and larger vessels for use as "mother ships" or mobile command and supply centers. Navy officials theorize that was the goal of the attack on the Maersk Alabama, which would have been the largest prize yet for the pirates.

Any new strategies at sea will have to take the mother ships into account, officials said, perhaps with new authority to hunt for them.

U.S. officials are looking for things they can do unilaterally and in concert with other nations to buttress a loose strategy of seaborne patrols. The top Navy official in the region acknowledged Sunday that the current strategy isn't working. Military officials and diplomats said any real solution would involve several nations and must focus as much on the collapsed economy and government structure in Somalia as on the explosion of increasingly sophisticated piracy near the Horn of Africa. Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ordered a wide review of military options on Monday, said his spokesman, Navy Capt. John Kirby.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates said piracy will be a top priority for the administration in the weeks ahead, even as he called the dramatic rescue a "textbook" success story.

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"I think we're going to end up spending a fair amount of time on this in the administration, seeing if there is a way to try and mitigate this problem of piracy," Gates told about 30 students and faculty members at the Marine Corps War College in Quantico, Va., according to a U.S. military news service.

He added: "All I can tell you is I am confident we will be

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spending a lot of time in the situation room over the next few weeks trying to figure out what in the world to do about this problem."

Nonmilitary responses include greater coordination among nations trying to help stabilize the weak, ineffectual Somali government and provide economic options beyond the ransoming of foreign cargo crews.

A 24-nation response group on Somali piracy, formed under United Nations auspices, is likely to meet soon to discuss a recent spike in hostage-taking.

"We're going to be looking at a number of options and mechanisms," State Department spokesman Robert Wood said Monday.

"We clearly have an issue in this region right now -- piracy -- and we need to work cooperatively with a whole host of countries as best we can to prevent these things from happening," Wood said. "This is not something we're going to be able to solve overnight, but I think we've got some steps in place."

In Praise of Snipers

Washington Post - By David Ignatius

13 April 2009

Just as the policy mavens were beginning to debate elaborate political-military strategies for dealing with the **Somali pirates**, we were reminded that the best solution is sometimes the simplest and most direct -- in this case, a sniper's rifle.

The Navy seals waited stealthily on board the USS Bainbridge for the right moment, and then: pow! Nightmare over. I don't mean to overdo the gung-ho enthusiasm, but this was a correct and proportionate use of military power. Given the brutality of the pirates' hostage-taking, and the threat they increasingly posed to maritime traffic in the Gulf of Oman, some decisive action was necessary. And it was taken.

The larger point (there's always one of those lurking in op-ed land) is that we too often use a howitzer -- or an F-16 -- when a sniper rifle should be the weapon of choice. That is, the United States as a nation tends to favor big, direct deployment of military power when something more limited and discrete would make better sense. That's one lesson of Iraq and Afghanistan. Invading foreign countries willy-nilly should be an option of last resort; and as we've discovered, once the United States gets in, it often can't get out easily without suffering a serious strategic reversal.

These issues will come to a head over the next few weeks, as the

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Obama administration tries to frame a Somalia policy. An early sign of this debate was the story in last Saturday's Washington Post by Greg Jaffe and Karen DeYoung about the administration's review of policy options against the Muslim militia known as al-Shabab, which dominates the lawless land from which the pirates emerged.

The rag-tag nature of this "insurgency" is conveyed by its name, which in Arabic means "the boys." Despite al-Shabab's growing power, it's still closer to a youth gang than a strategic threat to the United States. It poses a menace, to be sure, in the way gun-toting bad guys do in ungoverned spaces anywhere on the planet. But it shouldn't prompt a big, overt military deployment, or even those "surgical strikes" that air force commanders like to talk about.

This is the kind of problem for which U.S. Special Forces and the covert operators of the Central Intelligence Agency were created. They can move quickly and quietly to alter the balance of power on the ground, just as they have done at sea. They should be subject to close congressional oversight, in secret. The less the rest of the world sees the American footprint in Somalia, the better.

U.S. weighs fate of surviving Somali pirate

CNN - By Terry Frieden

13 April 2009

Federal law enforcement authorities are discussing what to do with the lone surviving pirate captured Sunday off Somalia's coast after a successful military rescue abruptly ended a five-day hostage standoff at sea.

A Kenyan police officer guards the U.S.-flagged Maersk Alabama at a Mombasa port Sunday.

