

*Kata'ib Hezbollah*

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**Name:** Kata'ib Hezbollah

**Type of Organization:**

- Militia
- religious
- terrorist
- transnational
- violent

**Ideologies and Affiliations:**

- Iranian-sponsored
- Islamist
- jihadist
- Khomeinist
- Shiite

**Place of Origin:**

Iraq

**Year of Origin:**

2006–2007

**Founder(s):**

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)

**Places of Operation:**

Iraq, Syria

**Overview**

*Executive Summary:*

Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) is an Iranian-sponsored, anti-American Shiite militia operating in Iraq with ancillary operations throughout Syria.<sup>1</sup> During the U.S.-led war in Iraq that began in 2003, KH earned a reputation for planting deadly roadside bombs and using improvised rocket-assisted mortars (IRAMs) to attack U.S. and coalition forces.<sup>2</sup> According to U.S. diplomat Ali Khedery, KH is responsible for “some of the most lethal attacks against U.S. and coalition forces throughout the [U.S.-led war in Iraq].”<sup>3</sup> The group's deceased leader, [Jamal Jaafar Ibrahim](#)<sup>4</sup>—also known by his alias Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes—was the alleged mastermind behind the U.S. and French embassy bombings in Kuwait in 1983 and the assassination attempt on Kuwait's emir in 1985.<sup>4</sup> The group is suspected of involvement in extrajudicial killings and abductions in Iraq's Anbar province, including the May 27, 2016, abduction of more than 70 Sunni boys and men from al-Sijir, and the murder of 49 men from Saqlawiyah.<sup>5</sup> The group has gained exclusive control over the Jurf as-Sakr area west of Baghdad where it prevents displaced Sunni residents from returning and operates private prisons.<sup>6</sup> In August 2019, Washington Institute for Near East Policy fellow Michael Knights assessed that KH posed the greatest threat to U.S. interests in the country.<sup>7</sup>

KH's Ibrahim was killed in a January 3, 2020, U.S. drone strike in Iraq. The strike also [Qasem Soleimani](#), the head of the Quds Force of Iran's [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps \(IRGC\)](#). KH joined with other Iran-backed Iraqi militias in calling for revenge against the United States.<sup>8</sup> KH security official Abu Ali al-Askari called for renewed suicide attacks.<sup>9</sup> Askari also threatened to cut off the flow of oil from Iraq and attack U.S. military bases in Iraq if the United States follows through on a threat by U.S. President Donald Trump to impose sanctions on the country.

<sup>10</sup> Following continued attacks by KH on U.S. interests in March 2020, U.S. defense officials reportedly ordered military commanders in Iraq to draw up plans to destroy KH.<sup>11</sup>

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After the U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq in December 2011, KH sent fighters to defend the Assad regime in Syria, allegedly at the behest of Soleimani.<sup>12</sup> As KH switched from fighting U.S. forces in Iraq to combating Sunni rebels and extremists in Iraq and Syria, KH has continued to prioritize its anti-American agenda, repeatedly boycotting battles against [ISIS](#) in which the U.S. participates.<sup>13</sup>

In January 2018, KH, [Asaib Ahl al-Haq](#) (AAH), and the [Badr Organization](#) joined with other Shiite units to form the Fatah Alliance political party ahead of Iraq's May 2018 elections.<sup>14</sup> The alliance won 47 parliamentary seats in the election, though the parliament soon after called for a manual recount.<sup>15</sup> Notwithstanding, on June 11, the Fatah Alliance formed a coalition agreement with Muqtada al-Sadr's Sairoon Alliance, which won the Iraq elections.<sup>16</sup> This new coalition potentially places Fatah—and by extension KH—in a position to influence the new Iraq government. On July 13, 2018, Iraqi protesters in the country's south attacked the political offices of KH and other Iran-backed groups as they called for Iran to withdraw from Iraq.<sup>17</sup>

KH is reportedly the “most secretive” and elite of Iraq's predominantly Shiite militias.<sup>18</sup> KH has long-standing ties to Iran's external military branch, the IRGC-Quds Force, as well as to Iran's proxy in Lebanon, [Hezbollah](#).<sup>19</sup> KH has maintained a presence along the Iraqi-Syrian border since Iranian-backed Syrian and Iraqi militias captured the border town of al-Qaim from ISIS in November 2017.<sup>20</sup>

