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Roundtable Discussion

Maritime Security: Lessons from Ongoing Cooperation

- Thank you for having me here today. Let me start by saying what has happened off the coast of Somalia is truly remarkable. And the response to piracy off the coast of Somalia has been a little recognized success the transatlantic alliance and the wider international community.
- Just to provide some brief context. When I first began this job Somali piracy was spiraling out of control. Attacks were escalating and pirates were expanding operations far out into the Indian Ocean. While there seemed to be no limit to the growth of piracy, through the collective effort of the United States, our European partners, the international community, and the private sector, we are now seeing signs of *clear progress*.
- The numbers tell the story. According to figures from the U.S. Navy, we experienced a 75 percent decline in overall pirate attacks in 2012 compared with 2011.
- We are seeing fewer attempted attacks in no small measure because pirates are increasingly less successful at hijacking ships. In 2012, pirates captured just ten vessels, compared to 34 in 2011 and 68 in 2010. The last successful Somali pirate attack on a large commercial vessel was on May of last year.
- While piracy remains a real threat off the Horn of Africa, the progress that has been made in addressing the threat is real and extraordinary.

The effort to combat piracy also demonstrates how important and valuable the transatlantic alliance can be in addressing transnational threats.

- The strong response to piracy in Europe, the U.S., and from around the world stemmed from the fact that piracy posed a real threat to the global economy and to the stability of the region.
- In 2008, the EU began a naval mission to escort World Food Program shipments from hijacking. And following the capture of a cargo ship carrying heavy weapons bound for Sudan, as well as a tanker with millions of dollars of oil aboard – more countries saw the need to address this growing threat.
- This level of concern spawned unprecedented cooperation at sea. The establishment of Combined Task Force 151 in 2009 – to coordinate a multinational naval effort – NATO's Operation Ocean Shield was established in August of 2009, and EUNAVFOR' Operation Atalanta in 2008. These operations have different but complementary missions and all have operated extremely effectively together. Today, on any given day up to 30 vessels from as many as 22 nations are engaged in counter-piracy operations in the region.

Such close coordination at sea would not have been possible without the extremely close political cooperation between Washington and Brussels, as well as the close coordination within Brussels between NATO and the EU.

- However, it was clear to the political leadership on both sides of the Atlantic that a naval response was insufficient. Four key transatlantic partners – the United States, France, Germany, and the UK – came together with other like-minded nations to form the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia in January 2009. This core group rapidly expanded to *explicitly* include the European Union and NATO, each with specific operational mandates.
- The Contact Group now includes over 80 nations and organizations and has become the essential forum for counter-piracy, as it has helped galvanize action and coordinate efforts. A number of specialized working groups were established within the Contact Group to address a variety of subjects, including: naval coordination at sea; judicial and legal issues involving captured pirates; public diplomacy programs in Somalia to discourage piracy; and working creatively to disrupt the pirate enterprise ashore, including its illicit financial flows. The Contact Group also has a Working Group, which focuses on shipping self-protection, including the use of armed security on commercial ships. This has been extremely effective in repelling pirate attacks. To date, no ship employing embarked armed security has been hijacked. And the Contact Group has played an important role in facilitating the use of these teams.
- Importantly, EU states have played a leading role in the Contact Group and the success of this novel international forum shows what can be accomplished when the U.S. and Europe work together to address global challenges.
- The European Union is also very actively involved in all these efforts, and has applied its very considerable staff talent and financial resources to each of these tasks. I can safely say that the EU is a working partner that multiplies the national efforts of its member states. And we are very glad to have a robust and effective working relationship with the European External Action Service as well as EUNAVFOR's Operation Atalanta. We look forward to continued collaboration at sea and increasingly on land, as Somalia stabilizes and we can work together to help its leadership rebuild the governing institutions it needs, including those related to the maritime sector.
- The net result of this extraordinary effort, especially our operational coordination at sea and our shared efforts to encourage the commercial maritime industry to better protect themselves, is a dramatic reduction of pirate attacks.
- While the drop in attacks may lead some to conclude we can wind down our efforts, it is clear that threat of piracy off the Horn of Africa remains and our naval efforts must continue to prevent it from coming back. Nevertheless, it is clear that the experience of cooperating off the coast of Somalia has shown us that we can achieve real progress in maritime security if the U.S. and EU work together. Therefore, it makes sense for the U.S. and the European Union to look to further cooperation on maritime security issues.

