

Video 4: The rock found in El Ali: Is it gold or diamond?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PB46J_2LPoU

There is debate for the past few days, and leaders and politicians have spoken out a lot about a rock that has been said to be precious brought from El Ali area in Hiiraan region in Somalia.

Members of Somalia's Federal parliament and those of Hirshabelle as well as local leaders spoke differently about this issue. Some of them are warning that there are individuals trying to quarry more precious rocks which are available in El Ali area. The local Mayor of El Ali named Yarow Omar Abikar has given an interview to our reporter Abdullahi Kulmiye Adow.

Local Mayor You know, during the (1990s), the Canadians tried and likewise the government before (President) Abdullahi Yusuf tried to dig it out and they were chased away and were fought off.

Reporter: The UNISOM forces?

Local Leader: Yes, and since then, local forces were protecting it whether they won or defeated. And this last time, they were overpowered and it was taken away. Whatever their intention was, it is now in the hands of the Federal Government.

Reporter: Is this the first attempt or there were previous minor things?

Local Leader: No, there were many attempts of people saying we are testing it, we came to see it, and people circling around it. They were chased away. But this is the first instance of bulldozers and cranes coming to dig it out. Al Shabaab also made previous attempts to dig it out but their bulldozers and cranes were broken. Then, they killed some of the local militia and others escaped. They then came with big and powerful cranes. I do not know where they got them. Majority are saying that the cranes left Mogadishu in order to dig it out.

Reporter: The equipment and cranes can be rented. Those who rented it, are they businesspeople or are there any politicians involved per your knowledge?

Local Mayor: No, no politicians were involved and there were no other businesspeople. It is Al Shabaab that forcibly excavated this thing. And they will be asked how they knew about it. Then, individuals claiming to be businesses were captured with it in a truck owned in the area. They are all in custody, and we are waiting for information.

Reporter: As far as you know as the mayor, did anyone contact you while there, whether or not they got what they wanted?

Local Mayor: I am the one who was supporting the forces that were protecting it. Afterwards, there were specific locals that I was in contact with who were watching it in the field as well as locals. We were overpowered.

Reporter: When you assigned those forces and you oversaw locals, did you receive support from anyone?

Local Mayor: We were in charge of the whole area. There are 12 villages under El Ali district. The 12 villages were under our administration.

Reporter: Mr. Mayor, since you assigned forces to the hill, there must be something you know about it. What are these rocks or hills made of?

Local Mayor: You do not need to ask me that now. There are many resources in the country and it is one of those resources. And it is not just El Ali. Our country is full of resources.

Reporter: Yes, but since you funded soldiers to guard this Shiid Birood hill in a bid to protect this national resource, what can you tell us about what the hill is made of?

Local Mayor: The hill is a huge one. It is not just one rock. And the classifications of it I am unable to tell you but we know there are resources.

Reporter: By protecting it, you knew something.

Local Mayor: We were responsible for the whole area, how are you talking to me?

Reporter: That is your responsibility as an administration. Please tell the listeners about why you and locals volunteered for this. What information do you have?

Local Mayor: When the UNISOM troops tried to dig there, we chased them away. We understood that there is some resource that they know which they are looking for. We refused to let even soil to be taken from there. That's how we protected it.

Reporter: Several businesspeople went there, some tests were done. Did you finally get information on what this Shiid Birood hill is made of?

Local Mayor: I do not know if these men claiming to be businessmen are actually businessmen. They took off from Buq Aqable, they discussed it with Al Shabaab. They said they bought from them. I do not know if that is true or if they were behind the plot to fund Al Shabaab. But to tell you about the value of the rock and the hill, it is not something I can easily tell. I heard the Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals issued people with a license to export and this is not the kind of thing that can be sold because it is one of the most expensive rocks and hills.

Reporter: Who gave you the information that it is expensive, that this is a precious stone?

Local Mayor: It is based on information I gathered as well as the amount they said they paid to Al Shabaab to sell it for more funds and how they never give up on it clearly indicate everything. And there are Somali experts who know these things who are speaking out now saying they know of it and they know what it is made up of and that it is material that has never been found in Somalia. We hear these things but I do not have the knowledge to be able to say I tested it and I found out something. Our goal was to protect it from misuse by private individuals or enemies until the country gets a government that protects national resources.

Reporter: Yarow Omar Abikar, you are the Mayor of El Ali, and people expect you to shed some light on this thing that cost so much, where bulldozers were transported there and heavy equipment and this whole effort as well as the troops you positioned there to protect it for the area. Is there anything you can mention about what this rock or hill is made of?

Local Mayor: Do you hear me? I do not know types of rocks. It is gold, it is this, or it is that, people who studied these things can tell us about it after tests. We were preventing people who know what is in there from taking it and the reason being it is a Somali resource, it is a resource for the local area.

Reporter: Were you protecting something you knew nothing about, or did you know about it?

Local Mayor: I told you, We chased away foreign forces from Canada who wanted to excavate it. And since then, we put all our effort to watch it and we succeeded mostly, thanks God.