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Gulf of Aden-Somali basin news update, April 20, 2009

Philippines seamen banned from Somalia

Manila - Philippine President Gloria Arroyo has moved to ban Filipino seamen from serving on ships that enter pirate-infested sea lanes near Somalia, the presidential palace said on Sunday.

"President Arroyo issued a series of directives banning the deployment of our seafarers on the pirate-threatened sea lanes," Press Secretary Cerge Remonde said. He did not say how such a ban could be enforced. Last week, Arroyo's chief aide, Eduardo Ermita, conceded that a ban may not work because Filipino seamen are not obliged to tell the government about their ships' routes.

Arroyo also ordered renewed efforts to recover more than 100 Filipinos being held by Somali pirates, Remonde added. The government announced last week that 17 Filipino seamen held hostage since mid-March had been freed, leaving 105 Philippine nationals still in the hands of pirates. - Sapa-AFP

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