

Kata'ib Sayyid al Shuhada

Name: Kata'ib Sayyid al Shuhada

Type of Organization:

- Militia
- political party
- religious
- social services provider
- terrorist
- transnational
- violent

Ideologies and Affiliations:

- Iranian-sponsored
- Shiite
- Jihadist
- Khomeinist

Place of Origin:

Iraq

Year of Origin:

2013

Founder(s):

Abu Mustafa al Sheibani

Places of Operation:

Iraq, Syria

Overview

Also Known As

- Kata'ib Abu Fadl al-Abbas¹
- Kata'ib Karbala²
- Battalion of the Sayyid's Martyrs³

Executive Summary

Kata'ib Sayyid al Shuhada (KSS) is an Iraqi militia that has fought in both Iraq and Syria and is closely connected to Iran's [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#) (IRGC) and the [Houthis](#).⁴ Its leader is Abu Mustafa al Sheibani, a U.S.-designated terrorist who also assisted in forming the IRGC-backed [Asaib Ahl al-Haq](#) (AAH) and [Kata'ib Hezbollah](#) (KH) militias.⁵

The group was founded in 2013. Its first public announcements were three martyrdom notices for members killed fighting in southern Damascus alongside Syrian regime forces.⁶ In Syria, KSS operates within the fold of the mixed Syrian and Iraqi Liwa Abu Fadl al-Abbas, another Iranian-backed militia.⁷

KSS follows the same Shiite jihadist ideology as fellow pro-Iranian Iraqi militias, framing its fight in Syria as a defense of Shiites and the Shiite shrine of Sayyida Zaynab.⁸ In a 2013 interview, KSS's information office stated that the group sent 500 militants to Syria.⁹ Other media

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statements have affirmed the presence of KSS fighters in rural Damascus along the frontlines in eastern Ghouta.¹⁰ The Associated Press has reported that KSS fighters enter Syria via Iran.¹¹

In 2015, KSS declared Saudi Arabia “a legitimate and permissible target” after that country executed a prominent Shiite cleric.¹² A 2018 KSS statement indicated the group was ready to send fighters to Yemen. KSS’s leader wrote, “I am a soldier standing at the signal of Sayyid Abdel Malek al Houthi [leader of the Houthis].”¹³ Both of these actions indicate that KSS firmly sees itself as part of a global Shiite jihadist movement. In June 2020, the Republican Study Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives recommended designating KSS as a terrorist group. The recommendation also included other PMF factions Badr Organization, Kataib al-Imam Ali, Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas, and Jund al-Islam.¹⁴

Doctrine

KSS follows the same global Shiite jihadist ideology as other IRGC-backed Shiite militant groups such as [Asaib Ahl al-Haq \(AAH\)](#) and [Kata'ib Hezbollah \(KH\)](#).¹⁵ Its militant activity in Syria was framed as a holy war to protect the Shiite shrine of Sayyida Zaynab, and KSS has publicly pledged its loyalty to the Houthis, indicating its support for a global Shiite armed movement.¹⁶

Organizational Structure

Shiite-militia expert Phillip Smyth claimed in late 2013 that KSS appears to be closely tied to the [Badr Organization](#), both ideologically and in terms of shared fighters in Syria.¹⁷ KSS claims to have sent 500 militants to Syria in 2013, where it fought alongside the Syrian regime until at least 2015.¹⁸

The group corresponds to the 14th Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) brigade.¹⁹ KSS is connected to the Syrian Liwa al-Muntadhir and corresponds to the 7th PMF Brigade led by Dagher al-Mousawi.²⁰ According to Smyth, KSS may be essentially a front for the military arm of the Sayyid al-Shuhada Movement, a jihadist political group allegedly backed by Iran and based in Basra, Iraq.²¹ Many of KSS’s reported casualties have been militants from the Basra region.²²

Financing

KSS receives funding directly from the IRGC’s Quds Force—a special branch of the IRGC tasked with achieving sensitive missions beyond Iran’s borders—and, as a member of the PMF, from the Iraqi government.²³

Recruitment

Based on its reported losses, apparently KSS largely recruits from the southern Iraqi city of Basra, as well as from the Dhi Qar Province.²⁴ On September 15, 2016, KSS released a new call for recruits.²⁵

Training

An August 2016 video, which has since been removed by YouTube, showed KSS fighters training in Syria with heavy machine guns.²⁶ The group also receives training directly from the IRGC. The U.S. Treasury Department accused IRGC commander Ahmed Foruzandeh of training the Basra-based Sayyid al-Shuhada movement. Shiite-militia expert Phillip Smyth believes KSS is a front for the Sayyid al-Shuhada organization’s military arm.²⁷

KSS has also reportedly trained extensively in the use of drones. KSS Secretary General Abu Waala al Wa’eli expressed “enthusiasm for [drone warfare](#)” and stated in a 2019 interview, “We are working day and night to develop drones that can be put together in a living room.”²⁸

¹ “Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS),” Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, accessed March 24, 2020, <https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/kata'ib-sayyid-al-shuhada-kss>.

