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In her latest exclusive report, Antonia Rados reports on pirates in Somalia

Cover: Antonia Rados was one of the first reporters to talk to pirates in Somalia
Danger lurks everywhere in the Horn of Africa: pirates that hijack ships with their crews and demand ransom money in the millions keep making the headlines. All ships wishing to pass through the Suez Canal must traverse this perilous route or take a detour of several thousand kilometres. Although the route has been patrolled by international naval forces since December 2008, ‘Operation Atalanta’ has not succeeded in completely all hijackings. At the present time, more than 20 ships are being held by Somali pirates. To date, an estimated USD 100 to 150 million have probably been paid out in ransom money.

Antonia Rados and her cameraman Jean-Jacques Feron have become the first TV team to interview pirates in Somalia. They travelled to Somalia with two photographers, a New York Times reporter and a correspondent for the French newswire AFP. A former Somali militiaman assisted her with the organisation and logistics of the trip. After a several-day adventurous journey, she and her cameraman finally arrived in the pirate’s village, Hobyo. “The fact that they even agreed to see us testifies to the pirates’ new confidence,” Rados says. “Apparently, they now want power, too. There are talks between a local government and pirates. Ultimately, what’s happening here is that there are too many groups now. There is infighting. Each group is trying to find allies so as not to go under. A dangerous new round of violence is imminent.”

Because of films like Pirates of the Caribbean the word ‘pirate’ has come to have romantic overtones – as a kind of “Robin Hood of the seas”, as Antonia Rados says. “The pirates are in fact regarded as heroes in Somalia,” she explains. “They are heroes defending the seas against the foreign fishing vessels. In a mix of self-interest, revenge and resoluteness, the pirates are making it clear, in their way, that the causers of their misery can’t just do as they please off the Somali coast.”
The team filmed hijacked ships in Hobyo and met with village elders and pirates. The men, some of them former fishermen, reveal the rationale behind their ruthless business in the interviews: “They told us that they are being ‘forced’ to hijack ships because the fish stocks off the coast of Somalia are disappearing – emptied of fish by international trawlers,” says Rados. Their means of survival is being taken from them right in their backyard. Rados adds: “Some pirates wanted help getting into a different line of work, with a Somali coast guard, for example”.

“Many Somali people endorse or support their actions,” explains Rados. “But even though the pirates see themselves as benefactors of the nation, it doesn’t look as if the ransom monies are actually being distributed. In the pirate stronghold Hobyo, there is nothing, no infrastructure, no doctor – the women have to travel eight hours to get to the nearest hospital.” Part of the money from the piracy is spent on weapons and hi-tech, the rest is apparently being squandered for parties and drugs.

Antonia Rados reports: “Piracy has become a lucrative ‘branch of industry’. Word about the prospect of easy dollars has gotten out, and in a country like Somalia, which has no government, no jobs and structures this attracts a lot of young people. The dilemma is obvious: the more the countries and the shipping lines pay, the more pirate groups there will be.”

The report shows this deadly cycle of violence, hijacked ships and horrendous ransom sums in Somalia. For the first time, pirates allowed themselves to be accompanied to their strongholds, where they hide the hijacked ships. “That was where we first saw the true extent of the lucrative business of piracy,” Rados says. The local population is still as poor as before, while the pirates can afford beautiful new houses. “Our trip to the pirates was sobering in that we saw that this money is merely being used to buy even more weapons,” says Rados. “These are used to hijack more ships. And everyone wants to become a pirate. Greed has become rampant in Somalia.”

Another problem is the recent cooperation between pirates and Islamist extremists. In the beginning, the Islamist troops in Somalia fought the pirates, saying that piracy is irreconcilable with their faith. “But avarice has prevailed among them now, too,” explains Antonia Rados. “In one town along the coast, the pirates and Islamists now share the ransom monies. The cooperation between Islamists and pirates gives rise to new horror scenarios: the Islamists have close ties to Al Qaeda. They are extremely against the West. It’s dreadful to imagine what would happen if they were to seize a oil tanker, bring it somewhere and blow it up.”

Despite the international security force, a solution to the problem is not in sight. Rados reports: “Somalians don’t like foreign intervention – that was the message the population conveyed to us: don’t send us warships, don’t send us weapons, don’t send us militia. What we need is a political solution for this chaotic country. My job is to show the phenomenon as a report. Of course the pirates get to have their say and state their positions, but one shouldn’t take too romantic a view of it.”

