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State Security Agency

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEMO

To DEPUTY DIRECTOR COLLECTION
From GENERAL MANAGER HORN & NORTH OF AFRICA
Date 6 July 2012
Reference SSA FB/NF10/IN/IC/OR

**MEETING WITH RSA HOSTAGES: DEBBIE CALITZ AND BRUNO PELIZZARI:
DIRCO: 3 JULY 2012**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Italian Intelligence Service (AISE) secured the release of the RSA hostages Bruno **PELIZZARI** and Debbie **CALITZ** through a carefully planned and executed operation in cooperation with the Somalia National Security Agency (SNSA) on 21 June 2012. In a clandestine manner AISE co-opted the witting services of Vera **HECHT** (sister of **PELIZZARI**) and Abdulhakim **MOHAMED** (Chairperson of Somalia Community Board in the RSA) to negotiate a ransom during the period February to June 2012. AISE paid a ransom to the amount of USD 525 000.00 (Five Hundred and Twenty Five Thousand) to a pirate militia group that kept the hostages in custody for more than twenty months in South Central Somalia. The family of the hostages did not contribute to the ransom. The pirate militia group could move freely between areas in South Central Somalia and Mogadishu that were under both the control of insurgents and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). There is a great probability that the identities of the pirate militia and their negotiator are known to the SNSA. To conceal the payment of the ransom, AISE, SNSA and the hostages agreed to inform the media and public that the release of the hostages was the result of a successful rescue operation by the Somali Security Forces.

COMMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SSA

It is evident that the involvement of AISE in the negotiations was instrumental in securing the release of the hostages. AISE followed the case of the RSA hostages and was aware of every minor detail necessary to secure the release of

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the hostages. Despite several promises to co-operate and share information with the SSA, AISE elected not to disclose any information about the extent of its involvement. The position not to disclose any information to the SSA was also maintained when AISE met with a SSA representative on the 22 June 2012.



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1. AIM

To provide feedback re discussions that were held with the two RSA hostages and a member of their family on 3 July 2012.

2. INVOLVEMENT OF AISE IN THE RELEASE OF THE RSA HOSTAGES

HECHT was debriefed to determine the extent of the involvement of the AISE and **MOHAMED** in the release of the hostages on 21 June 2012. **HECHT** disclosed that that she was contacted by an Italian on Facebook in February 2012 with a request that she communicates with him on her negotiations with the Somali's re the release of "Debbie and Bruno". The Italian only identified himself as "Marco" and suggested that they should communicate via Skype for security reasons.

"Marco" advised her not to disclose their relationship to her family or to the RSA authorities. He also advised **HECHT** to purchase a new cell phone and a simcard to use for communication with him, the Somali negotiator and **MOHAMED**. He also advised her to utilise the services of **MOHAMED** in her communication and negotiations with the Somali negotiator. **HECHT** also created a "g-mail" account which "Marco" and **MOHAMED** enjoyed access to. The procedure wrt the g-mail address was for all three parties to post unsent draft messages to the g-mail address. The g-mail address was used to access messages and to respond to it.

Marco also advised **HECHT** to inform the Somali negotiator that the Italian family of **PELIZZARI** had managed to sell property in Italy and that she was able to negotiate a ransom. She was informed that the Italian Government would be willing to pay up to USD 900 000.00 (Nine Hundred Thousand) for the release of the hostages.

Adam **FABIYO**, a new Somali negotiator, made contact with **HECHT** via Facebook on 6 April 2012. A mobile number was provided in the Facebook message and on advice of "Marco" **HECHT** started new negotiations with **FABIYO**. **MOHAMED** travelled to Mogadishu, Somalia

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during April 2012 to assist **HECHT** with her negotiations. Proof of life wrt the RSA hostages was provided during May 2012. An agreement on the payment of a ransom of USD500 000.00 (Five Hundred Thousand) was reached in early June 2012. **FABIYO** also presented **HECHT** with a bill for services of a Mogadishu based consultancy that facilitated the proof of life to the amount of USD25 000.00 (Twenty Five Thousand). "Marco" agreed to the ransom amount and requested **HECHT** to travel to Nairobi, Kenya with the USD100 000.00 (Hundred Thousand) that were collected by the family.

Due to concerns about the credibility of "Marco", the risk of travelling to Kenya and handing over the USD100 000.00 (One Hundred Thousand), **HECHT** decided to consult with the Italian Consulate in the RSA. Staff of the Italian Consulate were not aware of the Italian Government's involvement and did not know about "Marco". "Marco" contacted **HECHT** within an hour of her meeting at the Italian Consulate. He informed her that it was no longer necessary to take USD100 000.00 (One Hundred Thousand) to Nairobi.

