

Tuesday, September 30, 2008

U.S. warships surround hijacked vessel

[Kelly Hearn](#) ([Contact](#))

U.S. warships off the coast of Somalia have surrounded a Ukrainian cargo ship hijacked last week by Somali pirates and carrying massive quantities of Russian weapons to Sudan.

Navy Fifth Fleet spokeswoman Cmdr. Jane Campbell told The Washington Times by telephone from Bahrain Monday that ships from the U.S. Fifth Fleet had moved into the vicinity of the hijacked vessel, Faina, anchored near the Somali port city of Hobyo.

"Our effort and mission is based out of concern for the safety of the crew and ensuring that the cargo is not off-loaded, where it could end up in the wrong hands," she said.

A Russian naval vessel is en route to the area, according to Russian news services.

The vessel, carrying arms and 33 tanks, was initially said to be bound for Kenya.

The incident highlights a growing problem of piracy off the East Horn of Africa, a trend that affects both merchant ships and humanitarian aid to the unstable region.

Josette Sheeran, executive director of the U.N. World Food Program, said Monday that the Canadian navy was protecting ships delivering U.N. food to Somalia.

"We need naval escort," she told the [Women's Foreign Policy Group](#) in Washington. "Canada came to the rescue for the next three weeks. [After that], I have no idea how we'll get food into Somalia."

Somali pirates have attacked more than 60 vessels this year off the Somali coast and adjoining Gulf of Aden, according to the International Maritime Bureau, which called the onslaught the biggest spike in piracy in modern times.

Earlier this month, a German shipowner paid ransom to Somali pirates to release one of his ships. The pirates aboard the Ukrainian-operated freighter told reporters by telephone that they want \$20 million to release the ship and its cargo of T-72 tanks, rifles and ammunition.

"Piracy has boomed off the coast of the Horn of Africa in recent years in part due to continued anarchy in Somalia," said Jim Phillips, a senior Africa analyst at the Heritage Foundation. Mr. Phillips said the pirates appear to be affiliated with clan-based groups, some of which may be aligned with al Qaeda. But he said he was not aware of any cases in which al Qaeda operatives have resorted to piracy themselves.

Fred Burton, a former U.S. counterintelligence operative, said that links with jihadists aren't clear.

"For some time now, there've been concerns that this region has been a safe haven for al Qaeda," said Mr. Burton, now vice president for counterterrorism at the risk-management company Stratfor. "From a command-and-control perspective, that scares the U.S. intelligence community."

The possibility that ransom payments are going to al Qaeda is worrisome, he said.

"When a ransom gets paid, you have to ask where that money goes," he said. He said he thinks the money is going "to re-fund their tactical capacity, to buy better boats and guns."

Navy officials on Monday reported that an unspecified number of U.S. destroyers and cruisers have joined the San Diego-based destroyer USS Howard within a 10-mile radius of the captive Ukrainian ship, which is carrying 20 crew members of Russian, Ukrainian and Latvian nationality. One crew member reportedly died from a heart attack. The Faina, while operated by a Ukrainian company, is flying a Belize flag.

With a Russian ship reportedly on its way to the area, Mr. Burton said the U.S. Navy will stay in the area to make sure the cargo doesn't fall into the hands of insurgents.

"I would imagine that there is a lot of cable traffic between the State Department and Defense Department and Moscow, with Washington saying 'We'll hold the perimeter until you get here,'" he said.

Mr. Burton and others also mentioned an unconfirmed news report in the South African newspaper, the Sunday Times. On Sunday, the newspaper reported that Somali pirates who hijacked an Iranian ship suffered skin burns, hair loss and other ills within days of boarding the ship MV Iran Deyanat.

The paper said that some Somalis died, and that the ship's declared cargo included "minerals" and "industrial products." It said that officials involved in negotiations "are convinced that it was sailing for Eritrea to deliver small arms and chemical weapons to Somalia's Islamist rebels."

cThis article is based in part on wire service reports.



Widespread Hunger Poses National Security Threat

America.gov (Washington, DC)

NEWS

30 September 2008

Posted to the web 1 October 2008

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
Washington, DC

The director of the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) warns that the burgeoning global food crisis is "a silent tsunami striking the most vulnerable" wherever they are located.

