

U.S. captain attempts escape from pirates

by UPI

MOGADISHU, Somalia -- The captain of the U.S.-flagged cargo ship jumped from a lifeboat in an escape attempt Friday but was recaptured by his pirate captors, a U.S. official said.

Pirates followed Capt. Richard Phillips of the cargo ship Maersk Alabama into the water and took him back into the boat in the waters off Somalia, CNN reported.

Phillips was believed to be trying to swim to the USS Bainbridge, a nearby U.S. Navy destroyer in communication with the gunmen holding Phillips hostage, the official said.

The standoff moved into its third day as U.S. naval personnel assisted by the FBI tried to negotiate Phillips' release from his Somali kidnappers.

U.S. Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, U.S. Central Command commander, said two more ships would be sent to the region, the BBC reported. Petraeus said the added presence would "ensure that we have all the capability that might be needed over the course of the coming days."

Pirates hijacked the Maersk Alabama Wednesday as it was carrying humanitarian aid for African countries. The ship resumed its journey Thursday toward Mombasa, Kenya, with a security detail protecting the remaining 19 crew members who retook the ship hours after it was seized. The crew attempted a swap of a pirate for Phillips but the pirates reneged on the exchange, keeping Phillips in the lifeboat.

Analysts told the BBC negotiations could be lengthy as the pirates likely would want a large ransom for the captain as well a compensation for a boat that was damaged during the attack on the Alabama.

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