² “Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS),” Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, accessed March 24, 2020, <https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/kata'ib-sayyid-al-shuhada-kss>.

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- “Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS),” Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, accessed March 24, 2020, <https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/kata'ib-sayyid-al-shuhada-kss>.
- ⁴ Caleb Weiss, “Iraqi Shia Militia ‘Willing to Send Fighters to Yemen,’” Long War Journal, July 9, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/iraqi-shia-militia-willing-to-send-fighters-to-yemen.php>.
- ⁵ Caleb Weiss, “Iraqi Shia Militia ‘Willing to Send Fighters to Yemen,’” Long War Journal, July 9, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/iraqi-shia-militia-willing-to-send-fighters-to-yemen.php>; Phillip Smyth, “Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada: Another Supplier of Iraqi Shia Fighters in Syria,” Jihadology, June 3, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/06/03/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-another-supplier-of-iraqi-shia-fighters-in-syria/>.
- ⁶ Phillip Smyth, “Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada: Another Supplier of Iraqi Shia Fighters in Syria,” Jihadology, June 3, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/06/03/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-another-supplier-of-iraqi-shia-fighters-in-syria/>.
- ⁷ Phillip Smyth, “Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada: Another Supplier of Iraqi Shia Fighters in Syria,” Jihadology, June 3, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/06/03/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-another-supplier-of-iraqi-shia-fighters-in-syria/>.
- ⁸ Phillip Smyth, “Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada Emerges: Updates on the New Iraqi Shia Militia Supplying Fighters to Syria,” Jihadology, September 9, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/09/09/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-emerges-updates-on-the-new-iraqi-shia-militia-supplying-fighters-to-syria/>; Phillip Smyth, “Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada: Another Supplier of Iraqi Shia Fighters in Syria,” Jihadology, June 3, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/06/03/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-another-supplier-of-iraqi-shia-fighters-in-syria/>.
- ⁹ Phillip Smyth, “Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada Emerges: Updates on the New Iraqi Shia Militia Supplying Fighters to Syria,” Jihadology, September 9, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/09/09/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-emerges-updates-on-the-new-iraqi-shia-militia-supplying-fighters-to-syria/>.
- ¹⁰ Phillip Smyth, “Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada Emerges: Updates on the New Iraqi Shia Militia Supplying Fighters to Syria,” Jihadology, September 9, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/09/09/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-emerges-updates-on-the-new-iraqi-shia-militia-supplying-fighters-to-syria/>.
- ¹¹ “Treasury Designates Individuals, Entity Fueling Iraqi Insurgency,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, January 9, 2008, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/hp759.aspx>; Phillip Smyth, “From Karbala to Sayyida Zaynab: Iraqi Fighters in Syria’s Shi’a Militias,” Combating Terrorism Center *Sentinel* 6, no. 8 (August 2013), <https://ctc.usma.edu/from-karbala-to-sayyida-zaynab-iraqi-fighters-in-syrrias-shia-militias/>.
- ¹² Caleb Weiss, “Iraqi Shia Militia ‘Willing to Send Fighters to Yemen,’” Long War Journal, July 9, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/iraqi-shia-militia-willing-to-send-fighters-to-yemen.php>.
- ¹³ Caleb Weiss, “Iraqi Shia Militia ‘Willing to Send Fighters to Yemen,’” Long War Journal, July 9, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/iraqi-shia-militia-willing-to-send-fighters-to-yemen.php>.