Pirate Mohammed was Antonia Rados’ bodyguard while she was in Somalia.
Sara Geater promoted

Sara Geater was promoted to the position of CEO of Talkback Thames with immediate effect. She will also join the FremantleMedia Operating Board.

United Kingdom - 29 October 2010

Sara has been Interim CEO of Talkback Thames since June this year, having joined the company as Chief Operating Officer in March 2007. She has been a key player in leading Talkback Thames’ Strategic Review and since taking up the position of Interim CEO, Sara has led the implementation of the company’s new growth strategy. At the heart of this strategy is a significant investment in development and a focus on creating programmes with both global and ancillary potential.

Sara, together with Syco, was instrumental in closing the three year deal with ITV and Syco which secures The X Factor and Britain’s Got Talent on ITV1 until the end of 2013. Tony Cohen, CEO, FremantleMedia, said: “Sara has a wealth of knowledge and extensive experience in television on both the production and commercial side of the business. She’s done an exceptional job in her interim position as CEO of Talkback Thames, and I’m delighted that Sara will be taking up this new role.”

Sara Geater added: “I’m thrilled to be leading one of the UK’s leading independent companies with some of the most talented on and off screen creatives. Our new growth strategy will allow us to build on our successes and invest in the future whilst capitalising on FremantleMedia’s extensive global network and commercial capabilities.”
Right from the launch of the app in July, viewers had been able to watch a number of RTL Television programmes live – but now the channel’s programming is available live 24/7 on the iPhone and iPod Touch. The app also gives users a wide range of extra functions and exclusive features.

Robert Fahle, Head of Mobile at RTL interactive, says: “By expanding our popular app to include a 24-hour live-TV offering, we make sure that iPhone users don’t have to miss a single RTL show. From now on, RTL Television’s entire programme is available around the clock, and from anywhere. The added functions and exclusive features of the RTL app lets users stay informed at all times and rest assured that they won’t miss their favourite shows.”

The RTL app may be downloaded from the iTunes App Store. The first 30 days are free, after which the app may be used for a service fee of EUR 1.59 per month.
This year once again, many amateur artists will try their luck and reveal all their talent in front of a panel of uncompromising judges that include Sophie Edelstein, Artistic Director of the Pinder Circus, Gilbert Rozon, a major producer of artists and creator of the Just for Laughs festival, and, for the first time, the singer Dave. Dancers, comics, fire-breathers, lookalikes, animal trainers, singers, acrobats, magicians and even robots: this season, there is no limit to the participants’ imagination and there are more artistic disciplines than ever in this out-of-the-ordinary show.

The rules remain the same: the amateur contestants have just two minutes to prove that they are the “Incredible Talent” of 2010 and thus succeed the Echos-Liés, a fabulous group of “humorous break dancers” and winners of the 2009 edition who have since turned professional. The prize: EUR 100,000 and participation in the Just for Laughs festival in Montreal, where many stars have performed, including French comedians Frank Dubosc, Florence Foresti, Gad Elmaleh and Elie Semoun, as well as the American stars Jim Carrey and Jerry Seinfeld.

La France a un incroyable talent will be presented by the dynamic duo of Sandrine Corman and Alex Goude and will be followed by La France a un incroyable talent, ça continue, at 22:35. The magazine goes behind the scenes to relive the programme’s greatest moments. It also shows what has become of former participants and features astonishing performances from the programme’s foreign versions.
The movie follows the lives of two sisters from the present into a realistic near future, a time of uncertainty and great change. Laura Kuper (played by Bernadette Heerwagen) has to make a choice between her desire to have children and Hans (Daniel Brühl), the great love of her life. Her sister Cecilia (Johanna Wokalek) is driven into the depths of a newly emerging form of terrorism by her unrequited love for Konstantin (August Diehl). Each of the two sisters faces their future in a destabilised world with their own private hopes and fears.