Josette Sheeran, the 11th director of WFP, told the **Women's Foreign Policy Group** in Washington on September 29 that hunger "can have a profound impact on national security."

The problem of staving off hunger is a critical one for fragile and economically unstable nations, she said. In the past year and a half, 34 nations have experienced food riots and protests. Political strife tied to climbing food prices has occurred in Liberia, Cameroon, Haiti, Afghanistan, Mexico, Pakistan, Indonesia and elsewhere.

"So often these nations are neighbors, friends and allies of the United States whose prosperity, stability and success are so critical to America's own national security," Sheeran said.

"Without food, societies become breeding grounds for instability, civil unrest, terrorism and demagogues," the WFP director said. Her organization is striving to help as many hungry individuals as possible. It expects to aid 90 million people this year, including an estimated 20 million schoolchildren, many of whose daily diets will be supplemented with a hearty cup of enriched porridge, she said.

However, that cup is at risk of being reduced by as much as 40 percent in places such as Rwanda as the result of soaring commodity prices. Sometimes, Sheeran said, the WFP faces the grim choice of cutting the number of calories packed into the offering or reducing the number of people who are on the distribution list.

The price of rice has soared recently, she said, rising from \$780 a metric ton in March to more than \$1,000 a metric ton in Haiti at the end of September. This statistic is especially devastating for Haiti, which lost 50 percent of its planned harvest in the wake of a pounding succession of four hurricanes.

Haiti is suffering from what Sheeran described as "a perfect storm within a perfect storm -- in fact, four storms." Sheeran just returned from Gonaïves, the area hardest hit by Hurricane Ike. It is entombed in a landslide of mud, she reported, with many Haitians still hungry, thirsty and trapped on their roofs or marooned in makeshift shelters.

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Aid from the United States, Canada and the United Nations has begun to flow into the flood zone, but Sheeran said the situation in Gonaïves is still "desperate." She thanked the United States for its \$7 million donation in September and acknowledged Yum Brands Chief Executive Officer David Novak's pledge of 4 million school meals for Haitians. Canada and Switzerland have pitched in several million dollars in food aid and logistical support, Sheeran added.

But hunger should not be viewed simply as a humanitarian challenge, Sheeran said, because it is also "a vital national security issue for the United States and, indeed, for the world." Combatants, she said, frequently use hunger as a weapon and hijack food aid.

Sheeran appealed to the world's navies to provide consistent escort for ships stocked with WFP food aid so the cargo and crew will not fall prey to pirate attacks. "There are pirates off the coast of Somalia threatening our supply line," she said.

It is far too dangerous to send in ships without escort now, Sheeran said. Sporadic escorts have been provided, she said, and Canada, most recently, is escorting ships. But the WFP director said it is unclear who will provide escort service when Canada's turn is over in three weeks.

Sheeran reminded her audience that the pursuit of food security "has been at the core of the rise and fall of civilizations." It has toppled governments, allowed dictators to prevail, and spawned mass migration. "When food security is in question, we must pull together and act," she said, because "there is no other option." Hunger is not only about providing compassion, she added, but it also "is about global stability and security."

Sheeran said food aid is now at its lowest level in three decades, even as "the national security threat of widespread hunger is far greater and more immediate" than it has been in the past.

MONEY, LOGISTICS, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDED

Even though the United States has pledged \$5 billion in aid in 2008-2009 and Saudi Arabia is donating \$500 million to the WFP, the director said more money is needed.

And more food. Sheeran quoted the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization as saying the world will need to produce twice as much food by 2050, given growing demands and rising populations.

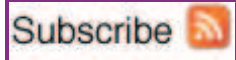
She identified any number of actions that could be taken to help alleviate the shortfall, including greater agricultural research and more partnering between governments and the private sector.

More nutrition-packed food also must be designed, Sheeran said. India developed a sweet paste made from chickpeas that requires neither water nor refrigeration. Egypt created a successful power bar made from dates. "This is the wave of the future," the director said.

The world financial crisis cannot be used as an excuse "not to come to the assistance of fragile democracies facing hunger and even starvation," Sheeran said.

