

Plane with U.S. congressman fired on

by UPI

MOGADISHU, Somalia -- An airplane carrying a U.S. congressman was fired on Monday as it took off at the Mogadishu International Airport, the representative's spokeswoman said.

"His airplane was fired upon," Kerry McKenny, spokeswoman for U.S. Rep. Donald Payne, D-N.J., told CNN.

McKenny said Payne was visiting Somalia and was scheduled to visit Nairobi. The spokeswoman said local police told her the aircraft left safely and no one was hurt but she said she hadn't spoken to the congressman.

An African Union official, speaking to The Times of London, confirmed the gist of McKenny's account.

"The plane of the congressman was leaving and the mortars started falling. There were no casualties but the attack was aimed at the congressman. He flew out safely," an AU official said.

The incident occurred the day after U.S. Navy sharpshooters killed three pirates who had been holding Capt. Richard Phillips, skipper of a U.S.-flagged cargo ship, captive since Wednesday.

Pirates vowed retaliation for the pirates' death and the rescue negotiations. Abdi Garad, a Somali pirate chief in Eyl said: "The American liars have killed our friends after they agreed to free the hostage without ransom. ... (This) matter will lead to retaliation and we will hunt down particularly American citizens traveling our waters."

In Mombasa, Kenya, the destination of the Maersk Alabama, first mate Shane Murphy called on U.S. President Barack Obama to step to the forefront in fighting piracy.

"I'd like to implore President Obama to use all his resources ... to end this Somali piracy scourge," Murphy said during a news conference. "It's a crisis. Wake up."

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