



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on May 12, 2009

U.S. Policy re. Somali Pirates

On the important issue of arming select crew members, Capt. Phillips, the star witness before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on “Confronting Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia,” was directly at odds with Maersk boss John Clancey, who testified immediately before him. “I know Captain Phillips prefers an armed capability for the crew onboard and I respectfully understand his perspective,” said Mr. Clancey, chairman of Maersk, Inc., the world’s largest container ship operator. Maersk and other shipping companies, said Clancey, believe “that arming merchant sailors may result in the acquisition of ever more lethal weapons and tactics by the pirates, a race that merchant sailors cannot win.” In addition, he noted, “most ports of call will not allow the introduction of weapons into their national waters.”



Captain Phillips, who was rescued by Navy SEAL sharpshooters after being held for five days by Somali pirates, told senators “the most desirable and appropriate solution to piracy is for the United States government to provide protection, through military escorts and/or military detachments aboard U.S. vessels.” He acknowledged, however, that “due to the vastness of the area to be covered,” even the U.S. Navy together with the coalition of other navies currently in the Gulf of Aden region “may simply not have the resources to provide all the protection necessary to prevent and stop the attacks.”

Aside from naval escorts, said Phillips, merchant vessels “can be ‘hardened’ even beyond what’s being done today and made even more structurally resistant to pirates,” and their crews given better tools and training to repel boarders.

While he favors policy changes that would permit arms aboard ships, Phillips said “arming the crew cannot and should not be viewed as the best or ultimate solution to the problem. At most, arming the crew should be only one component of a comprehensive plan and approach to combat piracy.” The former hostage and veteran mariner said his “personal preference” would be to give only the four most senior officers aboard a vessel access to weapons and to give them special training. Acknowledging that this would raise “a very thorny set of issues,” Phillips said: “Nevertheless, I do believe that arming the crew, as part of an overall strategy, could provide an effective deterrent under certain circumstances, and I believe that a measured capability in this respect should be part of the overall debate about how to defend ourselves against criminals on the sea.”



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The *Maersk Alabama* skipper said that putting armed security details on board could be “an effective deterrent” and that he preferred government forces, though “as long as they are adequately trained I would not be opposed to private security” on board. “And I don’t mean a security guard. I don’t mean a mall cop. I mean someone who’s sufficiently trained,” Phillips said.

Supporting UN Hegemony

Captain Phillips’ practical recommendations contrasted sharply with the proposals of the Obama administration, as put forward at the Senate hearings by Ambassador Stephen D. Mull, acting assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs. Reprising the arguments of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and his own previous testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Mull proposed a more “international” approach, calling for more U.S. “collaborative” efforts with the United Nations, the European Union, and NATO; more financial aid for Somalia; and expanded support for the UN-led military intervention of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

Mull told the Senate hearing:

We also recognize that sustainable change in Somalia requires a political solution that is authored and implemented by the Somalis themselves and not by outsiders. In this regard, the United States continues to support the UN-led Djibouti peace process, which has facilitated important progress on the political and security fronts in recent months, and to work with a broad international group of donors.

The ambassador further noted:

The United States also remains committed to supporting the Somali security sector and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Secretary Clinton dispatched a high-level envoy, Acting Assistant Secretary Phillip Carter, to the Donors’ Conference on Somalia in Support of the Somali Security Institutions and AMISOM, where we will reaffirm our commitment to building security and governance in Somalia.

Ambassador Mull’s testimony reaffirms the Obama-Clinton policy on Somalia as virtually identical with the previous George Bush-Condoleezza Rice policy. Which is to say, U.S. policy is to support an internationalist UN-imposed regime on Somalia, notwithstanding the patently false claim that the ongoing “peace process” in Djibouti is being “authored and implemented by the Somalis themselves and not by outsiders.”

In this the U.S. State Department continues to parrot UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon and his Special Representative for Somalia Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah. In a report to the UN Security Council on



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March 20, Special Representative Ould-Abdallah claimed the UN-facilitated 2008 Djibouti Agreement between the Transitional Federal Government and the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia has brought Somalia “back from the brink.”

