

Doc ID: AFGP-2002-003677

Date: 1996-1998

Author: Multiple and unknown

Length: 11 pages

Title: Ciphers and Status of bin Laden's Security

## Synopsis

A series of incomplete documents that consist of (1) codewords and ciphers used by al-Qaeda; (2) an assessment of Osama bin Laden's personal security situation; (3) letters primarily concerning the disposition of three prisoners held by Iran that are important to al-Qaeda; (4) a letter discussing the frustrating situation on the front lines in Afghanistan, and the foreign fighters there.

## Key Themes

The first part of the handwritten document is a table of contents, apparently for another missing document, discussing training camps and operations conducted by al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups, including Hezbollah.

Next, the document contains a cipher, with letters that corresponds to numbers.

It then lists code words to be used for countries and cities within al-Qaeda's anticipated sphere of operations, certain key people, and a variety of other key words, including nuclear, biological and chemical weapons vocabulary.

Ciphers and codewords for the times of meetings and operations are also covered, with examples.

The writer negatively assesses the security of the location and food for Osama bin Laden's weekly lunch meetings, in light of possible American attempts to assassinate him.

1. The source of the food is not secure.
2. The food is not distributed securely.
3. It is obvious which plate Osama bin Laden will receive.
4. Osama bin Laden drinks water from a general guard.

There follow several letters, one a thank-you letter, and another enquiring about the possibility of obtaining the release of several prisoners.

Letter to Abu Ibrahim, from Muhammad Atif: This letter provides updates on several financial transactions, and a number of associates.

A lengthy letter discusses the status of three al-Qaeda prisoners of the Iranians. The letter reports that the prisoners, along with other Arabs, Afghans, and Pakistanis, have been moved to Iran through Tajikistan after several failed attempts, including the use of Masoud's airplane, and a truck that rolled over. The writer suspects that 'they' might actually be trying to eliminate them.

The writer then lays out three options for obtaining the release of the prisoners from Iran.

- A. Direct and indirect mediation with the Iranians, using a combination of diplomacy and threats. This is the recommended solution.

- B. Taking several Iranians hostage to exchange for the prisoners. This will have complex consequences, and will serve to divide up the Muslim world, but is worth discussing with the Taliban.
- C. Bomb Iranian interests abroad until they release the prisoners.

The writer also requests the return of 'the Pakistani' so that training and operations can begin.

Letter to Sheik Abu Hafis: This letter continues discussing the prisoner situation. The writer has discussed the situation with a Taliban commander, who requests a car, and warns of not being bothersome to the Taliban.

The letter then provides news on the prisoners. Three of the prisoners are alive. A fourth was killed. Several Pakistanis have been released after their relatives intervened, or after they bought their way out.

Letter to Abdul Aziz: The writer provides updates and instructions on various operations, and expresses concern about the security situation.

The final letter describes the situation on the front lines in the fighting between the Taliban and Mas'oud (presumably the Northern Alliance). The writer is frustrated at the back-and-forth nature of the fighting, and believes that the Taliban have lost their will to fight. Many foreign fighters have abandoned the front lines in despair, and the writer then provides status updates on those that remain. Some refuse to fight, some want to leave for personal reasons, or to engage in projects elsewhere, including in Saudi Arabia. A small number are staying on the front, including a group at Bagram, some Jordanians, and an Iraqi.

There are also two brothers from Ogadin (Ethiopia), one of whom wants to get married, and the other to be part of the Eritrea security group.