

AN EASTER PRESENT

Our nation had an additional reason to rejoice on Easter Sunday. U.S. Captain Richard Phillips, who was taken hostage by pirates after they boarded his



merchant ship, the *Maersk Alabama*, east of Somalia on Wednesday, was freed by the United States Navy in a bold initiative.

It was a dramatic rescue. Three gunshots, all fatal, were fired in the dark by three specially trained U.S. Navy SEALs as the pirates' boat rocked in the water. "Phenomenal shots – 75 feet

away," said Navy Vice Admiral Bill Gortney, who oversees the region. Four pirates had been holding Phillips in a small lifeboat, which had run out of fuel. "One of the pirates had left the lifeboat, needed medical attention, and jumped onto one of our inflatable boats," Gortney said.

The three remaining pirates had repeatedly threatened to kill Phillips, Gortney said, and one of them held his AK-47 in the back of the captain. A Navy SEAL team had parachuted in and taken up positions on the deck of the USS Bainbridge. The on-scene commander, concerned for the captain's life, ordered the shots to be taken and they hit their marks. Three pirates were killed and the fourth taken captive.



Two days after that rescue, which occurred at 12:19 p.m. EDT on Sunday, what are we to make of this successful operation? Cal Thomas, a nationally syndicated columnist who was a keynote speaker at Life Care's annual management meeting in Chantilly, Va., in 1994, observed:

1. Captain Richard Phillips was ready to lay down his life for his crew. "The analogy to Easter Sunday was hard to miss."
2. "Those Navy SEALs and other military personnel remain the best in the world."
3. "Decisive action sometimes produces far better results than U.N. resolutions and statements by world leaders."
4. "These were not pirates as much as they are part of the same terrorist operation that seeks to bend world opinion to their will."

The Rev. Charles Danielson, pastor of St. Thomas Church, where the Phillips family attends, summed it up best: "It's almighty God, and the U.S. Navy."

To that, we add "Amen!"

– Beecher Hunter