

Following the Oct. 5 twin U.S. commando raids in Africa, targeting suspected terrorist leaders, new information is emerging about the targets themselves, why the U.S. military sought to capture them alive and how Navy SEALs in Somalia came up empty handed, while Army Delta Force Operators in Libya captured their intended target without firing a shot.

(MORE: After U.S. raid, Somalis brace for al-Shabab reprisals.)

The target of the Somalia raid was Abdikadar Mohamed Abdikadar, better known as Ikrima, a Kenyan of Somali decent who is believed to be a key operations planner and recruiter for al-Shabab, a Somali extremist group linked to al-Qaeda. Norway's TV2 has reported that Ikrima traveled to Oslo in 2004 to seek asylum, but left in 2008 before Norway decided on his application. According to a Kenyan intelligence report that was leaked to the media after the Sept. 21 terror attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Ikrima was a lead planner in an al-Qaeda plot to carry out several attacks in Kenya, including parliament buildings and the U.N. Office in Nairobi. Somali intelligence, citing a defector from al-Shabab, said that Ikrima is well-connected and has organized operations on both sides of the Somali-Kenyan border. Ikrima also appears to be closely linked to the leader of Al-Shabab, Mukhtar Abu Zubayr, who also goes by the name Ahmed Abdi Godane.

The U.S. military has been mum so far on why exactly they targeted Ikrima for a capture mission, but they have offered new details of the operation. Military officials told Foreign Policy that SEALs came ashore and made it past the beach, then came under heavy fire. The commander made the decision to pull back once he determined they could not capture Ikrima alive. "Once the gunfight breaks out, they realize they're not going to be able to capture this guy without the risk becoming too high," a military official told Foreign Policy. "They made a decision, 'hey, not today,' and out they came." Two days after the raid, NBC reported that the SEALs cut the mission short because children showed up and were intermingled with the fighters.

While the inability to capture the intended target colors the mission as a failure, doctrinally, it wasn't a disaster. A raid is a surprise attack for a specific purpose—destroying a position, killing or capturing enemy troops or freeing prisoners—but it always ends with a carefully planned withdrawal. The American departure—with no loss of life—was a success.

(MORE: Behind Kenya's war with al-Shabab.)

New details have also emerged about the mission that successfully captured suspected senior al-Qaeda member Abu Anas al-Liby in Tripoli Saturday morning. Abdullah al-Ruqai, al-Liby's 21-year-old son told the Guardian newspaper that his father was parking his car outside their home in the suburb of Noufle'een when three white cars blocked the street, followed by a van. Masked men smashed the driver's side window of al-Liby's car, dragged him out, tossed him in the van and roared away.

The entire operation was over in seconds, and no shots were fired. Initial reports said that the mission was carried out by Army Delta Force operators who were assisted by the FBI and CIA, but al-Ruqai told the Guardian that the men shouted with Libyan accents. After the operation, Libya's interim government condemned the capture and called it a kidnapping, but later said they were asking for "clarifications" and that they hoped it would not endanger Libya's strategic relationship with the U.S.

Al-Liby's capture has raised concerns about how he avoided arrest for so long. For more than a decade, he has been one of the most wanted terrorists in the world. In 2000, he was indicted in New York on charges of conspiring with Osama bin Laden on plots to attack U.S. forces and the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, where 224 people were killed. When the FBI created the Most Wanted Terrorists list after September 11, he offered a \$5 million bounty for information on his whereabouts.

(MORE: How al-Liby's capture deepens Libya's sense of crisis.)

At the time of the embassy bombings, al-Liby was living in Manchester, England where he had been granted asylum in 1995. He was questioned by the FBI, and when he was released he fled the country. In 1999, British police raided his house and found a 180-page al Qaeda manual. Since al-Liby's capture in Tripoli, British members of parliament have questioned why an al-Qaeda suspect with ties to Libyan terrorist organizations was given political asylum in Britain in the first place.

For now, al-Liby is being held aboard the USS San Antonio in the Mediterranean, where he is being questioned by U.S. investigators. Officials told CBS News that he will be brought to New York to face charges, but not before officials have a chance to question him about al-Qaeda activities and possible terrorist operations in the future. The FBI and CIA will get their shot to interrogate al-Liby—an opportunity they probably wish they had with Ikrima, the jihadi who got away.

Read more: <http://world.time.com/2013/10/08/a-tale-of-two-jihadis-what-we-know-about-the-u-s-s-africa-terror-targets/#ixzz2hFUqrijN>