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***Bahamas and US seek to expand
cooperation on counter-piracy efforts***

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NASSAU, The Bahamas – The Bahamas is continuing to throw its support behind counter-piracy efforts and have implemented several measures to prevent such acts on the high seas.

The pledge was made during a meeting between The Bahamas and the United States State Department on the discussion of Somali Piracy and Flag State Prosecutions of Suspected Pirates, held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday, September 6, 2012.

Statements of purpose were read by the Hon. Hope Strachan, Minister of State in the Ministry of Transport & Aviation and United States Charge' 'd Affaires John Dinkleman. Also present were Commodore Davy Rolle, Director & CEO of The Bahamas Maritime Authority, London, Donna Hopkins, Coordinator for Counter-Piracy & Maritime Security, US State Department and other representatives from both governments.

The purpose of the meeting was to explore how both nations can expand its cooperation on counter-piracy and identify areas in which the US might assist building Bahamian counter-piracy capacity through information sharing, training and or other resources.

Mrs. Strachan underscored the importance of such a meeting, and the role The Bahamas plays in solving the problem of piracy, which has existed for over 400 years on the high seas.

She said while such activities are not commonplace in Bahamian waters, modern-day pirates present a real threat to the world-wide shipping lanes having amassed an estimated loss of \$13-\$16 billion per year.

Such acts are occurring in waters between the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, off the Somali coast and the Strait of Malacca and Singapore.

“The Bahamas is ever so proud of our strides in the maritime industry, and especially our Bahama Maritime Authority, as we continue to attract ships to our register,” she said.

The Bahamas is ranked the fifth largest ship registry in the world. It also maintains the largest cruise ships registry.

“The Government of The Bahamas through the Bahamas Maritime Authority has pledged its absolute support to counter-piracy efforts and has implemented several security and prevention measures,” she said.

Such measures are the vessel protection and assistance schemes, registration and position reporting procedures, implementation of anti-piracy measures, Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) Policy, the Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) Policy, procedures for alerting/reporting pirate attacks or suspicious activities, and pre and post piracy planning. She also noted an international joint naval presence, which provides protection and support to ships of all nationalities in waters around the Horn of Africa.

“However, protection and assistance is only practicable if the coordinators of these forces are fully aware of the identity, location and intended course of ships,” Mrs. Strachan said.

In this vein, the Bahamas Maritime Authority requires that all Bahamian vessels register with the natal coordinators at the Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa (MSCHOA) at least four days prior to entry into the risk area as it is defined by them,” she said.

Caption:

The Bahamas and the United States State Department held discussions on anti-piracy measures, during a meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday, September 6, 2012. Pictured from left Donna Hopkins, Coordinator for Counter-Piracy & Maritime Security, U.S. State Department; the Hon. Hope Strachan, Minister of State, Ministry of Transport & Aviation; and John Dinkleman, Charge’ d Affairs, United States Embassy, Nassau. (BIS Photo/Kris Ingraham)