

KSM ASKED AFTER HIS SONS IN DECEMBER 2006

Terry McDermott will have a 9/11-timed biography of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed in the New Yorker this week. But in the interim, he has posted a few of the letters he got in Pakistan as part of his research. In a letter sent December 15, 2006 to his brother—sent just months after KSM first became accessible to the Red Cross at Gitmo and described as the first his family received from him—KSM includes a request for photos of his sons:

If my wife [Umm] Hamza is living with her family in Iran Bluchistan then let her to be [in contact] with me through the Iran[ian] Red Crescent Society, but please [to write only] social and family news [not political or] Mujahideen news and to send the pictures of all sons plus [Halima] with Big Smile plus their education['s] grades & news. [my transcription—with your corrections/suggestions in brackets]

The passage is followed by nine lines of redaction, in turn followed by directions for the family and friends to pray.

Now, perhaps McDermott covers this in his article (I'll chase that down, but it's not available online yet). And there is much that I was unable to understand, either because it is illegible or seems designed to be opaque.

But the request is particular important given reports that the US captured two of KSM's sons—then aged around 6 or 7 and 8 or 9—and interrogated them to get information on KSM.

Two young sons of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the suspected mastermind of the September 11 attacks, are being used

by the CIA to force their father to talk.

Yousef al-Khalid, nine, and his brother, Abed al-Khalid, seven, were taken into custody in Pakistan last September when intelligence officers raided a flat in Karachi where their father had been hiding.

He fled just hours before the raid but his two young sons, along with another senior al-Qa'eda member, were found cowering behind a wardrobe in the apartment.

The boys have been held by the Pakistani authorities but this weekend they were flown to America where they will be questioned about their father.

Last night CIA interrogators confirmed that the boys were staying at a secret address where they were being encouraged to talk about their father's activities.

"We are handling them with kid gloves. After all, they are only little children," said one official, "but we need to know as much about their father's recent activities as possible. We have child psychologists on hand at all times

and they are given the best of care."

The sons were reportedly captured in September 2002. From this letter, it appears that one of the first things KSM asked once he got contact with the outside world again through the Red Cross was proof that they—and their mother—were safe.

But I'm not entirely convinced the letter is as transparent as that. KSM names his wife, where her family lives, and then uses the name Haluma (I think). Why would KSM's brothers need all these details? It seems that KSM may be writing in such a way that his brother can identify

precisely what KSM is after.

~~Also note the odd detail that KSM technically asks for social news on the Mujahadeen before he asks for pictures of his sons.~~ Update: With the correction, he's specifically directing his brother not to forward news on the Mujahadeen.

And finally, note the long redaction, which the US presumably did before the letter was sent to KSM's brother. Given that the passage just after the redaction is an exhortation for the family and friends to pray—precisely the topic preceding the redaction, it appears that KSM wrote things that the US found too sensitive (or deemed a coded message) to pass along.

[Thanks for the help on transcribing this.]