“I would argue that with the Djibouti Agreement, the country has passed the crossroads,” Ould-Abdallah said. “It is on a one-way street — going forward.... Today, state legitimacy is established and the legality of the new institutions is recognized regionally, internationally and indeed by the vast majority of Somalis.”

Typical of overblown UN rhetoric, Ould-Abdallah’s pronouncements bear little resemblance to actual facts on the ground. The UN-imposed (and U.S.-backed) Djibouti Agreement has not brought the anarchic Somalia “back from the brink.” And while the new UN-recognized “transitional government” headed by Sharif Sheikh Ahmed is recognized by most governments of the world, it absurd to claim it is recognized “by the vast majority of Somalis.” It is not even a “government” in any traditionally accepted definition of the word, being merely a fragile coalition of competing forces and not holding practical or institutional control even at its base in southern Somalia, which has been badly divided along religious, political, and clan loyalties since the 1991 ouster of dictator Siad Barre.

The UN, the U.S. government, the “international community,” and most media commentators prefer to ignore altogether the fact that the Djibouti Agreement was made without the participation or acceptance of the only actual functioning government inside Somalia, the government of Somaliland, the former British colony on the northern coast of the horn of Africa. A de facto independent country since 1991, Somaliland boasts a democratically elected government and has been comparatively stable, peaceful, and prosperous.

If the UN has its way, AMISOM troops — bolstered with financial and military aid from the United States and the EU — will impose “order” not only on the chaos in the south, but also on the peoples of Somaliland. Thus, we could see a repeat of the UN “Congo solution” of 1961, when, with crucial U.S. military support, the United Nations brutally crushed the peaceful province of Katanga, massacring thousands of innocent civilians and forcing Katanga back into the hands of the communist regime that was carrying out a reign of terror throughout the Congo.

AMISOM declares in its mission statement that its purpose is “to create a safe and secure environment in preparation for the transition to the UN.” AMISOM’s website also claims: “Humanitarian activities have made AMISOM very popular among the local Somalis.”

Really? Is that why AMISOM forces are facing their own “Black Hawk Down” reception? Somalis hate foreign occupiers, as UN and U.S. forces found in 1993. The AMISOM forces, made up of Ugandan and Burundian soldiers, may be black, but to the fiercely independent Somalis they are invaders, and are non-Muslim infidels to boot. The poorly trained and equipped AMISOM troops have reinforced the Somali antipathy by opening fire on crowds on several occasions, resulting in a high civilian death toll. The AMISOM forces are viewed by many Somalis as merely a replacement for the invading Ethiopian forces recruited by President Bush in 2006 to impose a UN-U.S. “solution” on their country. Having just ridded themselves of the Ethiopians, they are not willing to accept a new occupation force.

Nevertheless, the Obama administration, as noted above, reaffirmed its commitment to AMISOM and the Djibouti Agreement, at the recent international donors conference held on April 23 in Brussels, Belgium. The conference, sponsored by the UN and the EU, netted pledges of \$213 million for AMISOM and the UN’s other programs in Somalia.



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“If we only treat the symptoms, piracy at sea, but not its root causes — the decay of the state and poverty — we will fail,” said European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso, who opened the meeting.

Unfortunately, the leading Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Richard Lugar, is an ardent internationalist who differs little on this matter from Committee Chairman John Kerry, a liberal-left Democrat.

“President Obama and Secretary Clinton, like President Bush before them, have emphasized that development must be an important pillar of our foreign policy,” said ranking minority member Lugar at the April 30 Senate hearing on Somali piracy. “The Senate this year, in agreeing to fully fund President Obama’s budget request for international affairs, also recognizes that if we don’t sustain the long-term investments necessary to prevent failing states and to reduce the poverty that can spawn instability and extremism, we run the risk of paying a far higher price down the road.”

If the GOP rank and file allow Senator Lugar and other “moderate” Republicans to continue the Bush-Obama program of support for the UN-designed agenda for Somalia, we can expect a succession of disasters — not only in Somalia, but throughout the Horn of Africa and that strategic region of the Middle East.

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