On July 1, 2019, Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi issued a decree ordering the militias of the PMF to choose between full integration into the Iraqi armed forces or disarmament by July 31. If the groups oppose integration, they will be considered outlaws. The prime minister's decree stated that the PMF factions have to choose between either political or paramilitary activity and if they choose politics, they are not allowed to carry weapons.<sup>21</sup> The decree was an attempt by Abdul Mahdi at gaining influence over the Iran-backed militias, which boast more than 120,000 fighters. Some critics suggested the United States and Saudi Arabia instigated the decree after U.S. officials concluded that drone attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil pipeline in May 2018 were launched from Iraq, not Yemen, which raised the concerns over the activities of Iran-backed militias in Iraq.<sup>22</sup> U.S. officials want the Iraqi government to do more to rein in Iranian-allied militias that have grown in power since they helped win the war against ISIS, including preventing them from using Iraqi territory as a launchpad for attacks against the American military or its allies. KH slammed Abdul Mahdi's decree, calling it a regional and international scheme that “would weaken security” and “strengthen the presence and goals of the American enemy, producing another [ISIS].”<sup>23</sup>

According to Mahdi's decree, all PMF factions must abandon their old names and receive new names in compliance with the regulations of the Iraqi army. The decree forbids political parties and parliamentary blocs from having ties with the PMF. Also, all the headquarters, economic offices, and checkpoints manned by militias are to be shut down.<sup>24</sup> KH has six locations inside Nukhayb adjacent to Saudi territory and still refuses to evacuate Iraq's international border areas. After U.S. reports of Saudi oil sites being targeted from Iraq, KH considers the decree a Saudi-backed attack as a way to usurp KH's autonomy.<sup>25</sup> Abdul Mahdi issued a new decree in September 2019 that restructured the PMF's leadership.<sup>26</sup>

In May 2020, former Iraqi intelligence chief Mustafa al-Kadhimi became Iraq's transitional prime minister, despite threats of violence from KH if parliament approved him as premier. Upon his ascension to the office, Kadhimi appointed an American-trained general to head the interior ministry, which had previously been staffed by leaders of Iranian militias. Kadhimi also pledged to fight against government corruption, which has helped Iran gain influence in the Iraqi government. Iran-backed militias have also used anti-corruption protests as cover for violent activities, such as KH's December 2019 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.<sup>27</sup> KH again threatened Kadhimi in June 2020 after security forces arrested 14 militants allegedly planning attacks around Iraq. KH members in more than a dozen armed vehicles protested outside Kadhimi's residence, demanding the release of their compatriots. Following the militants' release on June 29, the 14 KH members set fire to posters of Kadhimi, as well as U.S. and Israeli flags. KH told Iraqi media that it will never give up its weapons.<sup>28</sup>

### *Doctrine:*

According to the U.S. Department of State, KH is “a radical Shia Islamist group with an anti-Western establishment and jihadist ideology.”<sup>29</sup> The group is virulently anti-American and ideologically loyal to the Iranian regime.

*Anti-American:* During the U.S.-led war in Iraq, KH built its reputation by targeting U.S. personnel and interests and killing numerous U.S. soldiers in terrorist attacks.<sup>30</sup> Since the U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq in December 2011, KH has retained its anti-American ideology. KH's website states that the group's first goal “was and still remains: thwarting the American project in the region, defeat of the occupation, and expelling them from Iraq, broken and humbled.... As for our jihadi pillars, there are four. Firstly, waging jihad against the occupation until the last American is expelled from Iraq.”<sup>31</sup> In KH's efforts to fight ISIS in Iraq, KH remains opposed to any cooperation with the United States. In September 2014, for example, KH released a statement saying, “We will not fight alongside the American troops under any kind of conditions whatsoever. [Our

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only contact with Americans will be] if we fight each other.”<sup>32</sup> In March 2015, KH’s military spokesman reaffirmed the group’s anti-American position, saying, “It is not possible for Kataib Hizbollah or any of the resistance factions to be in the same trench as the Americans.”<sup>33</sup> In December 2017, following ISIS’s defeat in Iraq, KH released a statement declaring that “the enemy of humanity, the US, can no longer desecrate Iraqi soil, as the fighters of [KH] will not allow them to do so.”<sup>34</sup>

