

## U.S. Statutes Relating to Piracy

### 18 U.S.C. § 2280. Violence against maritime navigation

#### (a) Offenses.--

##### (1) In general.--A person who unlawfully and intentionally--

(A) seizes or exercises control over a ship by force or threat thereof or any other form of intimidation;

(B) performs an act of violence against a person on board a ship if that act is likely to endanger the safe navigation of that ship;

(C) destroys a ship or causes damage to a ship or to its cargo which is likely to endanger the safe navigation of that ship;

(D) places or causes to be placed on a ship, by any means whatsoever, a device or substance which is likely to destroy that ship, or cause damage to that ship or its cargo which endangers or is likely to endanger the safe navigation of that ship;

(E) destroys or seriously damages maritime navigational facilities or seriously interferes with their operation, if such act is likely to endanger the safe navigation of a ship;

(F) communicates information, knowing the information to be false and under circumstances in which such information may reasonably be believed, thereby endangering the safe navigation of a ship;

(G) injures or kills any person in connection with the commission or the attempted commission of any of the offenses set forth in subparagraphs (A) through (F); or

(H) attempts or conspires to do any act prohibited under subparagraphs (A) through (G),

shall be fined under this title, imprisoned not more than 20 years, or both; and if the death of any person results from conduct prohibited by this paragraph, shall be punished by death or imprisoned for any term of years or for life.

(2) Threat to navigation.--A person who threatens to do any act prohibited under paragraph (1) (B), (C) or (E), with apparent determination and will to carry the

threat into execution, if the threatened act is likely to endanger the safe navigation of the ship in question, shall be fined under this title, imprisoned not more than 5 years, or both.

(b) Jurisdiction.--There is jurisdiction over the activity prohibited in subsection (a)--

(1) in the case of a covered ship, if--

(A) such activity is committed--

(i) against or on board a ship flying the flag of the United States at the time the prohibited activity is committed;

(ii) in the United States; or

(iii) by a national of the United States or by a stateless person whose habitual residence is in the United States;

(B) during the commission of such activity, a national of the United States is seized, threatened, injured or killed; or

(C) the offender is later found in the United States after such activity is committed;

(2) in the case of a ship navigating or scheduled to navigate solely within the territorial sea or internal waters of a country other than the United States, if the offender is later found in the United States after such activity is committed; and

(3) in the case of any vessel, if such activity is committed in an attempt to compel the United States to do or abstain from doing any act.

(c) Bar to prosecution.--It is a bar to Federal prosecution under subsection (a) for conduct that occurred within the United States that the conduct involved was during or in relation to a labor dispute, and such conduct is prohibited as a felony under the law of the State in which it was committed. For purposes of this section, the term "labor dispute" has the meaning set forth in section 2(c) [FN1] of the Norris-LaGuardia Act, as amended (29 U.S.C. 113(c)).

(d) Delivery of suspected offender.--The master of a covered ship flying the flag of the United States who has reasonable grounds to believe that there is on board that ship any person who has committed an offense under Article 3 of the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation may deliver such person to the authorities of a State Party to that Convention. Before delivering such person to the authorities of another country, the

master shall notify in an appropriate manner the Attorney General of the United States of the alleged offense and await instructions from the Attorney General as to what action to take. When delivering the person to a country which is a State Party to the Convention, the master shall, whenever practicable, and if possible before entering the territorial sea of such country, notify the authorities of such country of the master's intention to deliver such person and the reasons therefor. If the master delivers such person, the master shall furnish to the authorities of such country the evidence in the master's possession that pertains to the alleged offense.

(e) Definitions.--In this section--

“covered ship” means a ship that is navigating or is scheduled to navigate into, through or from waters beyond the outer limit of the territorial sea of a single country or a lateral limit of that country's territorial sea with an adjacent country.

“national of the United States” has the meaning stated in section 101(a)(22) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(22)).

“territorial sea of the United States” means all waters extending seaward to 12 nautical miles from the baselines of the United States determined in accordance with international law.

“ship” means a vessel of any type whatsoever not permanently attached to the sea-bed, including dynamically supported craft, submersibles or any other floating craft, but does not include a warship, a ship owned or operated by a government when being used as a naval auxiliary or for customs or police purposes, or a ship which has been withdrawn from navigation or laid up.

“United States”, when used in a geographical sense, includes the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and all territories and possessions of the United States.

