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CANADA CONTRIBUTES \$150,000 TO PROGRAMME TO COMBAT PIRACY AGAINST VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, today announced Canada will contribute \$150,000 to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for a programme to combat the serious incidence of piracy against Vietnamese refugees in the Gulf of Thailand. The programme's objective is to support and strengthen the anti-piracy efforts of the Government of Thailand. It would provide for a regular patrol presence in the Gulf of Thailand and ensure more effective enforcement and prosecution of those caught engaging in piracy.

The piracy problem is of serious concern to the international community. Vietnamese refugees continue to escape by boat from Vietnam in significant numbers, seeking asylum in nearby countries. They are subject to frequent brutal attacks by pirates when crossing the international waters of the Gulf of Thailand.

The Canadian contribution is being made by the Department of External Affairs in response to a humanitarian appeal recently made by the UNHCR. The appeal, in the amount of \$3.6 million (US), is to fund this programme. It was addressed to a number of countries, some of which have already responded. The programme has been developed jointly by the UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Government of Thailand has provided important assistance and will be responsible for the operational aspects.