

Be Patient

Be aware that the ransom payment process is very stressful for the pirates and they may be more agitated than normal. Try to avoid contact with the pirates at this time. Confine yourself to established routines and behaviour patterns so as not to attract unnecessary attention on you. It may be some days after payment before you are released. Do not expect to be released immediately.



Take part in a Post Incident Debrief

Contribute to a post incident debrief as soon after your release as possible. The information you provided could assist you in dealing with what you have experienced, and will aid the authorities to gain as clear a picture as possible regarding the tactics and methods employed by the pirates. This information can assist in preventing or dealing with future attacks. Try to remember as much as possible about the pirates. Their actions, equipment, mannerisms, communications onboard and off-board, weapons carried, numbers onboard, routines, personnel changes etc. Relay this information during the post incident debrief to help the authorities.

Seek Advice

Seek advice and support on your release. Monitor your moods and behaviour after your release. Do not react negatively if others comment on changes to your personality, mannerisms etc. Remember you have been through a difficult and stressful experience. You need to ensure you deal with the emotional, physical and psychological effects of your experience. Be open about your experience, accept whatever assistance is available.

The European Union Naval Force - EU NAVFOR (Somalia) Operation ATALANTA has been tasked to conduct operations to help deter, prevent and repress acts of piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia. This mission is in support of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1814, 1816 and 1846 adopted in 2008.

Our mission is to protect vessels of the World Food Programme (WFP) delivering food aid to malnourished persons in Somalia, and to protect vulnerable vessels sailing through the Gulf of Aden and off the Somali coast including the Somali Basin.

The Maritime Security Centre – Horn of Africa (msc-hoa) is a 24hr watch centre set up as part of EU NAVFOR (Somalia). As part of its work, msc-hoa acts as a coordination centre between merchant and military forces operating in the region. The information contained in this section of our website is provided for the perusal and consideration by all companies and persons who transit the region and may be at risk from acts of piracy and armed robbery.

There is a large amount of advice available from reputable sources, on how to survive if you are attacked, or taken hostage. The advice contained herein, draws from these sources and has been reviewed by the maritime military staff of EU NAVFOR (Somalia) in order to tailor the suggestions specifically to the Somali context.

It is recommended that any persons or companies operating in the Gulf of Aden, Horn of Africa or Somali Basin be familiar with the content of IMO Maritime Safety Committee Circulars 1332, 1334, and the United Nations Guidance on Surviving as a Hostage. Please refer to the Maritime Intelligence section of our website for the latest information on acts of piracy and armed robbery in the region.

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SURVIVING PIRACY

Off the coast of Somalia



Information for those who are victims of piracy in the Gulf of Aden and Somali Basin.

Piracy is a Business

Be aware that piracy in the Somali region differs from other regions in two main areas.

- Pirates attack the ship, mainly to capture it and its crew for ransom, but also for looting, or robbery of belongings and equipment onboard. Thus any successful acts of piracy will inevitably result in a protracted period of captivity for the crew onboard.
- Somali pirates consider the act of piracy as a business, and recognise that unnecessary harm or injury to the crew is counter-productive and may harm their negotiations or the amount of ransom received. To date the level of violence against ships crews is relatively low when compared to other regions around Africa.



Remain Calm

Try to remain calm. Weapons may be brandished or used during an attack. To date, all indications have been that such actions are designed to intimidate ships Masters into submission, and not actual violence against the ship or crews. If your ship is pirated, a calm cooperative approach to the pirates will assist in reducing the level of violence, and potential for accidents. Remember, immediately after a successful attack, the pirates may be concerned that military forces may attempt to retake the vessel. They will be keen to establish their authority, and will reinforce their numbers as quickly as possible. It is important at this stage that you do not cause any increase in tension with the pirates, as this may result in injury or harm to yourself.



Acceptance

If your vessel has been pirated, accept that you may be held in captivity for an extended period of time. Typically periods of detention range from 6 to 12 weeks, but may last considerably longer depending on the success of the negotiations. You should:

- Reassure the pirates that you will not be a cause of concern against them.
- Seek to maintain the best possible living conditions onboard – negotiate this if necessary with the pirates. Remember as many as fifty or more pirates may live onboard during your period of captivity. They will take living spaces, however by being reasonable; you can maintain good conditions for yourself and your crewmates.
- Formulate a positive physical and mental exercise routine. This will help you cope with captivity; maintain your wellbeing and help pass the time productively. Try to maintain a regular sleep pattern.

Cooperate wherever possible

Cooperate with pirate demands. Remember, negotiations will be ongoing while you are in captivity. As part of these negotiations, the pirates may stage violence or acts of intimidation, to try and bolster their demands. They may also demand you pose for photographs, or muster on deck in clear view. This can often be to prove you are still alive and well. These actions are part of the negotiation process and you should not resist. Try to maintain a positive mental attitude, and be as good humoured as possible. You are less likely to be the subject of abuse or violence if you are 'liked' by your captors.

Be Prepared

Alert your family and relatives at home to the possible dangers that exist. This may cause some upset, but by discussing these matters openly before you transit the area, you will help them deal with your captivity if your ship is pirated. You may be forced (or asked) to make contact with your family while you are in captivity. You may be told to inform your family that things are worse onboard than they really are. By discussing such matters in advance, the impact on your loved ones at home will be less than if they are unprepared and do not understand what is happening.

Avoid drugs

Khat is a common drug used in the Somali region. If the pirates onboard your vessel use this or other drugs, you should be careful to avoid any confrontations whilst they are under the influence of such substances. You should not be tempted to take drugs, other than for legitimate medical conditions, whilst in captivity. The taking of drugs may offer temporary relief, however the negative effects of withdrawal symptoms and increased tension due to cravings could result in unnecessary violence from your captors.



Do not interfere

Do not get involved in disputes between your captors. Remember the pirates may have fears about other pirate groups in addition to normal tensions regularly experienced in the region. Such tensions or fears may result in squabbles or fights between the pirates. Try to remain removed during such arguments.