

**CHAPTER 81—PIRACY AND PRIVATEERING**

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**HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES**

In the light of far-reaching developments in the field of international law and foreign relations, the law of piracy is deemed to require a fundamental reconsideration and complete restatement, perhaps resulting in drastic changes by way of modification and expansion. Such a task may be regarded as beyond the scope of this project. The present revision is, therefore, confined to the making of some obvious and patent corrections. It is recommended, however, that at some opportune time in the near future, the subject of piracy be entirely reconsidered and the law bearing on it modified and restated in accordance with the needs of the times.

**§ 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.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 645, 62 Stat. 774.)

**HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES**

Based on title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed., § 481 (Mar. 4, 1909, ch. 321, § 290, 35 Stat. 1145).

**§ 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.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 645, 62 Stat. 774.)

**HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES**

Based on title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed., § 495 (Mar. 4, 1909, ch. 321, § 304, 35 Stat. 1147).

Words "Notwithstanding the pretense of such authority," were omitted as surplusage.

**§ 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.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 645, 62 Stat. 774.)

**HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES**

Based on title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed., § 496 (Mar. 4, 1909, ch. 321, § 305, 35 Stat. 1147).

Minor change was made in phraseology.

**§ 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.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 645, 62 Stat. 774; Pub. L. 103-322, title XXXIII, § 330016(1)(L), Sept. 13, 1994, 108 Stat. 2147.)

**HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES**

Based on title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed., § 494 (Mar. 4, 1909, ch. 321, § 303, 35 Stat. 1147).

Reference to persons procuring or aiding was omitted as unnecessary in view of definition of "principal" in section 2 of this title.

Mandatory punishment provisions were rephrased in the alternative.

The last sentence relating to venue was omitted as unnecessary in view of the general provision to the same effect in section 3238 of this title.

Minor changes were made in phraseology and arrangement.

**AMENDMENTS**

1994—Pub. L. 103-322 substituted "fined under this title" for "fined not more than \$10,000" in last par.

**§ 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.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 645, 62 Stat. 774.)

**HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES**

Based on title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed., § 485 (Mar. 4, 1909, ch. 321, § 294, 35 Stat. 1146).

A minor verbal change was made.

**§ 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.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 645, 62 Stat. 774; Pub. L. 103-322, title XXXIII, § 330016(1)(L), Sept. 13, 1994, 108 Stat. 2147.)

**HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES**

Based on title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed., § 497 (Mar. 4, 1909, ch. 321, § 306, 35 Stat. 1148).