

RELEASE IN PART
B5,B6

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, December 31, 2009 12:59 PM
To: H
Subject: FW: WFP Update on Somalia

[Redacted]

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cdm

From: Ertharin Cousin [Redacted]
Sent: Thursday, December 31, 2009 9:32 AM
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Subject: WFP Update on Somalia

B6

I am sure that you are receiving updates...but just in case. Ertharin

Here is the latest info on Somalia:

Situation has gotten considerably worse in last 24 hours: significant events happening globally with Al Shabaab(AS) that suggest WFP not able to get into Southern Region, from North into Gedo Region, Hiiran or conduct cross-border ops for next 6 weeks.

- As of 8:00 this morning local staff in Buaale boarded Landcruisers and headed north. Only 2 remain b/c of strong family ties to local clan who assured their protection.

- AS hardliners in Merka sent message to local AS to stop negotiating with elders and that they were sending a fighter contingent to take over WFP compound. This contingent will then travel to Wajid to do same (Wajid ops have been closed down now for 10 days). Local AS reps have demanded and received keys to WFP compound in Buaale.

- As a result of above threat of fighter contingent, 16 staff in Wajid as well as the 1 national in Gabrahare and the 1 -, Asmadel (sp) also relocated north this morning.

- In Gedo Region, Gabrahare (sp) the national rep was dismissed by a newly arrived AS hardliner. Hardliner has destroyed local market already.

- WFP attempted to move a truck of commodities out of Buaale en route to Mogadishu but truck was stopped by AS. Similar incident reported, not yet confirmed, in northern area also.

- Overall hardening of AS position, bringing in of new AS hardliners to certain areas, specific threats to staff and 2 incidents of forced food diversions has put WFP on high alert that AS is becoming overly eager to enforce Jan 1 edict deadline. WFP does not want to be in the line of fire on Jan 1 and is therefore putting the "operational pause" into full effect. No activities will take place in Southern/Central region until WFP has had time to assess how further AS will go with threats.

- WFP will now be calling UNICEF, OCHA and HCR at Amir's level to inform how the situation has deteriorated and how their contingency plans are now on hold.

"Operational Pause" is now in effect.

- WFP is willing to still do a conf call on Jan 2, but suggests Jan 4 to give them more time to assess situation.

B5

Currently, concern and focus is ensuring safety of staff (still in process of moving them out), alerting UN partners gathering/digesting info.

- ED will still travel to Kenya next week (has a mtg with Princess Haya), but focus has now changed to meeting with Somalia national staff to get a better sense of situation on ground.