- ¹⁴ “US Recommends Designating Badr Organization’s Leader, PMF Factions as Terrorists,” *Asharq al-Awsat* (London), June 12, 2020, <https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/2330586/us-recommends-designating-badr-organizations-leader-pmf-factions-terrorists>; Joyce Karam, “Congress Republicans table largest sanctions plan against Iran,” *National* (Abu Dhabi), June 10, 2020, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/the-americas/congress-republicans-table-largest-sanctions-plan-against-iran-1.1031877>.
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- ¹⁶ Phillip Smyth, “Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada Emerges: Updates on the New Iraqi Shia Militia Supplying Fighters to Syria,” Jihadology, September 9, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/09/09/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-emerges-updates-on-the-new-iraqi-shia-militia-supplying-fighters-to-syria/>; Phillip Smyth, “Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada: Another Supplier of Iraqi Shia Fighters in Syria,” Jihadology, June 3, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/06/03/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-another-supplier-of-iraqi-shia-fighters-in-syria/>; Caleb Weiss, “Iraqi Shia Militia ‘Willing to Send Fighters to Yemen,’” Long War Journal, July 9, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/iraqi-shia-militia-willing-to-send-fighters-to-yemen.php>.
- ¹⁷ Phillip Smyth, “Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada Emerges: Updates on the New Iraqi Shia Militia Supplying Fighters to Syria,” Jihadology, September 9, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/09/09/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-emerges-updates-on-the-new-iraqi-shia-militia-supplying-fighters-to-syria/>.
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- ¹⁹ Jessa Rose Dury-Agri, Omer Kassim, and Patrick Martin, *Iraqi Security Forces and Popular Mobilization Forces: Orders of Battle, Institute for the Study of War* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2017), 43, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Iraq%20-%20ISF%20PMF%20Orders%20of%20Battle_0_0.pdf.
- ²⁰ Jessa Rose Dury-Agri, Omer Kassim, and Patrick Martin, *Iraqi Security Forces and Popular Mobilization Forces: Orders of Battle, Institute for the Study of War* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2017), 43, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Iraq%20-%20ISF%20PMF%20Orders%20of%20Battle_0_0.pdf.
- ²¹ Phillip Smyth, “From Karbala to Sayyida Zaynab: Iraqi Fighters in Syria’s Shi’a Militias,” Combating Terrorism Center *Sentinel* 6, no. 8 (August 2013), <https://ctc.usma.edu/from-karbala-to-sayyida-zaynab-iraqi-fighters-in-syrrias-shia-militias/>; Reidar Visser, “Iraq,” in *Militancy and Political Violence in Shiism: Trends and Patterns*, ed. Assaf Moghadam (New York: Routledge, 2012), 107.
- ²² Phillip Smyth, “From Karbala to Sayyida Zaynab: Iraqi Fighters in Syria’s Shi’a Militias,” Combating Terrorism Center *Sentinel* 6, no. 8 (August 2013), <https://ctc.usma.edu/from-karbala-to-sayyida-zaynab-iraqi-fighters-in-syrrias-shia-militias/>.
- ²³ “Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada,” Mapping Militant Organizations, last updated December 28, 2016, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/629>.
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- ²⁵ Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, “Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada’ Launches New Recruiting Advertisement,” Jihad Intel, September 15, 2016, <https://jihadintel.meforum.org/184/kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-launches-new-recruiting>.
- ²⁶ YouTube: “????? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ????,” August 6, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWcRAFxDGvc>.
- ²⁷ Phillip Smyth, “From Karbala to Sayyida Zaynab: Iraqi Fighters in Syria’s Shi’a Militias,” Combating Terrorism Center *Sentinel* 6, no. 8 (August 2013), <https://ctc.usma.edu/from-karbala-to-sayyida-zaynab-iraqi-fighters-in-syrrias-shia-militias/>.

