

# Pirates

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sage,” said Diego Rodriguez, special agent in charge of the FBI’s New York Field Office. “Even on the high seas you are not beyond the reach of American justice.”

Pirates have increased attacks off

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the coast of East Africa despite an international flotilla of warships dedicated to protecting vessels and stopping the pirate assaults.

U.S. naval forces were tracking the Americans’ captured yacht with unmanned aerial vehicles and four warships, and negotiations were under way when the pirates fired a rocket-propelled grenade.

Then gunfire was heard aboard the

yacht. Special forces boarded the vessel and found the Americans had been shot, according to the military. Pirates have blamed the deaths of the American hostages on the U.S. Navy, saying the pirates felt under attack.

The group is the latest to be brought to Norfolk to face charges.

Last April, a federal grand jury indicted 11 in separate attacks on two U.S. Navy ships, the USS Ashland and the USS Nicholas. The Virginia-based ships were part of an international flotilla protecting shipping in the pirate-infested waters off Africa.

In November, five Somali men were convicted on federal piracy charges related to the attack on the USS Nicholas. They are expected to be sentenced this month.

A sixth pleaded guilty. Trials for the remaining five are pending.



Bob Riggie and Phyllis Macay of Seattle, were shot to death by pirates.

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the parades start to the packed streets of the French Quarter.

Ashley Scharfenstein, 24, jived to the music at a street party in the Treme neighborhood before strolling off to the French Quarter.

“Wherever the music takes us, we’re going,” said Scharfenstein, who was dressed as a black peacock.

Even the police were having a “fantastic” Fat Tuesday with no major incidents reported, said Officer Garry Flot, a New Orleans Police spokesman.

For many, the celebration was ending even before dark after a long day of elation.

Christian Wilkins, a 35-year-old bartender dressed in gold tights and nothing more except his “Legalize It” custom-made beads, was among the most depleted.

Completely lost in the maze of streets in the Faubourg Marigny, near the French Quarter, the Baltimore native walked back and forth shouting, “Oh, God! I am so lost!”

The problem was manifold: he was totally drunk, staying at a friend’s house and alone. He held his cell phone in his hand trying to pull his friend’s address from the contact list. “I am so lost it is wicked retarded,” he said, managing a smile.

Finally, with some help, he found the address. “I’m so wasted,” he admitted, before he staggered off to find the place where he could lay his head. “I got to go.”

Partiers wearing satirical costumes — a Mardi Gras staple — found plenty of fodder in this year’s headlines.

Retired hospital executive Pat Kent dressed up as a gun-toting priest. He said he and a friend were going as the “krewe of guns in church.”

“Today I’m packing for Jesus,” he said. Kent said his costume was in protest of a new Louisiana law allowing people to carry weapons in church.



Allen Logue, 58, walked through the French Quarter clad as a one-man oil spill cleanup crew. The oil field consultant from Barataria, La., didn’t have to do much shopping to build his costume. He already had a hard-hat helmet and BP-branded sweat shirt from work he did for the company in Alaska.

“The only thing I had to shop for was the Jim Beam and that was to ease the pain of the oil spill,” Logue said.

Sylvia Beyer, 57, of New Orleans led a group of five women in grass skirts and hats with the BP logo. On the back of their shirts were slogans, such as Broken Promises, Brazen Polluters and Bloody Pathetic. As they walked along, they passed out makeshift voodoo dolls with a photo of former BP CEO Tony Hayward pasted to each.

“We just wanted to stick it to BP. We put more time into these costumes than BP did in their disaster plan,” Beyer said.

The new national healthcare program provided inspiration for New Orleans residents Hal and Sharon Moser. Hal Moser strolled along Bourbon Street dressed in a hospital gown with bloody bandages and a fake ax pasted to his head.

“I’ve got a split-open headache from it,” Moser said. His wife dressed as a nurse.

The Transportation Security Administration also took hits. One group outfitted as TSA inspectors carried signs referring to body cavity searches. Locals were in a triumphant mood, and not without reason.

New Orleans — America’s poster child of disaster — has come a long way since Hurricane Katrina. Its beloved New Orleans Saints won the Super Bowl last year, and it has largely overcome the disaster of the BP oil spill.

This year, the timing of Mardi Gras helped. It fell later than usual and coincides with spring break for college students. Students have been out in force — giving more punch to the annual celebration.

Two friends on spring break from Wilmington College made a 12-hour drive from Ohio.

Garret Lingoe, 21, a junior, clutched a beer at midmorning Tuesday as he talked in awe of Mardi Gras. “I didn’t know I was coming here until about five days ago and I’m sure happy I did.”

Seth Howard, a 23-year-old senior, echoed his sentiments. “Everybody down here is just so nice and laid back.”

Ali Miller, 23, an early childhood education major at Southeastern Louisiana University, was jubilant as she walked

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takes us, we’re going,”  
said the black peacock.

Tuesday morning after a long night of drinking in the French Quarter.

“There is nothing like New Orleans,” she said. “I would never ever want to grow up anywhere but here! And Mardi Gras is the craziest time you could ever have in life — I don’t know what else to say.”

Mardi Gras was being celebrated across the Gulf Coast, in cities including Mobile, Ala., and Biloxi, Miss. In the Cajun country of southwest Louisiana, masked riders on horseback continued the tradition of riding from town to town making merry along the way.

# Flag

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Medford.

Phoenix-Talent schools Superintendent Ben Bergreen had demanded the flag be removed from school property, citing a policy prohibiting symbols that could be offensive to minorities.

Bergreen said he had received a copy of the letter, but did not want to comment, because there might be a lawsuit.

Married with four children, Webber has maintained the flag is not a political or racist statement, but an expression of his “redneck” identity, also expressed in a tattoo on his left arm.

“We’re doing the best we can,” Webber

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political or racist statement,  
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said of the financial hardship the loss of his job means to his family. “I must say, my 8-year-old makes me proud. She took my picture from the Mail Tribune (newspaper) to

school for show and tell. She was telling the kids in her class, ‘This is my dad standing up for what he believes in and I’m proud of him for that.’”

In the letter to the school bus company, Rutherford attorney Douglas R. McKusick cited a 2002 federal court ruling that upheld the right of a city worker in Kansas to display a vanity license plate on his truck with a Confederate battle flag and the words, “Heritage, Not Hate,” while parked at work.

In another case last November, the Sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the right of a Tennessee school district to suspend a student for wearing a T-shirt and belt buckle bearing the image of the Confederate battle flag.