*Pro-Iranian:* KH’s loyalty to Iran is key to the group’s ideology. A 2013 RAND Corporation report claims that “Kata’ib Hezbollah, like Lebanese Hezbollah, is used as a tool to ‘export the Islamic revolution’ as practiced in Tehran.”<sup>35</sup> KH openly accepts Iran’s vision of *velayat-e faqih* (Guardianship of the Jurists), a Khomeinist doctrine that calls for religious oversight of the government.<sup>36</sup> Members of KH swear an oath of loyalty to Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah [Ali Khamenei](#), and accept him as their own spiritual leader.<sup>37</sup> KH has increasingly targeted Saudi Arabia, which Iran views as a rival for regional hegemony and has engaged with in a proxy war in Yemen. In May 2019, KH attacked two Saudi oil facilities.<sup>38</sup> In May 2020, KH spokesman Abu Ali al-Askari called for continued “jihad operations” in Saudi Arabia.<sup>39</sup>

### Organizational Structure:

KH is considered the most secretive Shiite militia operating in Iraq.<sup>40</sup> Little is known about the group’s structure, aside from the fact that KH was led by Jamal Jaafar Ibrahim, also known by his *nom de guerre* Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes.<sup>41</sup> Ibrahim died in a January 3, 2020, U.S. airstrike in Iraq.<sup>42</sup> In addition to acting as leader of KH, Ibrahim also served as Iraq’s deputy national security adviser and the deputy commander of the Haashid Shaabi (also called the popular mobilization forces, or PMF), Iraq’s umbrella group of anti-ISIS Shiite militias.<sup>43</sup> The PMF coordinates anti-ISIS military ventures between KH, [Asaib Ahl al-Haq \(AAH\)](#), the [Badr Organization](#), and other predominantly Shiite and Iranian-sponsored militias. KH officially operates as the 45th Brigade of the PMF and controls the 46th Brigade under their affiliate, Saraya al-Difa’ al-Sha’abi.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to carrying out paramilitary activities in Iraq, KH has contributed fighters to pro-Assad forces in Aleppo. Though exact numbers of these fighters are not known, KH had previously claimed in 2015 to have contributed 1,000 fighters to the fight in Aleppo.<sup>45</sup> In 2014, the Foundation for Defense of Democracies estimated the total size of KH to be between 1,000 and 3,000 fighters.<sup>46</sup> However, the U.S. government estimated in 2017 that KH has a total membership of only 400 fighters.<sup>47</sup> As of December 2016, KH maintained an office in the government-held section of Aleppo, decorated with the group’s flags and banners.<sup>48</sup> KH fighters are also reported to have joined Harakat al-Nujaba, an AAH offshoot in Aleppo that is allegedly in part responsible for the slaughter of dozens of Syrian civilians.<sup>49</sup> It is unclear if the KH office in Aleppo remained past the government’s full capture of the city, however KH is known to be operating in the southern Syria governorate of Deir Ez Zor as of June 2018.<sup>50</sup>

KH belongs to the Fatah political alliance, which received the second most votes in Iraq’s May 2018 elections and quickly entered talks with the election winners—Muqtada al-Sadr’s Sairoon Alliance.<sup>51</sup> This new coalition potentially places Fatah—and by extension KH—in a position to receive important governing positions in the new Iraq government. However, a Fatah leader named Karim al-Nuri claimed that “The new coalition is in tune with the vision of Iran and the United States,” meaning the party would not seek to change Iraq’s post-2003 policy of working with both Iran and the United States.<sup>52</sup> In June 2020, Fatah Alliance member Fadhil Fatlawi told Iranian media that the Iraqi parliament was committed to expelling U.S. forces from Iraq.<sup>53</sup> Following Iraq’s October 2021 parliamentary elections, the Fatah Alliance won only 14 seats, decreasing from its 48-seat victory in 2018. KH member and former chief of security Hussein Muanis also ran under the banner of the Harakat Huquq party, winning one seat. He was the first member of KH to openly affiliate with the group in elections, leading to reports KH had officially entered Iraqi politics. KH and Huquq denied any affiliation between the two entities.<sup>54</sup>