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²⁸ Patrick Cockburn, "Just as Iraq Begins to Find Peace, It Once Again Becomes the Battleground for an American Proxy War," *Independent* (London), September 27, 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/iraq-us-iran-israel-proxy-war-middle-east-peace-abu-alaa-al-walai-shia-a9123436.html>.

Key Leaders



Abu Waala al Wa'eli
Secretary-General

Falih Khazali
Spokesman

Abu Mustafa al Sheibani
Senior leader and commander

Kata'ib Sayyid al Shuhada

History:

- **February 26, 2021:** The United States launches airstrikes in Syria against targets linked to Iran-backed militias, reportedly killing at least 22 members of Kata'ib Hezbollah and Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces.

According to the Pentagon, the strikes target a weapons shipment from Iraq to Syria and struck facilities belonging to KH and KSS. The Pentagon says the strikes are in retaliation for a February 15 rocket attack on an Iraqi base that killed a civilian contractor and wounded an American service member. KH denied responsibility for recent attacks on U.S. interests in the region. The airstrikes are the first military action taken by the Biden administration. Sources: Robyn Dixon and Sarah Dadouch, "Russia says U.S. gave only a few minutes' warning before strike in Syria," *Washington Post*, February 26, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/russia-syria-us-strike/2021/02/26/57e602b2-782a-11eb-9489-8f7dadc51e75_story.html; Lolita C. Baldor and Robert Burns, "US bombs facilities in Syria used by Iran-backed militia," Associated Press, February 26, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/ap-top-news-john-kirby-iran-syria-iraq-c10b1fb0ed653e687bfbf57d04b591b5>.
- On March 11, suspected Iranian-backed militias in Iraq launch rocket attacks from the Rashediya area of northeast Baghdad.

The missiles target a military base at Camp Taji, 17 miles north of Baghdad. The attack kills three—two Americans and one British soldier—and injures at least 14 others. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the airstrikes were allegedly in retaliation for airstrikes previously carried out across the Iraqi border around the Syrian city of Abu Kamal. No group claims responsibility for the attack. On March 12 and into the morning of March 13, the United States launches airstrikes in the Baghdad region, targeting five KH weapons facilities as well as a military base shared by KH, KSS, and other militias. The U.S. Department of Defense calls the retaliatory strikes "defensive, proportional, and in direct response to the threat posed by Iranian-backed Shia militia groups ... who continue to attack bases hosting ... coalition forces." Sources: Dan Lamothe and Louisa Loveluck, "U.S. and coalition troops killed in rocket attack in Iraq, potentially spiking tensions with Iran," *Washington Post*, March 11, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2020/03/11/us-coalition-troops-killed-rocket-attack-iraq-potentially-spiking-tensions-with-iran/>; Alissa J. Rubin and Eric Schmitt, "Rocket Attack Kills Three U.S. Coalition Members in Iraq," *New York Times*, March 11, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/world/middleeast/us-troops-killed-iraq-rocket-attack.html>; "UK soldier and two Americans killed in rocket attack in Iraq," BBC News, March 12, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-51842744>; Lolita C. Baldor, "Pentagon: US strikes Iran-backed group that hit Iraq base," Associated Press, March 12, 2020, <https://apnews.com/5ff9d48d1bdb22b1e4243d18930b159>; Carla Babb and Jeff Seidin, "US Hits Back in Iraq, Targeting Militia Behind Deadly Rocket Attack," *Voice of America*, March 13, 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/usa/us-hits-back-iraq-targeting-militia-behind-deadly-rocket-attack>; "Statement by the Department of Defense," U.S. Department of Defense, March 12, 2020, <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2110827/statement-by-the-department-of-defense/>; Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, "Pentagon Order to Plan for Escalation in Iraq Meets Warning From Top Commander," *New York Times*, March 27, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/27/world/middleeast/pentagon-iran-iraq-militias-coronavirus.html?searchResultPosition=1>; John Davison and Ahmed Rasheed, "Fractures grow among Iraq militias, spell political retreat," Reuters, April 1, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-militias/fractures-grow-among-iraq-militias-spell-political-retreat-idUSKBN21J5EZ>; Ali Mamouri, "Iran-backed militias in Iraq under fire after attack on base kills two Americans," *Al-Monitor*, March 12, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/03/iraq-us-troops-taji-baghdad-iran-pmu.html>.
- **August 28, 2019:** KSS Secretary-General Abu Waala al Wa'eli threatens to kidnap U.S. civilians in Iraq during an interview with Iraqi television station al-Dijla.

Wa'eli also threatens to attack the U.S. Embassy in Iraq and send drones into Israel. Sources: Kosar Nawzad, "Head of pro-Iran militia threatens Americans in Iraq," *Kurdistan 24*, August 30, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/20578-Head-of-pro-Iran-militia-threatens-Americans-in-Iraq>; "Iraqi Shiite Militia Leader Abu Alaa Al-Walal: If U.S.-Iran War Breaks Out, We Will Fight alongside Iran. All Americans in Iraq Will Be Held Hostages by the Resistance; We Could Easily Send Drone to Strike (U.S.) Embassy," Middle East Media Research Institute, August 28, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/tv/iraqi-shiite-militia-leader-walal-sayyid-shuhada-battalions-war-america-iran-side>.
- A weapons depot run by KSS explodes, killing one and injuring 37, in southern Baghdad.