According to sources familiar with the case, U.S. government officials are weighing potential legal hurdles they may face if the young Somali captive is flown to New York or Washington to face federal criminal charges.

Officially, the government is virtually mum on the discussions.

"The Justice Department continues to review the evidence and other issues to determine whether to seek prosecution of this individual in the United States," said Dean Boyd, spokesman for the Justice Department National Security Division.

Sources who asked not to be identified because they are not

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authorized to discuss the matter said the detained Somali youth remains in military custody, but is likely to be turned over eventually to the FBI for transport to the United States. Watch how the Navy deals with pirates (-VERTICAL-BAR-)

New York-based FBI agents are assisting Nairobi-based agents in collecting evidence and conducting interviews. Some officials say it appears most likely the captive initially would be flown to New York to stand trial. However, sources stress no decisions have been made on when or where the young pirate would face justice.

Investigators face the early and potentially difficult task of determining whether the Somali suspect is at least 18 years of age. Initial reports from the Horn of Africa have indicated the young man is anywhere from 16 to 19 years old. Officials note that authoritatively establishing his identity and date of birth in a lawless country, where records are often lost or burned, if they ever existed at all, may be problematic.

Even if officials determine the Somali youth is a juvenile, he could be presented to a magistrate in a U.S. District Court. Justice Department records indicate such occurrences are rare, with juveniles accounting for less than 1 percent of criminal defendants.

The latest available figures show among the thousands of federal prisoners, about half of the 200-plus defendants 17 or younger are held for trial as adults, while the other half are detained as juveniles.

Whether adult or juvenile, the Somali captive could be charged under an international treaty to which the United States is a signatory that carries penalties of up to life in prison. Watch how U.S. could deal with captured pirate (-VERTICAL-BAR-)

The 1988 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation has been used to prosecute pirates in other countries. The agreement allows for pirates and hostage takers on the high seas to be prosecuted in any country which signed the treaty, without regard to which national flag a ship was flying.

Former FBI official and CNN contributor Tom Fuentes, who supervised international operations for the FBI, recalls agents providing critical help in winning the conviction in a Kenyan courtroom of 10 pirates captured in 2006 with the help of the U.S. military. The USS Nassau had come to the aid of an Indian ship on which pirates were holding 16 Indian hostages. Shots were

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fired, prompting the pirates to surrender.

"The government of Kenya wanted to prosecute the case, so the Justice Department and State Department agreed to that. We said 'Let's teach them to fish'," Fuentes said.

He said FBI agents ended up spending six months working with Kenyan authorities on how to conduct interviews, handle and protect evidence, and shape a prosecution that would stand up in any courtroom in the world. The pirates were convicted and sentenced to seven years in prison.

Officials familiar with the current case say the lone Somali suspect in U.S. military custody could be turned over to Kenya or another country in the region if barriers to a U.S. prosecution appear to be daunting. However, because the ship was U.S.-flagged and the seized sea captain was a U.S. citizen, federal authorities will want to prosecute the case on U.S. soil if at all possible, according to one federal law enforcement official. Another official said it was probable that if a charge against the Somali is filed in a U.S. court, the action would be filed under a court seal and kept secret from the public until the suspect suddenly appears in court to hear the charge read by a magistrate judge.

Officials indicate such developments are not likely to occur soon.

Calls mount for solutions to Somalia

USA Today - By Ken Dilanian, David Jackson, and Jim Michaels
14 April 2009

President Obama basked in the success Monday of the naval operation that freed an American hostage from **Somali pirates**, and a key senator and several regional experts urged his administration to tackle piracy's root causes by helping Somalia's weak government gain control of its territory.

"A modest amount of assistance from the world community could do a great deal to help stabilize this government," said Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wis., a leading voice in Congress on Africa. Feingold sent Obama a letter Monday urging him to call Somalia's president and commit to helping establish security.

While U.S. troops "would not be a good idea," Feingold said the U.S. should broker agreements among competing groups and encourage rule of law.

Somalia's government, which came to power after Ethiopia invaded in 2004 and deposed an Islamist regime, doesn't control the capital, Mogadishu, let alone the northern regions from which pirates operate. About 1,000 African Union troops are deployed in

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Mogadishu, but that didn't stop insurgents from firing mortars at a plane carrying Rep. Donald Payne, D-N.J., as he was leaving the country Monday. He was unharmed.

