

U.S. determined to stop piracy, Obama says

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- The United States is resolute in its determination to halt piracy in the Indian Ocean off Somalia's coast, President Barack Obama said Monday.

"I want to be very clear, we are resolved to halt the rise of piracy in that region," Obama said during remarks at the U.S. Transportation Department. He said U.S. officials would work with their international partners to prevent the attacks, confront them when they occur, and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Meanwhile, CNN reported the airplane carrying U.S. Rep. Donald Payne, D-N.J., that came under mortar and small-arms attack at Mogadishu International Airport, has landed safely in Nairobi, Kenya.

Obama said he was pleased with the rescue of Capt. Richard Phillips, skipper of the U.S.-flagged Maersk Alabama, which pirates tried to seize Wednesday. Phillips was freed Sunday when U.S. Navy snipers shot and killed three of his captors. Pirates vowed retaliation.

"His safety has been our principal concern," Obama said, thanking everyone who worked for Phillips' release.

Concerning Payne's trip to Somalia, U.S. State Department spokesman Robert Wood said Payne received a "very frank and straightforward assessment of the security situation on the ground."

U.S. officials were working with a number of countries to "help bring some political and economic stability to Somalia" to blunt the rampant piracy, Wood said.

"We've been encouraging states to prosecute suspected pirates, in their domestic legal systems," Wood said. "And we've been working with industry and with the International Maritime Organization to help ships try to avoid these types of piracy incidents."

In Mombasa, Kenya, the destination of the Maersk Alabama, first mate Shane Murphy called on Obama "to use all his resources ... to end this Somali piracy scourge."

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