Source: Kosar Nawzad, "Head of Pro-Iran Militia Threatens Americans in Iraq," *Kurdistan 24*, August 30, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/bd6f683c-8a20-4d19-a081-c12edd56915>.
- KSS's secretary general declares that the group would send militants to support the Houthis in Yemen if requested.

Source: Caleb Weiss, "Iraqi Shia Militia 'Willing to Send Fighters to Yemen,'" *Long War Journal*, July 9, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/iraqi-shia-militia-willing-to-send-fighters-to-yemen.php>.
- KSS accuses and denounces Israel, the United States, and the Iraqi government for airstrikes carried out against KH in Syria.

Source: Caleb Weiss, "Shia Militias across the Middle East Send Condolences to Hezbollah Brigades," *Threat Matrix*, June 22, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/06/shia-militias-across-the-middle-east-send-condolences-to-hezbollah-brigades.php>.
- A KSS video shows militants using a U.S.-made M1 Abrams tank.

The United States suspends maintenance of Abrams tanks in Iraq in response. Sources: Caleb Weiss, "Iranian-Backed Militia Seen with US Tank in Iraq," *Threat Matrix*, February 8, 2016, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/02/iranian-backed-militia-seen-with-us-tank-in-iraq.php>; David Axe, "Made in America, But Lost in Iraq," *Foreign Policy*, March 2, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/02/u-s-made-tanks-that-fell-into-militia-hands-in-iraq-sparks-assistance-standoff>.
- KSS declares that Saudi Arabia is "a legitimate and permissible target" after the country executes a prominent Shiite cleric.

Source: Caleb Weiss, "Iraqi Shia Militia 'Willing to Send Fighters to Yemen,'" *Long War Journal*, July 9, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/iraqi-shia-militia-willing-to-send-fighters-to-yemen.php>.
- **October 15, 2014:** After Saudi Arabia issues a death sentence for a prominent Shiite cleric, KSS issues a statement claiming "anything of Saudi origin on the level of building or person [is] a target for [KSS]; and [it] will not hold back capability in burning or destroying anything tied to this tyrannical kingdom if these authorities do not review this unjust execution decision."

Source: Aymenn al-Tamimi, "Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada—Threats to Saudi Arabia: Translation and Analysis," Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi's Blog, October 17, 2014, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2014/10/kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-threats-to-saudi-arabia>.
- KSS officially announces its presence in Syria, fighting alongside Syrian regime forces.

Source: Phillip Smyth, "Appendix 1: Phases Of Shiite Militia Development and Deployment In Syria and Iraq," in *The Shiite Jihad in Syria and Its Regional Effects* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2015), https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PF138Appendices/PF138_Appendix_1.pdf.
- **January 9, 2008:** The U.S. Treasury Department sanctions future KSS leader Abu Mustafa Al-Sheibani "for threatening the peace and stability of Iraq and the Government of Iraq."

**COUNTER
EXTREMISM
PROJECT**

Kata'ib Sayyid al Shuhada

Source: "Treasury Designates Individuals, Entity Fueling Iraqi Insurgency," U.S. Department of the Treasury, January 8, 2008, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/hp759.aspx>.

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Violent history:

- **August 24, 2013:** KSS declares on social media its presence in eastern Ghouta and issues three martyrdom reports. Three days earlier, a brutal chemical weapons attack occurs in eastern Ghouta. Some experts have suggested KSS played a role in preventing survivors from fleeing.²⁹
- **February 2015:** KSS fighters take part in the Syrian army-led siege of Dara'a and Quneitra with the IRGC and Hezbollah.³⁰
- **January 2016:** KSS fighters attack an Iraqi army checkpoint in al-Tanoumah near Basra. KSS then takes part in the formation of the Council of the Islamic Resistance Factions in Basra, a brigade formed to protest the deployment of an Iraqi armored brigade to the area. The brigade withdrew two days after the Council's formation.³¹
- **April 2017:** KSS engages ISIS militants between al-Baa'j and al-Hadher Districts in Iraq.³²
- **August 8, 2017:** ISIS militants kill 37 KSS fighters in an attack on the group's positions near al-Tanf, Syria. KSS claims the United States is responsible, but ISIS later releases documentation of the attack.³³

²⁹ Phillip Smyth, "Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada Emerges: Updates on the New Iraqi Shia Militia Supplying Fighters to Syria," Jihadology, September 9, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/09/09/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-emerges-updates-on-the-new-iraqi-shia-militia-supplying-fighters-to-syria/>.