Somalia is inundated by an Islamist insurgency that many security experts consider a significantly greater threat to the U.S. and its allies than pirates, said Peter Chalk, an Africa expert at RAND Corp., a think tank. There is no evidence linking the Islamists and the pirates, he said, and piracy plummeted when the Islamists were in power.

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Obama didn't mention those issues during his appearance at the White House. As onlookers applauded, the president welcomed the safe return of Capt. Richard Phillips.

Obama said that he was resolved to halting the rise of piracy off the Horn of Africa. "We're going to have to continue to work with our partners to prevent future attacks, we have to continue to be prepared to confront them when they arise, and we have to ensure that those who commit acts of piracy are held accountable for their crimes," he said.

Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ordered a review of options to address piracy, said his spokesman, Navy Capt. John Kirby.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates said piracy will be a top priority.

"I think we're going to end up spending a fair amount of time on this in the administration, seeing if there is a way to try and mitigate this problem of piracy," Gates said at the Marine Corps War College in Virginia.

The State Department says the driving force behind the rise in African piracy is Somalia's poverty and lawlessness. An effort by the U.S. military to help stabilize the country ended after 18 Americans died in the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu, depicted in the film *Black Hawk Down*.

State Department spokesman Robert Wood said the U.S. is working "with a number of countries in the region and around the world to help bring some political and economic stability to Somalia." He did not elaborate.

During the past two years, the U.S. has provided Somalia more than \$350 million in humanitarian aid and \$25 million to build courthouses, and give jobs to teenagers, according to government records.

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Chalk said he was concerned about calls to attack pirates on land, such as one issued Monday by Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., because "I don't think that really addresses the nub of the issue, which is lack of employment, lack of governance, in Somalia."

In a statement, Webb called for "hot pursuit, attacking and destroying pirate infrastructure at their home bases, and an examination of the extent to which armed security personnel should be used aboard U.S. flag merchant ships."

US congressman comes under mortar fire as he leaves Somalia
Telegraph - By Mike Pflanz

13 April 2009

Donald Payne, from New Jersey and a member of the foreign affairs committee, arrived in Mogadishu for talks with President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and his prime minister on rampant piracy off the country's coast.

He escaped unharmed and there were no injuries. Rescue of US freighter captain: **Somali pirates** vow revenge. His visit came the day after US forces shot dead three of four **Somali pirates** who had been holding an American captain hostage for five days in the Indian Ocean.

A **Somali pirate** chief had earlier threatened to target Americans in revenge for the rescue of a US captain in a dramatic operation that saw naval snipers kill his captors.

The dramatic rescue of Richard Phillips may have put the lives of hundreds of other hostages in danger and raised the stakes for future hijacks, experts have warned.

More than 230 sailors mostly from Far Eastern countries including the Philippines, Indonesia and Taiwan, are being held aboard 13 other hijacked ships in Somalia's coastal waters.

Jamac Habeb, a 30-year-old pirate from the **Somali pirate** town of Eyl, told the Associated Press: "From now on, if we capture foreign ships and their respective countries try to attack us, we will kill them (the hostages).

"(U.S. forces have) become our No 1 enemy."

Abdullahi Lami, one of the pirates holding a Greek ship, said that pirates would not be cowed by the US action.

"Every country will be treated the way it treats us," he said. "In the future, America will be the one mourning and crying. We will retaliate for the killings of our men."

US navy snipers shot dead the pirates using just three bullets in a dramatic rescue authorised by President Barack Obama.

They got the go-ahead to fire after one of the pirates was seen

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holding an AK-47 so close to Mr Phillips that the weapon appeared to be touching him.

The pirates were said to be getting "increasingly agitated" because they weren't getting what they wanted and had fired a bullet toward the USS Bainbridge, further heightening tension. Vice Adml William Gortney, commander of US Naval Forces Central Command, said the snipers were ordered to open fire when sailors aboard the USS Bainbridge spotted the kidnapers "with their heads and shoulders exposed".

Asked how they could have killed each pirate with a single shot in the darkness, he described them as "extremely, extremely well-trained".

Military officials praised the snipers for three flawless shots,
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which they described as remarkable, coming at night and from the stern of a ship on rolling waters.

The American operation in which Mr Phillips was freed unharmed came two days after French commandos stormed a yacht seized by a separate gang, killing two of the gunmen. The boat's 28-year-old French skipper also died in the firefight.

The International Maritime Bureau welcomed the missions to free the hostages but said they could provoke retaliations.

