



Città di Mazara del Vallo

Articolo diramato dall'AFP (Agence France-Press), sulla vicenda motopesca Luna Rossa,

ITALIAN FISHERMEN ATTACKED BY LIBYAN VESSEL: OFFICIAL

ROME, Feb 28, 2010 (AFP) - The Libyan coast guard attacked an Italian fishing boat 36 miles (58 kilometers) off Libya's coast, Sicilian authorities told AFP on Sunday.

The attack late Saturday was carried out "with the use of arms whose bullets hit the bridge of the ship," said Nicola Cristaldi, mayor of Mazzara del Vallo, the town from which the fishing boat departed.

"No circumstances justify the use of force and even more that of arms," added Cristaldi, who is also a member of parliament.

The attack took place around 2100 GMT on Saturday, when a Libyan vessel opened machine gun fire and then chased the fishing boat until 2300 GMT before giving up on capturing it, the mayor's spokesman told AFP.

No one was hurt among the eight-man crew which is currently heading back to Sicily.

"As a member of parliament and mayor I will ask our government to immediately contact Libyan authorities to obtain an explanation of the episode and verifications so those responsible for this incident can be identified and punished," added Cristaldi.

Four boats have been seized since 2008 in a contested area which Libya says is part of its exclusive economic zone. In one case the fishermen and their boat were held for 40 days before being allowed to return to Italy.

The Libyan government, "in spite of the recent steps towards collaboration with our country, is going back towards inexcusable methods," Nicola Lisma, head of the fisheries department for the Sicilian town of Trapani, said in a statement.

The incident comes as Libya is involved in a diplomatic dispute with Switzerland which has prompted Tripoli to close its borders to all Schengen area citizens.

So far, 50 Italians have been refused entrance into Libya, adding tension to Italy's usually friendly relations with Libya, its former North African colony.