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Title: AQ operations in Somalia, including purchase of boat and visit to training camp in al-Hadidiyah forest

Full Text: Arabic with English translation

SYNOPSIS

In this letter, Saif al-Adel reports to AQ leadership about the purchase of a motor boat, a training camp in the al-Hadidiyah forest, the existing leadership in the training camp, and the results of Sheikh Hasan's first tour to the area. The motor boat is described as a safe and secure means to transport personnel and equipment because the Kenyan coast guard that patrols the route is lax and corrupt, and the motor boat can easily be disguised as a fishing boat. The fishing will also be a good source of income for AQ operations, and the possibility of creating a fishing company to control the Somali shores and fishing industry is suggested. The only concerns is that it will be expensive to purchase the boat, and difficult to find sailors who are not susceptible to bribes and threats. They will find someone from within AQ, and will also begin training Somalis on swimming and sea activities.

The training camp in the al-Hadidiyah forest is described an ideal location because the thickness and height of the trees, and ravines make it difficult to observe and strike from the air. (However, the elephants may make it difficult to live there.) The terrain makes it suitable for all kinds of training except urban warfare and snow warfare. According to Brother Mukhtar, the camp leadership consists of Sheikh Hassan and his deputy Abd Al-Aziz, and the two Brothers Mohammed Abdullah and Ahmad Madoubi, who carried this letter. The leadership is described as simple, loyal, and very willing to fight – yet in need of organization and administrative support. Financial support cannot be provided due to lack of funds. According to Sheikh Hassan, the local political climate is favorable to AQ, with only one of the Sufi sheikhs dissenting.

THEMES

Although AQ operations at this point are short on money, they are still determined to continue with training plans and show inventiveness in using the fishing boat for the dual purpose of concealed transport and also as a source of income. Also, the security situation along the Kenyan coast is poor, enabling AQ to travel by sea with relative freedom. In addition, Saif al-Adel describes how much money he has and where he gets it.

Training in the al-Hadidiyah forest may suffer due to lack of funds, and the region is not suitable for urban warfare training. Although the leadership in the al-

Hadidiyah forest may benefit from administrative aid from al-Qaeda leadership, they are described as a close-knit, loyal group that is able to function independently, and currently does not require funds from al-Qaeda.

Saif al-Adel suggests that a crew come to the region and be equipped with the means to communicate with AQ so they can be given orders, because the current captain of the ship can't be trusted. (Note: this was omitted in the English translation.)

Saif al-Adel states the desire and outlines the plan to control the Somali coast.

Even though the wildlife in the forest is described as dangerous, this is outweighed by the benefits the forest offers in terms of concealment, particularly from air strikes.

Sheikh Hassan met with other Islamic leaders in the region and they all agree that fighting the infidels and forming a government according to the Holy Koran is the most important issue.

Based on other correspondence from this and other authors, Sheik Hassan is possibly Sheik Hasan Dahir Aweys, the current overall military leader of Al Itihad Al Islami (AIAI) or Sheik Hasan Turki (AIAI Kissmayo regional commander). If either were the case, Abd Al-Aziz would refer to Abd Al-Aziz Attan Nur, who is suspected of being a special envoy between AIAI and AQ. Muhammad Abdullah could refer to a current member of the Hargeysa cell, or to Muhammad Abdullah Imad (AKA Hamza Al-Libi), an AQ facilitator with links to Africa. Ahmad Maboudi could be Ahmad Abdi, commander to the most militant wing of AIAI. Brother Nouruddin might refer to Sharif Abd Alnour, a spiritual leader. These connections between past AQ operations and present AIAI hierarchy indicate the deep connectivity between the both groups, and specifically reveal the origins of the latter.