

The recent episode with the Somali pirates has brought to the forefront many questions about maritime security. What is the best way to deal with a gang of criminals, not acting on behalf of any country, when they attack private vessels? Under whose jurisdiction are these types of criminals to be prosecuted?

Most importantly, how do we deter such attacks in the future?

Already the administration is saber-rattling with typical big government so-called solutions, like “diplomatically” threatening the weak Somalian government, or any government of any country where pirates are thought to live, with military action if they fail to control the situation. There are calls to increase the size of the navy until it is nearly omnipresent on the seas.

I was pleased to see they got one thing partially right in stating that the government should work with shippers and the insurance industry to address gaps in their self-defense, if by “work with” they mean “get out of the way”.

But I fear this will soon be brushed aside in favor of the more elaborate, interventionist and expensive measures.

Self-defense is the most obvious, most effective and least expensive solution, but that has never stopped the government from spending money they don't have to make problems worse.

The situation is not unlike the situation with the non-state thugs that perpetrated the attacks on 9/11. We were not attacked by any country, and yet our response was to start wars with countries out of a need for misguided retaliation. This destroyed most

of the goodwill our nation had in the world, and helped terrorists recruit and grow even more powerful.

The worst thing we could possibly do is react to this incident with the same misguided fervor, producing equally damaging results.

First and foremost, the people and entities closest to the situation need to be empowered to defend themselves. In the case of private shipping companies, the owners and operators need to be allowed to carry weapons to deter and defend from attacks. But because many governments, including ours, have anti-gun laws in place in ports and territorial waters, ironically to discourage piracy, it is nearly impossible to legally carry weapons at sea for peaceful and defensive purposes.

This sets up the predictable situation that only criminals and military vessels remain armed, making legitimate shipping operations ridiculously easy prey.

I strongly believe that standing behind the basic human right to self-defense is the best deterrent to both terrorism and piracy, which is why I also argued for allowing pilots to be armed after 9/11.

What governments call a gun-free zone is in reality a target rich environment to a criminal.

The second line of defense would be for Congress to act within the Constitution and issue letters of marque and reprisal, deputizing private organizations to act within the law to disable and capture those engaged in piracy. This approach to keeping ships safe at sea would minimize the effect on international relations by keeping our Navy out of it, as well as keeping costs to a minimum.

These criminal gangs should not have free reign to rob, terrorize and murder

as they please in the world. But we need to be thoughtful and strategic in our reaction to incidents like these, and not knee-jerk our way into bigger, more encroaching government and military solutions.