I think there are **a few areas** where we can work closely with the EU to take advantage of what we have learned:

First, we need make sure we are on the same page when it comes to maritime security.

- **Maritime security involves an enormously complex set of cross-cutting issues.** From port security, to national defense of maritime boundaries, to customs enforcement, to regulations and laws to ensure the safety of mariners, the environment, and commerce. Therefore there are many functions that a government must perform in order to deliver what its citizens might recognize as maritime security. However, the lack of an agreed common international framework for approaching maritime security issues has simply made it difficult to work with countries in this sector. Countries that are looking for help in this area often face a variety of challenges, and those countries looking to help often do not know where to start.
- Therefore, in consultation with our European partners, the United States has developed a framework to help define maritime security in the context of security sector reform. In December 2010 we published the Maritime Security Sector Reform Guide. This guide the guide outlines a wholistic and integrated framework for approaching maritime security and it makes clear that maritime security is closely interdependent with other sectors of society, such as the justice and commercial sectors. It also lays out the capabilities needed to perform these functions.
- This has been the only comprehensive attempt I know of to establish agreed terms of reference relating to maritime security. And is serving as an important guide for us as we seek to assist countries with their maritime security.
- This is a significant development. Because too often efforts to assist countries in maritime security where disjointed. For instance, a donor may want to help a country build a coast guard, but without the justice sector instituting laws relating to maritime security, the coast guard will have no laws to enforce.
- Therefore the Maritime Security Sector Reform Guide helps create a common framework for providing maritime security assistance. And this guide is proving useful in Somalia, as the Contact Group working off the guide has created a web-based platform that has enabled donor countries to coordinate their efforts, as well as help identify requirements of the recipient countries.
- Going forward we believe that it is important for the U.S. and EU to work together to establish an internationally-accepted terms of reference for use in combined maritime security capacity building efforts. This would help facilitate our individual and collective efforts to build capacity in African states. Building the maritime capacity of Somalia's neighbors is vital and will allow us to eventually re-task our respective navies from the Gulf of Aden to other areas where their capabilities are required.
- This will take major management effort because of the very different ways that governments are organized to deal with their specific geographical and functional maritime security interests.

Lastly, we need to continue to work to improve international coordination.

- Coordinating *between* countries on maritime security is no doubt a challenge. This is because coordinating *within* a country on these issues can be just as difficult. As I have pointed out, maritime security is a multi-faceted challenge that does not obey neat bureaucratic lines. Therefore – and as is the case with many of today’s challenges – addressing maritime security requires governments to set up effective interagency frameworks to address these issues.
- While that is a challenge in and of itself, it is also essential for governments – **especially** for the U.S. and EU states – to establish national focal points that can facilitate routine coordination between countries on maritime security. This would include but would not be limited to counter-piracy efforts. The United States is one of many governments that can do more in this regard – as there is no natural home in any U.S. agency to enable effective policy and program management of “maritime security.”
- Despite some of the challenges to coordination, it is also clear that significant cooperation is occurring between the U.S. and EU. One promising development is the cooperation that’s emerged to address the troubling rise of maritime crime and piracy off the west coast of Africa. Our colleagues in the State Department’s Bureau of African Affairs are working closely the EU, France, UK, and others specifically on maritime capacity building with countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea. Through fora, such as the G8++ Africa Clearinghouse, we are working with our partners to advance coordination using the maritime security framework that I discussed.
- One very strong take away from the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia is that familiarity breeds comfort and encourages collaboration between ministries. We continue to build bonds between various departments and offices and agencies within the United States government with those in other governments and international organizations as a result of our routine collaboration at and between meetings of the Contact Group and its working groups.
- Given that the transatlantic relationship is of paramount importance to U.S. national security, I hope that we will build upon what we have developed as a result of our close cooperation in the fight against piracy.