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Title: Some letters about “Jihad” & AQ in Somalia

Full Text: English & Arabic

SYNOPSIS

These letters are on the subject of “Jihad” in Somalia. The first is about an attempted trip from Mendira in northern Somalia to Luuq on the Kenyan border. The trip was to have been in a rented aircraft. The author describes various extremist groups operating in Somalia, their leaders, and their operations. The second letter is also penned by someone whose travel arrangements have been delayed. The author also mentions bringing “the brothers from Africa”, and says he will “send the trusted ones”. Finally, he says he can arrange travel documents for anyone traveling to various African countries. The third letter is written from Nairobi after the author tried to fly to either Mendira or Luuq, but was thwarted for lack of permission from the Kenyan government. He outlines some steps that he has taken or will take. The final letter is a status report on the camp in Luuq, and a plea for resources and money.

THEMES

These letters offer interesting insight into the travel methods employed by AQ planners. They suggest that the rental of light aircraft for short trips is commonplace. Difficulties encountered include failure to obtain government permissions and logistical barriers (restrictively short runways).

Another travel-related theme can be found in the second letter, where the author mentions that he can facilitate the visa and customs process into several African countries. Although it is unclear how he does this, the ability suggests some level of government infiltration or collusion.

The author of the last letter references meetings and agreements with local leaders. The role is delineated with AQ maintaining control over training and operations (so long as those operations are conducted by AQ-trained personnel). This shows an understanding that the regional leaders will have invaluable local knowledge.

A related theme is the idea of placating local tribes through bribery. Acknowledging this necessity does not negate – and possibly magnifies – the disdain extremists have for the “apostates”. A final note on integration is weapons purchasing. The letter suggests that AQ will make all acquisitions from the local economy, making them dependant upon it.

The document also reveals that AQ uses written letters to transmit tactical information. In one of the letters, the author announces the anticipated arrival of a group of American delegation to the area. His likely intention is to alert the reader for possible planning implications.

One of the letters deals with the establishment of a new camp and the cost associated with the endeavor. The same document states that it costs \$1.50 per day to maintain each person in the camp.