

# PIRATE HOLDING TEAM

## Holding team guards

Upon arrival at the anchorage, the original pirate attack group will disembark from the vessel, handing it over to a holding team. The pirates boarding the hijacked vessels are organised into holding teams that are responsible for guarding the hostages and protecting the ship. Holding teams

have lower social status than the attack teams. The pirates may be new recruits and distrustful of each other. They can be from different sub-clans, but usually belong to the same main clan branch.

## On duty

Their job consists of watching the hostages and guarding the ship against intervention from naval



*Guard on duty sifting through khat leaves (Source: CS)*

forces, and also against rival pirate gangs. The guards on duty are armed with AK-47s and posted all over the ship and in the vicinity of the hostages' accommodation. They constantly chew khat while on duty to stay alert. They rotate posts and change shifts at regular intervals. They tend to be more alert after sunset, because they believe that intervention from naval forces is more likely during the dark hours.

### **Off duty**

When the guards are off duty, they laze around the ship, eat, sleep and chew khat. The guards will consume sweet beverages like sodas or heavily sugared tea to keep up the energy levels needed for the amphetamine-like stimulant in the khat to be effective.

They will also repeatedly loot the ship, ransacking it while searching for cash, jewellery, electronic

equipment and clothes that they can sell in the local market.

### **Sharing a ship**

Two different pirate groups can use the same ship, if the situation demands it. This can happen when, for example, a hijack has resulted in captured crew members being taken off a ship, or if the hijacked vessel is too small to comfortably accommodate the hostages and the holding team, such as a yacht. One pirate group will rent a space on the other group's vessel and use it to hold the captives. The group in control of the vessel will receive monetary reimbursement for rent and supplies after the ransom is paid. The two groups will divide the ship between them and stay out of the other group's area. The two groups tolerate each other, but interaction and cooperation is limited to an absolute minimum.

**Internal disciplinary system**

There is a lot of rivalry and conflict between the guards and they are prone to arguing and fighting. They will even have standoffs or shoot outs. Examples of guards killing each other are common, and sometimes a guard team may split into two factions that fight for control over the hostages, until one faction surrenders.

To regulate the pirates' behaviour, the groups have an internal disciplinary system. This system provides the pirates with a set of rules relating to their interaction with each other and with the hostages. The main intent is to maintain

order and discourage rivalry. Infractions are reprimanded or punished by the leader of the guard team.

The sanctions include fines, reduction of the individual's share of the ransom, loss of right to the ransom, physical punishment, isolation, banishment and execution.

It is referred to as "Code of Conduct" or "Good Conduct Guide" and is sometimes written down in Somali and displayed on board the hijacked vessel.

Some of the infractions regulated by the pirate's internal code of conduct are:

<b>Infraction</b>	<b>Punishment</b>
Thieving on-board the ship (except mobile phones)	Monetary fine
Sexual assault	Monetary fine
Beating/Maltreatment of hostages	Physical punishment/Monetary fine/Expulsion
Shooting a hostage	The perpetrator will be shot
Killing a fellow pirate	The perpetrator will have his throat cut and his body thrown into the sea
Injuring a fellow pirate	The perpetrator loses his share of the ransom and is banned from the group
Aiming a weapon at a fellow pirate	Forfeit 5 per cent of ransom share
Unintentional firing of gun	Monetary fine
Not keeping lookout on watch	Monetary fine
Speaking evil about the religion	Monetary fine

The pirates' internal code of conduct differs between groups, but has many common points.

Note that the existence of a code of conduct provides no safety guarantees for the hostages.

### **HOSTAGE GUIDELINES**

– *Pirate Holding Team:*

- Be wary of inexperienced or nervous guards
- Be wary of rifles pointing in random directions.
- When guards begin to argue, back off and stay quiet.
- If a fight breaks out between the guards, take cover or lie down flat on the deck.