Noel Choong of the IMB's piracy centre in Kuala Lumpur said: "We applaud the US and the French action. We feel that they are making the right move, although the results sometimes may be detrimental."

Adml Gortney admitted the American operation "could escalate violence in this part of the world, no question about it".

Giles Noakes, a maritime security expert at the largest international shipping association, BIMCO, said Mr Phillips' rescue would lead to an escalation of violence.

"The question here is whether there will be a change of attitude in the pirates and in their modus operandi. We hope the change will be that they will be even more deterred because of the successful action by both the Maersk Alabama crew and the navies," he said.

Meanwhile, the crew of the Maersk Alabama, the container ship involved in the hijack drama, called for greater efforts to curb piracy off Somalia.

Shane Murphy, the ship's second-in-command, said in the Kenyan port of Mombasa, said: "We would like to implore President Obama

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to us all his resources and increase the commitment to ending this **Somali pirate** scourge.

"Right now there are ships still being taken, as I stand here. America has to be at the forefront of this, it is time for us to step in and put an end to this crisis.

Mr Phillips was said to be resting on board one of the three US Navy warships sent to try to force an end to his four-day ordeal yesterday.

The head of Maersk praised the captain's behaviour. He said Capt Phillips had told him: "I'm just the byline, the heroes are the Navy seals who brought me home."

He will likely be flown to the Red Sea state of Djibouti, where there is a large international military base, and then on to the US.

Reading a statement on behalf of Capt Phillips' wife Andrea, a spokeswoman for ship owner Maersk Line said the family was "happy and relieved".

Navy snipers had multiple chances to shoot **Somali pirates**

LA Times - By Julian E. Barnes and Greg Miller

13 April 2009

Before ending a pirate standoff with three fatally precise shots, U.S. Navy SEAL snipers had passed on multiple opportunities to fire.

They had moved into position after the White House expanded the authority it had given the world's most powerful navy against a rag-tag foe holding an American hostage.

They kept their scopes trained on their Somali targets as prospects for a peaceful resolution seemed to shrivel.

Most of all, they waited as a series of seemingly insignificant moves -- from extending the pirates a rope to bringing an injured brigand onboard -- improved the sharpshooters' odds for success.

In his first public remarks on the rescue, President Obama on Monday pledged a sustained campaign against piracy.

"I want to be very clear that we are resolved to halt the rise of piracy in that region," Obama said. "We have to continue to be prepared to confront them when they arise. And we have to ensure that those who commit acts of piracy are held accountable for their crimes." Obama was briefed on the crisis at least 18 times.

But the crisis seems to have crystallized for the administration on Friday, not long after the White House got word that Capt. Phillips had tried to escape from his captors.

Senior NSC officials met in the White House situation room to

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draft a series of options to deliver to Obama. Later that night, Obama appears to have issued his first order authorizing the use of lethal force. The next morning, that authority to use lethal force was expanded and SEALs arrived on the Destroyer Bainbridge.

A military official speaking on condition of anonymity said the sniper team had multiple opportunities to shoot, but held off, not believing Phillips was in imminent danger.

The military thought they had a crucial breakthrough on Sunday morning. The youngest pirate, who had been injured, asked the SEALs if he could come aboard the Bainbridge to make a phone call.

As Sunday dragged on, the seas grew rougher and Navy officers offered to tow the lifeboat behind the Bainbridge, telling the pirates that they would move them to calmer waters. Also, the pirates were likely experiencing a withdrawal from Khat, a narcotic leaf chewed by many Somali men, according to a senior
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military official. Aboard the hot and cramped lifeboat tensions escalated. Watching from the Bainbridge, the sniper team observed an apparent argument between Phillips and one of the pirates. The SEAL team observed two of the pirates move away from Phillips and stick their heads out from a hatch. The third pirate raised his weapon at Phillips' back. Convinced that Phillips was about to be shot, the SEAL commander gave the order to fire.

"If the goal was just to kill these guys there were opportunities where we could have shot them," said a military official. "This was not the outcome we wanted. We wanted those three guys to give themselves up."

10 killed in Nigeria speedboat clashes

AFP - By non-attributed author

13 April 2009

Clashes Monday involving speedboats in the oil-rich Niger Delta left nine militants and one naval rating dead, military officials said.

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the most prominent militant group in the area, denied involvement but gave a different account, saying three naval ratings had been killed and four taken hostage.