The popular German band ‘Wir sind Helden’ wrote and performed the theme song for the movie: Bring mich nach Hause, which is also the title song of the band’s new album. The single will be available in stores from 5 November. Thomas Peter Friedl, managing director of UFA Cinema, says: “In Die kommenden Tage, Lars Kraume paints an intense, moving and up-to-the-minute picture of our society’s mores in an imminent future. ‘Wir sind Helden’ add an equally moving, authentic musical exclamation point with their new album and title song Bring mich nach Hause.”

Die kommenden Tage (The Days Ahead) is a cinematic production by Badlands Film in cooperation with UFA Cinema and co-produced with Dream Team Filmproduktion and WDR, ARD Degeto and Arte. Telepool Munich is handling its global distribution. In the German-speaking territories, the film is being distributed by Universal Pictures International Germany and in cooperation with UFA Cinema.
In January 2010, RTL Belgium’s digital division was renamed. RTL Digital became RTL New Media and is headed by Jean-Jacques Deleeuw, a trained journalist who contributed to the success of radio station Bel RTL, which he led for seven years. Backstage interviewed Jean-Jacques Deleeuw, who talked about his areas of action and future ambitions.

Why this change of name?
More than just a name, this reincarnation epitomises a new ambition, to become the company’s third foundation stone, standing alongside television and radio. We want to be a major influence. The digital division is thus being called upon to deploy and the teams to expand. The department now has 15 contributors, and there will be 30 within the next two years. There is no shortage of work.

What are the roles of RTL New Media?
RTL New Media’s historical activity is the development of five window sites for the TV channels and radio stations, namely RTL-TVI.be, ClubRTL.be, PlugRTL.be, BelRTL.be and RadioContact.be. Also in 2007, we launched RTLInfo.be, a site dedicated to news and managed by RTL Belgium’s transversal editorial department.

RTL-TVI in television and Bel RTL and Radio Contact in radio have developed unequalled know-how in terms of entertainment and handling of the news, which is truly the trademark of our company. Number one by a wide margin, we have the confidence of Belgians in the French-speaking Community who, when they want to be informed, turn to our media. It was therefore logical for this success story to continue on the Net. Today, RTLInfo.be is the number three news site in French-speaking Belgium, after two newspaper sites. We have just optimised and relaunched an entirely new version and new graphic design, which offer, among other things, more multimedia content.

What are your future projects?
In order to grow, we have to conquer new spaces. For RTL New Media, growth will come from the creation of a portal at the beginning of next year that will oversee all our sites, our news and sport sites of course, but also our new thematic sites, which are linked to entertainment, “soft news” and services.
What service do you provide in terms of catch-up TV?

In terms of catch-up TV, RTL Belgium and its New Business department have chosen to develop in television through «RTL à l’infini» , a VoD pay service via IPTV. By pushing the red button on their remote control, viewers in French-speaking Belgian have access, among other things, in replay or in preview, to US series broadcast on RTL-TVI, Club RTL and Plug RTL for a fee, as well as to other major programmes. On the Internet, RTL New Media offers viewing of its televised news programmes and magazine shows at no charge.

About Jean-Jacques Deleeuw

After studies in journalism in the 1980s, during an era marked by the rapid development of free radio, Jean-Jacques Deleeuw joined IP in 1988 as communications director. In 1991, he returned to his first loves and joined the newly-created Bel RTL as news chief. In 1996, he became Editor-in-chief and in 2003 he was appointed Station Manager. At the end of January 2010 he took over the helm of RTL New Media.
The National Association of Television Programme Executives announced that it will honour Gerhard Zeiler, CEO RTL Group, as the first non-American to receive the prestigious Brandon Tartikoff Legacy Award in January 2011.

On the heels of winning the German TV Award, the Phoenix Film produced series Danni Lowinski, added a couple of Comedy Awards to its track record: Danni Lowinski won ‘Best Comedy Series’ and its lead actress Annette Frier was named ‘Best Actress’. At the beginning of the month, Jessica Schwarz had won the Hesse Film Award for her performance as Romy Schneider in the biography Romy.

RTL Creation prevailed in three categories at the 12th International Eyes & Ears Awards in Munich, and also accepted a special prize. RTL Creation won ‘Best Studio Design/Set Design/Production Design’ for Extra. The magazine has been on air in a new look and from Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland’s new studio since June. The trailer for the 2009 season of Alarm for Cobra 11 was picked as the ‘Best On-Air Promotion Spot for Fictional Programming’. Let’s Dance earned RTL Creation the award for ‘Best 360-Degree Programme Promotion Campaign’. And finally RTL Creation received this year’s special award for ‘Effectiveness’ for special achievements in the area of 360-degree campaigns this year and the past few years.