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### **18 U.S.C. § 1651. Piracy under law of nations**

Whoever, on the high seas, commits the crime of piracy as defined by the law of nations, and is afterwards brought into or found in the United States, shall be imprisoned for life.

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### **18 U.S.C. § 1652. Citizens as pirates**

Whoever, being a citizen of the United States, commits any murder or robbery, or any act of hostility against the United States, or against any citizen thereof, on the high seas, under color of any commission from any foreign prince, or state, or on pretense of authority from any person, is a pirate, and shall be imprisoned for life.

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**18 U.S.C. § 1653 Aliens as pirates**

Whoever, being a citizen or subject of any foreign state, is found and taken on the sea making war upon the United States, or cruising against the vessels and property thereof, or of the citizens of the same, contrary to the provisions of any treaty existing between the United States and the state of which the offender is a citizen or subject, when by such treaty such acts are declared to be piracy, is a pirate, and shall be imprisoned for life.

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**18 U.S.C. § 1654 Arming or serving on privateers**

Whoever, being a citizen of the United States, without the limits thereof, fits out and arms, or attempts to fit out and arm or is concerned in furnishing, fitting out, or arming any private vessel of war or privateer, with intent that such vessel shall be employed to cruise or commit hostilities upon the citizens of the United States or their property; or

Whoever takes the command of or enters on board of any such vessel with such intent; or

Whoever purchases any interest in any such vessel with a view to share in the profits thereof--

Shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both.

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**18 U.S.C. § 1655. Assault on commander as piracy**

Whoever, being a seaman, lays violent hands upon his commander, to hinder and prevent his fighting in defense of his vessel or the goods intrusted to him, is a pirate, and shall be imprisoned for life.

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**18 U.S.C. § 1656. Conversion or surrender of vessel**

Whoever, being a captain or other officer or mariner of a vessel upon the high seas or on any other waters within the admiralty and maritime jurisdiction of the United States, piratically or feloniously runs away with such vessel, or with any goods or merchandise thereof, to the value of \$50 or over; or

Whoever yields up such vessel voluntarily to any pirate--

Shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both.

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**18 U.S.C. § 1657. Corruption of seamen and confederating with pirates**

Whoever attempts to corrupt any commander, master, officer, or mariner to yield up or to run away with any vessel, or any goods, wares, or merchandise, or to turn pirate or to go over to or confederate with pirates, or in any wise to trade with any pirate, knowing him to be such; or

Whoever furnishes such pirate with any ammunition, stores, or provisions of any kind; or

Whoever fits out any vessel knowingly and, with a design to trade with, supply, or correspond with any pirate or robber upon the seas; or

Whoever consults, combines, confederates, or corresponds with any pirate or robber upon the seas, knowing him to be guilty of any piracy or robbery; or

Whoever, being a seaman, confines the master of any vessel--

Shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than three years, or both.

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**18 U.S.C. § 1658. Plunder of distressed vessel**

(a) Whoever plunders, steals, or destroys any money, goods, merchandise, or other effects from or belonging to any vessel in distress, or wrecked, lost, stranded, or cast away, upon the sea, or upon any reef, shoal, bank, or rocks of the sea, or in any other place within the admiralty and maritime jurisdiction of the United States, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both.

(b) Whoever willfully obstructs the escape of any person endeavoring to save his life from such vessel, or the wreck thereof; or

Whoever holds out or shows any false light, or extinguishes any true light, with intent to bring any vessel sailing upon the sea into danger or distress or shipwreck--

Shall be imprisoned not less than ten years and may be imprisoned for life.

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**18 U.S.C. § 1659. Attack to plunder vessel**

Whoever, upon the high seas or other waters within the admiralty and maritime jurisdiction of the United States, by surprise or open force, maliciously attacks or sets upon any vessel

belonging to another, with an intent unlawfully to plunder the same, or to despoil any owner thereof of any moneys, goods, or merchandise laden on board thereof, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both.

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**18 U.S.C. § 1660. Receipt of pirate property**

Whoever, without lawful authority, receives or takes into custody any vessel, goods, or other property, feloniously taken by any robber or pirate against the laws of the United States, knowing the same to have been feloniously taken, shall be imprisoned not more than ten years.

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**18 U.S.C. § 1661. Robbery ashore**

Whoever, being engaged in any piratical cruise or enterprise, or being of the crew of any piratical vessel, lands from such vessel and commits robbery on shore, is a pirate, and shall be imprisoned for life.

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