Officials said the fighting erupted when militants attacked a naval unit attached to a Joint Task Force in Nembe, a town in the

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southern Nigerian state of Bayelsa.

"In the first attack, the militants launched an unprovoked attack on the Nembe location of the naval unit attached to the JTF. The naval rating was killed in that attack," said military spokesman Colonel Rabe Abubakar.

He said nine militants were killed and several others wounded in a reprisal ambush by the military.

Four of the insurgents' vessels were sunk during the exchanges, he said, adding that the militants did however manage to make off with two speedboats belonging to Anglo-Dutch oil giant Shell.

"A manhunt has been launched to track down the fleeing militants.

We are engaged in serious pursuit of them," Abubakar said.

MEND said it was the military who first opened fire on some youths who later regrouped and attacked the military post.

"Three naval ratings were killed and four abducted. Two fully armed gunboats were also seized and stripped of all its military hardware," the MEND statement said.

MEND said that although it was not involved in the attacks, it could assist in securing the release of the seized troops.

Abubakar slammed MEND's casualty figures as "propaganda".

A week ago, MEND dismissed an amnesty offer from the government as "unrealistic" and charged that the military was being put on the warpath in the oil-rich region.

The past three years have seen an upsurge in militant activities in the region with frequent attacks on foreign oil companies and a wave of kidnappings of expatriate employees.

The unrest has drastically reduced Nigeria's oil output, with daily production currently standing at around 1.78 million barrels, according to the International Energy Agency, compared to 2.6 million barrels in 2006.

Mauritania Junta Leader Announces Candidacy for June Elections

VOA - By James Butty

12 April 2009

Mauritania's military leader Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz has made good on his promise to stand as a candidate in the country's June sixth presidential election. He announced Sunday that he planned to hand over leadership to the Senate president before April 22.

General Abdelaziz ousted President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, Mauritania's first democratically elected president in August last. The African Union suspended Mauritania from its membership and said last month it would impose travel bans and asset freezes on officials involved in the coup. General Abdelaziz's

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announcement came as an African Union delegation was in Mauritania to mediate the political crisis there.

Moussa Oumar Diop, first councilor at the Mauritanian Embassy in Washington told VOA General Abdelaziz's decision to stand for president was good for all Mauritians, both black and white.

"I know exactly last election was very clear and very democratic. I know that. But the people who were elected disappointed the Mauritanian people. When you are outside you cannot know that, but when you go to Mauritania 100 percent need the change, and they are with this new president who made the coup because I know exactly this man. He will take care of everybody, the black and the white because the situation of Mauritania, you have to know that, is black and white," he said.

General Abdelaziz's announcement came as an African Union delegation was in Mauritania to mediate the political crisis there.

The African Union suspended Mauritania from its membership and said last month it would impose travel bans and asset freezes on officials involved in the coup.

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But Diop cited Libyan leader and current African Union chairman Moamer Kadhafi who said last month that the African Union's Peace and Security Council had no independent authority to impose sanctions on Mauritania.

"In my opinion, that's right for the African people, but don't forget the president of the African Union, Libyan President Kadhafi, he came to Mauritania one month ago to make the arrangement between the military and different political parties in Mauritania. He's the president for the African Union; it's him who should tell us about the sanctions," Diop said.

On Sunday, one group of the Mauritanian opposition came out in favor of taking part in the June elections, signaling a split in the opposition that was blamed on the military junta.

Diop said those calling themselves the opposition represented only about five percent of the Mauritanian population who he said once held power but did nothing for the Mauritanian people.

"These people who are the opposition, when you come to know them, you will see they are only five percent or four percent of the population. All these people they didn't do something for Mauritania since we got our independence. I know them; they need

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only to get to their family, to get to their close relatives. They are fighting for their interest. But this military leader I know, he's our hope in Mauritania. I'm sure he will make a justice for Mauritania because you don't need the people who talk about Mauritania for four years but did not do anything for Mauritania," Diop said.

Still, Diop said he was not glorifying military interventions in Mauritania or in Africa as a whole.

"I never in my life supported coup d'etat, but this one is right because the people who were elected, they disappointed the population. The Ex-President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, what did he do for Mauritania since two years? He left his wife doing everything; the prime minister he can't talk only his wife. He spent his time travelling. This is not democracy, and he didn't do anything for the black people of Mauritania to make a justice between the populations," Diop said.

