

***An Act to protect the commerce of the United States, and punish  
the crime of piracy.***

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That the President of the United States be, and hereby is authorized and requested to employ so many of the public armed vessels, as, in his judgment, the service may require, with suitable instructions to the commanders thereof, in protecting the merchant vessels of the United States and their crews from piratical aggressions and depredations.*

*SEC. 2. And be it further enacted, That the President of the United States be, and hereby is, authorized to instruct the commanders of the public armed vessels of the United States to subdue, seize, take, and send into any port of the United States, any armed vessel or boat, or any vessel or boat, the crew whereof shall be armed, and which shall have attempted or committed any piratical aggression, search, restraint, depredation or seizure, upon any vessel of the United States, or of the citizens thereof, or upon any other vessel; and also to retake any vessel of the United States, or its citizens, which may have been unlawfully captured upon the high seas.*

*SEC. 3. And be it further enacted, That the commander and crew of any merchant vessel of the United States, owned wholly, or in part, by a citizen thereof, may oppose and defend against*

any aggression, search, restraint, depredation, or seizure, which shall be attempted upon such vessel, or upon any other vessel owned as aforesaid by the commander or crew of any armed vessel whatsoever, not being a public armed vessel of some nation in amity with the United States; and may subdue and capture the same; and may also retake any vessel, owned as aforesaid, which may have been captured by the commander or crew of any such armed vessel, and send the same into any port of the United States.

SEC. 4. *And be it further enacted,* That whenever any vessel or boat, from which any piratical aggression, search, restraint, depredation or seizure shall have been first attempted or made, shall be captured and brought into any port of the United States, the same shall and may be adjudged and condemned to their use, and that of the captors, after due process and trial, or in any court having admiralty jurisdiction, and which shall be holden for the district into which such captured vessel shall be brought; and the same court shall thereupon order a sale and distribution thereof accordingly, and that their discretion.

SEC. 5. *And be it further enacted,* That if any person or persons whatsoever, shall, on the high seas, commit the crime of piracy, as defined by the law of nations, and such offender or offenders, shall afterwards be brought into or found in the United States, every such offender or offenders shall, upon

conviction thereof, before the circuit court of the United States for the district into which he or they may be brought, or in which he or they shall be found, be punished with death.

SEC. 6. *And be it further enacted*, That this act shall be in force until the end of the next session of Congress.

APPROVED, March 3, 1819.

*Statutes at large of the United States of America, 1789-1845*, 8 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1846-67), 3:510-14. This act was Chapter LXXVII of the statutes passed during the fifteenth Congress.