HECHT travelled to Nairobi on 20 June 2012. She was met by a male diplomat from the Italian Embassy in the international "arrivals and transfer hall" and escorted through customs. She was taken to a residence and informed that the RSA hostages were due to be released on 21 June 2012. She was also informed that she would travel to Djibouti to meet the hostages on 21 June 2012.

HECHT, escorted by the Italian diplomat, travelled on a commercial flight to Djibouti on 21 June 2012. Within twenty minutes of their arrival, a private Lear Jet landed with "Marco", the hostages and Italian government officials. **HECHT** joined the passengers and the private jet immediately departed for Italy and arrived in Rome on 22 June 2012. Italian government officials and the RSA Charge Affairs of the RSA Embassy in Italy met them on arrival. **HECHT** and the hostages were instructed by the Italian officials not to disclose that a ransom was paid, but to rather inform

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the media that the TFG forces of Somalia rescued them. "Marco" also requested **HECHT** to inform the media that **MOHAMED** played a significant role in the rescue of the hostages.

HECHT disclosed that **MOHAMED** was paid an amount of ZAR30 000 (Thirty Thousand) for his expenditure and services he rendered during negotiations for the release of the RSA hostages.

3. RSA Hostages: Place of Captivity, Identity of Capturers and Release

Bruno **PELIZZARI** disclosed the following information re the above-mentioned topics:

Place of Captivity: Two elderly Somalis took custody of the two hostages when they went ashore after the pirates beached the yacht they were travelling in during November 2010. The pirates immediately left in a southerly direction towards Lamu while the hostages and their escorts made their way in a northerly direction towards Kismayo.

Mogadishu: **PELIZZARI** believes that they were kept in Mogadishu after travelling past Kismayo, Barawe and Merca. Although they were blindfolded when travelling and kept behind closed doors, handcuffed and in dark rooms, they could hear the sounds of traffic and people passing by. **PELIZZARI** also heard the noises of planes landing and departing at short intervals. This to him was an indication that they were near a busy airport. They were moved frequently during their captivity. He is also of the opinion that one of the places that they were held was in or close to a mosque. This notion is based on hearing praying and singing of Muslims on regular times during the day. They were also guarded by young Somali militias that consisted of groups of six at a time. The guards were also regularly changed. He described the guards as very disciplined and religious. The guards wore civilian clothing inside the house but changed into military uniform when they had to travel somewhere. Most of the travelling took place when they had to move to a new place of captivity or

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when it was required to make a phone call. They were involved in a car accident during one of their travels and were taken to a clinic for treatment in Mogadishu. A Somali visited them once a week to enquire about their health and to provide them with medical treatment if required. At some stage, they were treated for Malaria and issued with a certificate indicating that it was issued by a clinic in Baaidihabo.

PELIZZARI was aware of another foreigner kept in a room adjacent to theirs. Though there was little contact between them, he could establish that the hostage was French speaking. He introduced himself as “Danny” and disclosed that he was working on a tunnel in Somalia before he was kidnapped. The foreigner received treatment for a bad head wound by the visiting Somali doctor.

Identity of Capturers: There was very little communication between the hostages and their capturers. On a few occasions, they were required to answer proof of life questions on a piece of paper. On two occasions, they were allowed to speak to **HECHT** on a cell phone but were given strict instructions to what they could say. They were taken to a different location for the telephone conversations with **HECHT**.

Release of the Hostages:

On more than one occasion, the hostages were informed that they were due to be released. When they were notified on 20 June 2012 that their release was eminent, they travelled for six and half hours in an SUV in a south–easterly direction. Other vehicles escorted their SUV with militias mounted at the back. For the first leg of their journey they were blindfolded. They passed various checkpoints and at some of these checkpoints they were allowed to proceed without stopping while at others the driver had either to negotiate or make a phone call. After passing one of the checkpoints, the driver told them to remove their blindfolds and announced to them that they were free. The driver introduced himself as Adam **FABIYO**. He then made a phone call and allowed the hostages to speak to “Marco” who confirmed to them that they were to be released. **FABIYO** also informed them that they were in “no-man’s land” and that

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they had to pass one checkpoint before they would be safe. The escort vehicle was stopped at the final checkpoint, but **FABIYO** was allowed to proceed to Mogadishu.

A short while later members of the TFG Security Forces and Italian Government officials met the hostages. They were taken to a Hotel in Mogadishu. The following morning they were taken to Villa Somalia where a conference was held and they were formally handed over to the Italian Officials.