Beginning in 2019, new Iran-backed militias appeared to emerge and claim responsibility for attacks against U.S. interests in Iraq. Foreign policy and media analysts in Iraq and the United States questioned the validity of claims from these groups based on suspicions they were recycling old video footage and claiming attacks without evidence.<sup>55</sup> One of the groups to emerge during this time was Ashab al-Kahf (“Companions of the Cave,” AK), reportedly a subgroup of KH that first issued a threat against U.S. forces in April 2020.<sup>56</sup> The group claimed responsibility for an attack on a military convoy in July 2020 in the Salaheddin province. AK also claimed responsibility for an August 11 bombing of a U.S. convoy along the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border, but Iraqi, Kuwaiti, and U.S. sources denied the incident took place.<sup>57</sup> Following the July attack, Iranian media reported that U.S. forces had no choice but to withdraw from Iraq.<sup>58</sup> AK initially claimed responsibility for a barrage of rockets targeting the U.S. Embassy on November 17, 2020. However, KH and the Fatah Coalition issued a statement denying any responsibility or connection between the rocket attack and Shiite militias after it became public that the rockets had killed an Iraqi child.<sup>59</sup> AK has also been linked to AAH, declaring in December 2020 it would unleash street violence if AAH ordered it.<sup>60</sup> AK has denied it has ties to KH, AAH, or any other militias.

<sup>61</sup> In an August 1, 2022, statement, AK accused NATO, the United States, and the United Kingdom of enflaming stoking political tensions in

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Iraq and threatened to attack their embassies and military bases in Iraq and around the Middle East.<sup>62</sup>

KH has used other such façade groups to claim responsibility for attacks without directly implicating itself. Qasem al-Jabbarin has claimed roadside bombings targeting Iraqi supply trucks servicing the U.S. military. The group first came to light in 2020 with a September 17 announcement of an attack on a U.S. convoy.<sup>63</sup> Other suspected façade groups linked to KH include Alwiyat al-Waad al-Haq,<sup>64</sup> Raba Allah,<sup>65</sup> and Usbat al-Thaireen.<sup>66</sup> Another front group, Liwa Thar Muhandis (LTM) (“Revenge of Muhandis Brigade”), emerged in 2020 with claims of rocket attacks on U.S. forces on May 6 that year at Baghdad’s airport and an April 17 missile attack on U.S. helicopters. While the group has been suspected of links to both KH and AAH, some analysts suspect it has no capabilities for actual attacks and is used only to claim attacks.<sup>67</sup>

KH has also mobilized online groups. Unit 10,000 specializes in the publication of propaganda and developing online followers for hacking and collecting open-source intelligence.<sup>68</sup> Another electronic façade group, Fatemiyoun Electronic Squad, formed in January 2020 to carry out cyberattacks on behalf of KH by hacking websites and social media accounts and disrupting oppositional social media accounts by mass reporting community violations.<sup>69</sup>

#### *Islamic Resistance in Iraq*

Following the onset of the Hamas-Israel war in the Gaza Strip in early October 2023, an umbrella group called the Islamic Resistance in Iraq (IRI), claimed responsibility for an October 17 failed drone strike on a U.S. air base in Erbil, Iraq. The IRI is reportedly a coalition of all Iran-backed Shiite militias operating in Iraq, including KH, Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada, Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), and Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN), as well as lesser-known militias, such as Tashkil al-Waritheen. The IRI targets U.S. elements across Iraq and Syria in retaliation for the United State’s perceived role in the Gaza war. The IRI carried out at least 20 more attacks by the end of October. By January 2024, the IRI had carried out more than 100 attacks against U.S. targets in Iraq and Syria.<sup>70</sup>

#### *Financing:*

According to the U.S. government, KH is primarily funded by the government of Iran and, specifically, Iran’s IRGC-Quds Force.<sup>71</sup> In November 2014, wounded U.S. military veterans and family members of deceased U.S. soldiers filed a lawsuit against European banks for processing money from Tehran that bankrolled terrorist attacks in Iraq. According to the lawsuit, KH allegedly received money from Iran to finance terrorist attacks against U.S. soldiers.<sup>72</sup> Syrians who fight in KH’s Syrian branch also receive their salaries directly from Iran.<sup>73</sup>

KH has also reportedly secured funding through kidnap-and-ransom operations, reportedly taking hostage more than two dozen people in December 2015, including Qatari royals, and releasing the hostages more than a year later in exchange for a large payout.<sup>74</sup> In April 2017, Qatari officials arrived in Baghdad carrying a bag with “millions of dollars” in ransom money, destined for KH and other Islamist groups, including Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, an umbrella group that includes the [al-Qaeda](#)-affiliated [Nusra Front](#).<sup>75</sup> Documents released in April 2018 revealed that the Qatari officials had paid \$25 million of a \$150 million ransom to KH in 2017.<sup>76</sup>