Ghana Government Encouraged by Obama's Cooperation Promise
VOA - By Peter Clotey

13 April 2009

Ghana's government says it is encouraged by Washington's cooperation and support to resolve the ongoing narcotic menace that threatens West Africa. President Barack Obama also applauded Ghana's smooth transition after Professor John Atta-Mills won last December's highly contested election run-off. This follows President Barack Obama's call to President John Atta-Mills to discuss the escalating narcotics trade in the West African sub-region. President Obama also reportedly praised Ghana for its democratic process at a time when he said there was growing instability across Africa with recent coups in Mauritania, Guinea and Madagascar.

Haruna Iddrissu is Ghana's communications minister. He tells reporter Peter Clotey that with Washington's cooperation, the new administration is determined to win the fight against the growing narcotic menace.

"Certainly government is elated about the development and it reflects the strengthening of the bilateral ties between the government and people of the United States and the government and people of Ghana under the leadership of President JEA (John Evans Atta) Mills. We are encouraged by that development particularly the commendation and recognition for Ghana's democratic evolution," Iddrissu pointed out.

Former opposition leader Professor Atta-Mills took over early in

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January this year after a smooth transfer of power from the then ruling New Patriotic Party when he won the last December general election run-off. This was Ghana's second successful smooth transition from one legitimately elected leader to another in the country's history.

Iddrissu said Ghana has shown its desire to entrench the tenets of democracy.

"We have demonstrated to the rest of the world that democracy will work and can work in Africa. And president Mills and the NDC (ruling National Democratic Congress) are committed to deepening multi-party constitutional democracy and deepening democratic values and culture within the body politic of Ghana," Iddrissu noted.

He said the new Ghanaian government is determined to win the fight against the growing narcotic menace across West Africa.

"We are particularly encouraged by his (Obama's) readiness to cooperate with the government of Ghana to fight the illicit drug trade. It has become a major, major problem of our government," he said.

Iddrissu said the new administration recognized the narcotic challenge after recent incidents. But he added the new administration is determined to win the war on the drug trade.

"You will recall that under the previous administration, the image of our country was bruised internationally in terms of our funding and our inability to fight the narcotic drug trade.

President Mills is committed to revivving the current Narcotic Drugs Board into establishing a strong commission responsible for narcotics, and the law will accordingly be reviewed. But to be successful in our fight against the illicit drug trade, we need international cooperation and understanding. We need

/****** BEGINNING OF SECTION 10 *****

international collaboration and support and that is why government is particularly excited about this call from President Barack Obama," Iddrissu said.

He praised Washington's long-standing support to Ghana.

"We want to recognize that the U.S. government has been supportive of Ghana's economic, social and democratic development. I recall the 541 million dollars that government got under the Millennium Challenge Account, which is benefiting areas such as agriculture, road infrastructure and many other areas of our national economy," he said.

Iddrissu said President Obama's call demonstrates the assurance

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Washington reposes in President John Atta-Mills' new administration.

"It certainly means that President Obama has confidence in the new administration and trusts our commitment and our pledge to deal with the illicit drug trade. And he is extending a hand as a collaborator and he is extending a hand in support of President Mills' effort to fight the illicit drug trade, which is becoming a major problem for our country and a major problem in our country," Iddrissu pointed out.

He said Washington has always maintained strong ties with successive Ghanaian governments.

"The relationship between Ghana and the U.S is already one which is healthy. The bond of friendship exists from independence up to today and the foreign policy pursued only a few days ago His Excellency the President embarked on good neighborliness agenda when he visited neighboring countries. With this call (from President Obama) it means that he has a leverage to extend entrenching relationship with the west notwithstanding the global economic crunch, we expect some support in order to be able to face our development challenges of the country. And this means that we can count on the U.S government's support and its influence in international politics," he said.

UN News Service Africa Briefs

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13 April 2009

DR Congo: UN envoy to push for children's rights in peace process

13 April - The United Nations human rights envoy tasked with protecting the rights of children in armed conflict is set to arrive tomorrow in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for talks to ensure greater protection for children amid the ongoing humanitarian crisis engulfing the country's east.

UN-African Union mission reports return to relative calm in Darfur

13 April - The joint United Nations-African Union (AU) peacekeeping mission in Sudan's war-ravaged Darfur region today reported that the security situation is now relatively calm despite some continuing acts of banditry and carjacking in North and West Darfur.

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