

Sarkozy, Abdullah call to step up shipping security

30 November 2008



French president Nicolas Sarkozy and Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah on Saturday called for international efforts to protect shipping in the Gulf of Aden amid a spate of attacks by Somali pirates.

The two leaders also discussed the global financial crisis and Middle East peace, during a brief visit by Sarkozy to Saudi Arabia, the official SPA news agency reported.

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS: Sarkozy (L) is welcomed by King Abdullah as he arrives in Jeddah. (AFP)

Sarkozy and the Saudi king underscored "the need to reinforce international efforts to preserve shipping security in the Gulf of Aden," the agency said.

Their call comes a day before the expiry of a \$25 million ransom which Somali pirates are demanding for a Saudi super-tanker seized two weeks ago.

The 330-metre-long oil carrier Sirius Star is the biggest vessel ever seized by pirates. Its capture sent shockwaves through the shipping world and prompted some companies to re-route via the Cape of Good Hope.

Sarkozy paid a brief visit to the oil-rich Saudi kingdom after addressing a UN aid conference in Qatar, where he said EU assistance to poorer countries - pledged at \$61 billion this year - would not be sacrificed.

"While we are all facing these growing deficits and rising unemployment, we have decided not to sacrifice the Millennium objectives but to fulfil the promises made to you regarding public aid for development," he said.

{ Arabian Business }