KH and fellow PMF unit Liwa al-Tafuf have also taken charge of all PMF activity in western Anbar. Together, the two groups control smuggling and commerce across the Iraq-Syrian border, particularly around the al-Qaim-Abukamal crossing, providing a further source of income for the organizations.<sup>77</sup>

#### *Recruitment:*

KH has sought to lure recruits by advertising its fight against U.S. forces in Iraq. Following the start of the Syrian civil war, the group also advertised its efforts to support Assad forces in neighboring Syria.

During the U.S.-led war in Iraq, KH filmed attacks against U.S. and coalition targets, publishing the films online for propaganda and recruitment purposes.<sup>78</sup> During the Arab Spring, KH and fellow Shiite militia Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) also attempted to attract recruits to fight anti-Assad rebels in Syria by advertising their involvement there. They did so by holding public funerals for fighters in Shiite neighbors in Baghdad, and by posting updates on the groups’ Facebook pages.<sup>79</sup> The two groups also posted phone numbers around Baghdad to attract potential recruits.<sup>80</sup>

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KH launched its own website in 2015, but the site had been deleted as of June 2020.<sup>81</sup> KH has also developed a digital propaganda team that reportedly included 400 people as of June 2020. An investigation by the British *Telegraph* newspaper that month found that KH digital propagandists were flooding Facebook with fake accounts and promoted fake news stories to boost its own standing. According to the *Telegraph* report, Facebook has received millions of dollars in advertising revenue from KH and other Iraqi electronic armies promoting fake news stories on the platform.<sup>82</sup>

KH has formed multiple front groups to recruit Iraqi youth. Created in 2012, the Imam Hussein Scout Association is KH's youth organization and is also affiliated with Lebanese Hezbollah's Kishaf al-Imam al-Mahdi (Mahdi Scouts) youth movement. While the scouts provide sports activities, community service, and social activities for youth, they also indoctrinate children to political Islam, specifically KH ideology. KH iconography is visible in scouting videos while scouts have reportedly praised KH and its members.<sup>83</sup> Another KH-linked group targeting Iraqi youth is Sharia Youth Gathering. Like the Imam Hussein Scouts, Sharia Youth Gathering provides sports and social services while indoctrinating youth to KH ideology.<sup>84</sup> The leadership of both groups is allegedly made up of KH members.<sup>85</sup>

### Training:

KH members have received training from Iran's external military wing, the Quds Force, as well as from Lebanese Hezbollah, another Iranian proxy.<sup>86</sup> By 2008, the Quds Force and Lebanese Hezbollah were running training camps in four locations in Iran (Tehran, Qom, Ahvaz, and Mashhad). There, KH and Iran's other Shiite militias were trained on the use of small arms and explosives.<sup>87</sup> Lebanese Hezbollah also ran training camps in southern Iraq until the group was forced to relocate the camps to Iran in April 2008.<sup>88</sup> By 2010, training camps in Iran continued to provide KH with training related to small arms, surveillance, small unit tactics, and communications.<sup>89</sup> By November 2013, KH members were reportedly being trained in either Iran or Lebanon and then flown to Syria to fight alongside Assad regime forces.<sup>90</sup> By 2015, some KH members were receiving military training at a base near the city of Samarra in northern Iraq.<sup>91</sup> KH has developed especially close ties with Unit 3800, the Lebanese Hezbollah wing devoted to arming and training Iraqi Shiite militias.<sup>92</sup> In June 2015, the group allegedly helped train Bahraini militants.<sup>93</sup>