³⁰ "Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada," Mapping Militant Organizations, Stanford University, last updated December 28, 2016, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/629>.

³¹ "Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada," Mapping Militant Organizations, Stanford University, last updated December 28, 2016, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/629>.

³² Loaa Adel, "Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada Cuts Off IS Supply Line between al-Baa'j and al-Hadher," Iraqi News, April 25, 2017, https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-cuts-off-supply-line-al-baa-j-al-hadher/?utm_content=kuku.io&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=kuku.io.

³³ "Coalition Denies Bombing Iraqi Shiite Militia," Arab News, August 8, 2017, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1141601/middle-east>.

Kata'ib Sayyid al Shuhada

Associations:

Ties to Extremist Entities:

Badr Organization

In late 2013, official Badr websites began promoting KSS propaganda, including pictures of KSS fighters in Syria and official KSS martyrdom announcements.³⁴ Such announcements include pictures of only one Iraqi cleric, Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir Hakim, one of the main figures behind the formation of the Badr Organization.³⁵ Official Badr military webpages have also posted about joint Badr-KSS operations in Syria.³⁶

Hezbollah

KSS is believed to have close ties to Hezbollah. Its members have fought alongside both Hezbollah and IRGC officers during the Syrian regimen-led sieges of Dara'a and Quneitra.⁴⁰

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)

KSS receives funding directly from the IRGC's Quds Force.³⁷ In January 2008, the U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned IRGC commander Ahmed Foruzandeh for various terrorist activities, including the training of Basra-based militant group Sayyid al-Shuhada. Shiite-militia expert Phillip Smyth believes KSS is a front for the military arm of Sayyid al-Shuhada, an Iranian-backed jihadist political movement.³⁸ KSS's leader is a U.S.-designated terrorist who has worked with the IRGC since the late 1980s, including playing a central role in the formation of core IRGC proxy militias AAH and KH.³⁹

Houthis

In October 2018, KSS Secretary-General Abu Waala al Wa'eli announced his group's allegiance with the Houthis in a press statement.⁴¹ In the statement, he declared his personal loyalty to Houthi leader Abdel Malik al-Houthi before claiming that KSS "is a faction" within the Houthi movement.⁴² These announcements came three years after KSS threatened to attack Saudi Arabia outside of Iraq.⁴³

³⁴ Phillip Smyth, "Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada Emerges: Updates on the New Iraqi Shia Militia Supplying Fighters to Syria," Jihadology, September 9, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/09/09/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-emerges-updates-on-the-new-iraqi-shia-militia-supplying-fighters-to-syria/>.

³⁵ Phillip Smyth, "Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada Emerges: Updates on the New Iraqi Shia Militia Supplying Fighters to Syria," Jihadology, September 9, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/09/09/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-emerges-updates-on-the-new-iraqi-shia-militia-supplying-fighters-to-syria/>.

³⁶ Phillip Smyth, "Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada Emerges: Updates on the New Iraqi Shia Militia Supplying Fighters to Syria," Jihadology, September 9, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/09/09/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-emerges-updates-on-the-new-iraqi-shia-militia-supplying-fighters-to-syria/>.

³⁷ "Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada," Mapping Militant Organizations, December 28, 2016, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/629>.

³⁸ Phillip Smyth, "From Karbala to Sayyida Zaynab: Iraqi Fighters in Syria's Shi'a Militias," Combating Terrorism Center *Sentinel* 6, no. 8 (August 2013), <https://ctc.usma.edu/from-karbala-to-sayyida-zaynab-iraqi-fighters-in-syrias-shia-militias/>.

³⁹ Caleb Weiss, "Iraqi Shia Militia 'Willing to Send Fighters to Yemen,'" Long War Journal, July 9, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/iraqi-shia-militia-willing-to-send-fighters-to-yemen.php>; Phillip Smyth, "Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada: Another Supplier of Iraqi Shia Fighters in Syria," Jihadology, June 3, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/06/03/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-another-supplier-of-iraqi-shia-fighters-in-syria/>; Michael Knights, "Iran's Foreign Legion: The Role of Iraqi Shiite Militias in Syria," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 27, 2013, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-foreign-legion-the-role-of-iraqi-shiite-militias-in-syria>.