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[UN World Food Programme tries to stop "silent tsunami"](#)

Monday, September 29th, 2008

According to the Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme (WFP), Josette Sheeran, the food hunger crisis has become a "silent tsunami" causing violence, corruption, and starvation in more than 40 countries worldwide.

In her address to the [Women's Foreign Policy Group](#), Sheeran attributed this crisis to the increase in natural disasters as well as soaring food prices. "Hunger is not a solely humanitarian challenge," said Sheeran, who explained the effect that unstable foreign governments have on the United States such as the export bans and trade restrictions passed in recent years.

Sheeran spoke of the World Food Programme's efforts to establish school feeding programs to enable girls to attend schools their families would usually not let them attend. Also, the WFP has created similar programs for AIDS orphans that also gives them extra rations at the end of the week so families are more likely to take them home.

Specialists have helped WFP health workers develop "power packed food" for infants and toddlers to prevent undernutrition using locally grown crops, Sheeran said. In countries like Egypt, India, and Haiti, this has provided "the greatest impact for the least investment."

Sheeran hopes that the World Food Programme will help supply the world with twice the amount of food currently produced by 2050 and will provide opportunities, specifically for African farmers, to make their move onto the world stage as major food producers.

Tags: [Josette Sheeran](#), [UN World Food Programme](#), [Women's Foreign Policy Group](#), [World Hunger](#)

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9/30/2008

30 September 2008

Widespread Hunger Poses National Security Threat

U.N. director appeals for ship escorts to protect food aid from pirates



U.N. World Food Programme director Josette Sheeran visits a makeshift shelter for flood victims in Gonaives, Haiti, September 26.

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
Staff Writer

Washington — The director of the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) warns that the burgeoning global food crisis is “a silent tsunami striking the most vulnerable” wherever they are located.

Josette Sheeran, the 11th director of WFP, told the **Women's Foreign Policy Group** in Washington on September 29 that hunger “can have a profound impact on national security.”

The problem of staving off hunger is a critical one for fragile and economically unstable nations, she said. In the past year and a half, 34 nations have experienced food riots and protests. Political strife tied to climbing food prices has occurred in Liberia, Cameroon, Haiti, Afghanistan, Mexico, Pakistan, Indonesia and elsewhere.

“So often these nations are neighbors, friends and allies of the United States whose prosperity, stability and success are so critical to America’s own national security,” Sheeran said.

“Without food, societies become breeding grounds for instability, civil unrest, terrorism and demagogues,” the WFP director said. Her organization is striving to help as many hungry individuals as possible. It expects to aid 90 million people this year, including an estimated 20 million schoolchildren, many of whose daily diets will be supplemented with a hearty cup of enriched porridge, she said.

However, that cup is at risk of being reduced by as much as 40 percent in places such as Rwanda as the result of soaring commodity prices. Sometimes, Sheeran said, the WFP faces the grim choice of cutting the number of calories packed into the offering or reducing the number of people who are on the distribution list.

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Haiti is suffering from what Sheeran described as “a perfect storm within a perfect storm — in fact, four storms.” Sheeran just returned from Gonaives, the area hardest hit by Hurricane Ike. It is entombed in a landslide of mud, she reported, with many Haitians still hungry, thirsty and trapped on their roofs or marooned in makeshift shelters.

Aid from the United States, Canada and the United Nations has begun to flow into the flood zone, but Sheeran said the situation in Gonaives is still “desperate.” She thanked the United States for its \$7 million donation in September and acknowledged Yum Brands Chief Executive Officer David Novak’s pledge of 4 million school meals for Haitians. Canada and Switzerland have pitched in several million dollars in food aid and logistical support, Sheeran added.

But hunger should not be viewed simply as a humanitarian challenge, Sheeran said, because it is also “a vital national security issue for the United States and, indeed, for the world.” Combatants, she said, frequently use hunger as a weapon and hijack food aid.

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For more information about Haiti, see ["United States Boosts Aid for Haitian Storm Relief to \\$29 Million."](#)

For more on the WFP, see ["U.N. Food Agency Urges Countries to Lift Food Export Bans."](#)

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Josette Sheeran attends a June 2008 press conference in Rome at the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization.



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Sheeran: Widespread hunger poses national security threat

02 October 2008
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Keywords: Africa, food aid, hunger, conflict

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