The Teamworx-produced movie Das Lied in mir (The Song Inside Me) starring Jessica Schwarz and Michael Gwisdek won a Golden Icon at the 6th Zurich Film Festival at the beginning of the month. The Golden Icons each come with 20,000 Swiss francs and a 60,000-franc budget for promoting the winning film in Swiss cinemas.

Das Schiff des Torjägers, another Teamworx-produced film, won the Leipzig Film School Youth Jury Award at the DOK Leipzig.

The Hamburg Film Festival presented its honorary award, the ‘Filmfestbesteck Hamburg 2010’ to actress Hannelore Hoger, who accepted the coveted cutlery from Festival Director Albert Wiederspiel at the premiere of her latest film. The ‘Filmfestbesteck Hamburg’ made its debut last year and is given at irregular intervals to “loyal guests” to honour persons who have rendered extraordinary services to the Film Festival and to Hamburg as a place of film.

BCE received three awards at the International Tourism Film Festival (ART&TUR) in Barcelos, Portugal for its series of film shorts entitled Is it true what they say about Luxembourg? The shorts compare commonly held stereotypes about the small country with reality. Is it true what they say about Luxembourg? was named ‘Best Film Of A Travel Destination’, ‘Best Sound’ and the Wines of Luxembourg episode won in the special category ‘Wine’. To see the video, click here.

Radio 538 was nominated for the Sponsor Ring 2010 in two categories: ‘Sport’ and ‘Innovation’. The nominations refer to ‘Voetbal = Radio 538’ campaign, which the station launched in its capacity as media partner to the Dutch Football Federation KNVB. The Sponsor Ring 2010 awards will be presented in early December 2010.
Is Michael Jackson still alive?

Of course he is. The King of Pop lives in the heart of his fans, who demonstrate their talent as impersonators in ‘À la recherche du nouveau Michael Jackson’. The show presented by Aleaxandre Devoise (picture) is a hit on the French DTT channel W9, attracting 1.1 million viewers on Tuesday 2 November.
Another month on the podium
In October 2010, M6 confirms its position as the number three channel nationwide for the third consecutive month, with a total audience share of 10.2 per cent. Meanwhile, W9 ranks number one among DTT channels with a total audience share of 3.0 per cent.

France - 3 November 2010

Strongest monthly market share in over six years
Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland’ channels attracted 36.1 per cent of the 14- to 49-year-old viewer market in October, putting them well ahead of the channels in the ProSiebenSat1 group. RTL Television scored its best market share since January 2004.

Germany - 2 November 2010

Bringing prevention to classrooms
RTL II continues its initiative for protection against sexual abuse, and cooperates with a school in the process.

Germany - 3 November 2010

A whole new kind of restaurant advertising
As part of their subscription to the Couverts.nl reservations system, restaurant owners now have the opportunity to present their establishment as a Restaurant Van Vandaag on TV.

Netherlands - 29 October 2010

An enigmatic guest on RTL Radio
On 3 November, on L’heure du crime, a new show on the programme schedule, host Jacques Pradel welcomes Natascha Kampusch, the Austrian girl whose abduction lasted eight terrible years, that is 3,096 days as the title of her book.

France - 3 November 2010
People

Paul Wiertz

Netherlands - 4 November 2010

Paul Wiertz becomes the new Manager of Couverts, RTL Nederland’s high-quality online restaurant booking service.

On Monday 1 November, Paul Wiertz was named Manager of Couverts at RTL Netherlands, the provider of the online restaurant booking and review portal of the same name.

In 2009 Paul Wiertz together with Michiel Huisman, founded the award-winning website. As reported by Backstage last September, after a successful collaboration between Couverts and RTL Nederland that started in July 2010, RTL Nederland announced a takeover of the online service.

Nicolas Eglau, Manager Business Development, Strategy & Thematic Channels RTL Nederland comments: “I am delighted by the fact that we are able to keep the expertise and innovative talents of the founders of Couverts on board and thus continue to successfully develop the website.”

Michiel Huisman remains the Strategic Advisor and the Leader of Couverts’ Sales team.