

Pirates Leave Ship Carrying Tanks After Ransom Paid

Destination of the Tank Shipment Still in Doubt

By [Global Research](#)

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All the pirates who seized the Ukrainian cargo-vesel Faina around five months ago have now left. They reportedly received a record ransom payment of more than 3 million dollars for giving up the ship.

The 20-strong crew, and its cargo of battle tanks and ammunition, are now thought to be under the protection of the U.S. navy. It is reported that the crew on board are uninjured.

The ransom was dropped onto the Faina's deck from a plane earlier in the week. The sea bandits were demanding millions of dollars in ransom before freeing the ship and its crew of three Russians, sixteen Ukrainians and a Latvian.

When hijacked, the Faina was loaded with 33 T-72 tanks, grenade launchers and a large amount of ammunition, which had been sold to the Kenyan government.

The Russian captain of the Ukrainian-flagged ship died of a heart attack shortly after the pirates boarded it.

The pirates initially demanded a ransom of \$35 million, reportedly lowering their demands to \$8 million after protracted and complicated negotiations.

At one point the pirates had threatened to blow up the ship with everyone on board.

'Military release of captured ship was ruled out'

A commando-style operation to seize control of the Faina was dismissed early on. Military planners believed the Pirates might have either killed the sailors or sunk the ship, [Mikhail Voytenko](#) says, a spokesman for the owners of the ship.

"It took five months to make the deal with the pirates because of the military nature of the cargo, which is more expensive than a supertanker full of oil," he said.

And if previous experiences are anything to go by, the payment of the ransom does not ease the tension.

Last month, a similar air drop of cash led to the release of a captured ship. The captain explained what happened.

“As soon as the money was received, it became tense. Their leader sat down on top of the money, reloaded his machine gun, and for up to 16 hours they were dividing the money among themselves. And all that while they were doing drugs at the same time,” Andrey Nozhkin said, CEC Future captain.

Beware of Somali waters

The waters off the Somalian coast have become notorious for pirate attacks.

Hundreds of ships have been targeted in recent months and dozens seized by the increasingly bold pirates.

An international flotilla with warships from UK, France, U.S. and Russia is in the region to deter attacks and to escort cargo ships through the Gulf of Aden.

But so far it has had little impact on maritime banditry.

A few weeks after the Faina freighter was captured in September, relatives desperately tried to raise the ransom themselves.

“Never before have the pirates seized a ship with such a cargo. We believe this incident is politicised and this may be the reason why negotiations have been continuing for so long. We fear freeing our children may cause problems for somebody,” said Viktor Shapovalov, father of one of the Faina sailors.

In Ukraine, the seizure of the Faina triggered an illegal arms trade scandal, as many experts believed that the final destination of Ukrainian tanks and arms was not Kenya, but Sudan, which is under an international arms embargo.

The owner of the ship insisted he could not finance the ransom payment.

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