



April 24, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

We represent the American Maritime Officers (AMO), the International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots (IOMM&P), the Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (MEBA) and the Seafarers International Union (SIU). On behalf of the officers and members of our unions we wish to express our deepest appreciation to you and to all those in your Administration who were involved in bringing the recent acts of piracy against U.S.-flag vessels and their United States citizen crews to an end. We are especially grateful to the Department of the Navy and the naval personnel who, despite the unique and difficult circumstances, responded with great skill.

Nevertheless, American mariners working aboard U.S.-flag vessels operating in that region continue to face an immediate and ongoing threat from international pirates. As our American mariners simply attempt to do their jobs their lives are in constant peril as these pirates decide when to take further aggressive action against U.S.-flag ships.

We believe that the most effective step that must be taken to prevent further aggressive action against U.S.-flag commercial vessels and their crews is for our government to immediately provide U.S.-flag vessels with the force protection necessary to prevent any further acts of piracy against them. There should be no question but that it is the responsibility of the United States government to provide the protection necessary to ensure the safety of life and property aboard United States-flag vessels. When a vessel flies the United States flag it becomes an extension of the United States itself, regardless of where in the world the vessel is operating.

We stand ready to continue to meet with the appropriate persons in your Administration to discuss a realistic, long-term solution to this problem. We further believe a collaborative effort among all parties – domestic and international - is necessary to develop and implement solutions that have the potential to reduce if not end piracy on the high seas, and we stand ready to participate in this process.

Sincerely,

Thomas Bethel
President
AMO

Timothy Brown
President
IOMM&P

Don Keefe
President
MEBA

Mike Sacco
President
SIU