⁴⁰ "Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada," Mapping Militant Organizations, last updated December 28, 2016, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/629>; David Axe, "Made in America, But Lost in Iraq," *Foreign Policy*, March 2, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/02/u-s-made-tanks-that-fell-into-militia-hands-in-iraq-sparks-assistance-standoff>.

⁴¹ Caleb Weiss, "Iraqi Shia Militia 'Willing to Send Fighters to Yemen,'" Long War Journal, July 9, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/iraqi-shia-militia-willing-to-send-fighters-to-yemen.php>.

⁴² Caleb Weiss, "Iraqi Shia Militia 'Willing to Send Fighters to Yemen,'" Long War Journal, July 9, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/iraqi-shia-militia-willing-to-send-fighters-to-yemen.php>.

⁴³ Bill Roggio, "Popular Mobilization Committee Militia Threatens to 'Strike and Destroy' the Saudi Government," Long War Journal, October 30, 2015, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/10/popular-mobilization-committee-militia-threatens-to-strike-and-destroy-the-saudi-government.php>.

Kata'ib Sayyid al Shuhada

Rhetoric:

Abu Waala al Wa'eli, KSS Secretary-General, August 2019

"If fighting broke out between Satan and America, I would stand with Satan, because America is the Greater Satan."⁴⁴

Abu Waala al Wa'eli, KSS Secretary-General, August 2019

"The easiest thing for me to do, if I were considering a disproportionate retaliation [for attacks on the PMU]... Just like drones bombed our bases, as well as our men near the Syrian border and our camp in Amerli, the easiest thing for us to do would be to send drones, armed with the same weapons or even better ones, and bomb their embassy and all their military bases."⁴⁵

Abu Waala al Wa'eli, KSS Secretary-General, August 2019

"All Americans will be held hostage by the resistance factions in the event of a war."⁴⁶

Abu Waala al Wa'eli, KSS Secretary-General, July 2018

"I declare I am a soldier standing at the signal of Sayyid Abdel Malek al Houthi [the leader of the Houthi movement]...I announce that Kata'ib Sayyid al Shuhada is a faction among your factions O' Ansar Allah [the official name of the Houthis]."⁴⁷

KSS Statement, October 2015

"We in the Sayyid al Shuhada Battalion consider Saudi interests a legitimate and permissible target on all levels, and we will strike and destroy them whenever it pleases us...The rulers of petroleum will learn that the followers of Ahl al Bayt [family of Mohammad] will not be content with defeating [the Saudi government] in Baiji, Ramadi, and other Iraqi areas, but will take the battle to the spider's own nest."⁴⁸

⁴⁴ "Iraqi Shiite Militia Leader Abu Alaa Al-Walal: If U.S.-Iran War Breaks Out, We Will Fight alongside Iran, All Americans in Iraq Will Be Held Hostages by the Resistance; We Could Easily Send Drone to Strike (U.S.) Embassy," Middle East Media Research Institute, August 28, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/tv/iraqi-shiite-militia-leader-walal-sayyid-shuhada-battalions-war-america-iran-side>.

⁴⁵ "Iraqi Shiite Militia Leader Abu Alaa Al-Walal: If U.S.-Iran War Breaks Out, We Will Fight alongside Iran, All Americans in Iraq Will Be Held Hostages by the Resistance; We Could Easily Send Drone to Strike (U.S.) Embassy," Middle East Media Research Institute, August 28, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/tv/iraqi-shiite-militia-leader-walal-sayyid-shuhada-battalions-war-america-iran-side>.

⁴⁶ "Iraqi Shiite Militia Leader Abu Alaa Al-Walal: If U.S.-Iran War Breaks Out, We Will Fight alongside Iran, All Americans in Iraq Will Be Held Hostages by the Resistance; We Could Easily Send Drone to Strike (U.S.) Embassy," Middle East Media Research Institute, August 28, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/tv/iraqi-shiite-militia-leader-walal-sayyid-shuhada-battalions-war-america-iran-side>.

⁴⁷ Caleb Weiss, "Iraqi Shia Militia 'Willing to Send Fighters to Yemen,'" Long War Journal, July 9, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/iraqi-shia-militia-willing-to-send-fighters-to-yemen.php>.

⁴⁸ Bill Roggio, "Popular Mobilization Committee Militia Threatens to 'Strike and Destroy' the Saudi Government," Long War Journal, October 30, 2015, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/10/popular-mobilization-committee-militia-threatens-to-strike-and-destroy-the-saudi-government.php>.