### Also Known As:

- Battalions of Hezbollah<sup>94</sup>
- Battalions of the Party of God<sup>95</sup>
- Brigades of the Party of God<sup>96</sup>
- Hezbollah Brigades<sup>97</sup>
- Hizballah Brigades<sup>98</sup>
- Hizballah Brigades in Iraq<sup>99</sup>
- Hizballah Brigades-Iraq<sup>100</sup>
- Hizballah Brigades-Iraq of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq<sup>101</sup>
- Islamic Resistance in Iraq<sup>102</sup>
- Kataib Hizb Allah<sup>103</sup>
- Kataib Hizballah<sup>104</sup>
- Kata'ib Hezbollah<sup>105</sup>
- Kata'ib Hizballah<sup>106</sup>
- Kata'ib Hizballah fi al-Iraq<sup>107</sup>
- Kataib Hizbullah<sup>108</sup>
- Katibat Abu Fathel Al A'abas<sup>109</sup>
- Katibat Zayd Ebin Ali<sup>110</sup>
- Katibut Karbala<sup>111</sup>
- Khata'ib Hezbollah<sup>112</sup>
- Khata'ib Hizballah<sup>113</sup>
- Khattab Hezbollah<sup>114</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Farnaz Fassihi, Jay Solomon, and Sam Dagher, "Iranians Dial Up Presence in Syria," *Wall Street Journal*, September 16, 2013, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887323864604579067382861808984>;

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Associated Press, "Assad relies on foreign fighters in push to retake Aleppo," Fox News, December 10, 2016, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/12/10/assad-relies-on-foreign-fighters-in-push-to-retake-aleppo.html>.

<sup>2</sup> "Treasury Designates Individual, Entity Posing Threat to Stability in Iraq," U.S. Department of the Treasury, July 2, 2009, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg195.aspx>; *Terrorist Groups in Syria: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade of the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives*, 113th Cong. 17-24 (2013) (statement of Phillip Smyth, Middle East research analyst, University of Maryland), <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113hhrg85643/pdf/CHRG-113hhrg85643.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Ali Khedery, "Iran's Shiite Militias Are Running Amok in Iraq," *Foreign Policy*, February 19, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/19/irans-shiite-militias-are-running-amok-in-iraq/>.

<sup>4</sup> Richard R. Brennan et al., eds., *Ending the U.S. War in Iraq: the Final Transition, Operational Maneuver, and Disestablishment of United States Forces-Iraq* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2013), 138-139, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR200/RR232/RAND\\_RR232.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR200/RR232/RAND_RR232.pdf); Ali Khedery, "Iran's Shiite Militias Are Running Amok in Iraq," *Foreign Policy*, February 19, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/19/irans-shiite-militias-are-running-amok-in-iraq/>; "Treasury Designates Individual, Entity Posing Threat to Stability in Iraq," U.S. Department of the Treasury, July 2, 2009, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg195.aspx>.



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[releases/Pages/tg195.aspx.](#)

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- <sup>6</sup> Michael Knights, “Iran’s Expanding Militia Army in Iraq: The New Special Groups,” *CTC Sentinel*, Vol 12, Issue 17, August 2019, <https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2019/08/CTC-SENTINEL-072019.pdf>.
- <sup>7</sup> Michael Knights, “Iran’s Expanding Militia Army in Iraq: The New Special Groups,” *CTC Sentinel*, Vol 12, Issue 17, August 2019, <https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2019/08/CTC-SENTINEL-072019.pdf>.
- <sup>8</sup> Simon Kerr, Chloe Cornish, and Andrew England, “Middle East braced for backlash after killing of Qassem Soleimani,” *Financial Times*, January 3, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/52a2fce4-2e0f-11ea-a126-99756bd8f45e>; Shelly Kittleson, “Iraqi armed factions vow revenge for Shiite commanders’ killings,” *Al-Monitor*, January 5, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/01/soleimani-assassination-iran-iraq-us-pmu.html>.
- <sup>9</sup> Abu Ali al Askari, Twitter post, January 6, 2020, 3:27 p.m., <https://twitter.com/abualiaaskry/status/1213195091625598977>.
- <sup>10</sup> Abu Ali al Askari, Twitter post, January 6, 2020, 8:38 a.m., <https://twitter.com/abualiaaskry/status/1214179407163731969>.
- <sup>11</sup> 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>.
- <sup>12</sup> Michael R. Gordon and Steven Lee Myers, “Iran and Hezbollah Support for Syria Complicates Peace-Talk Strategy,” *New York Times*, May 21, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/22/world/middleeast/iran-and-hezbollahs-support-for-syria-complicates-us-strategy-on-peace-talks.html>; Suadad al-Salhy, “Iraqi Shi’ite militants fight for Syria’s Assad,” *Reuters*, October 16, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/16/us-syria-crisis-iraq-militias-idUSBRE89F0PX20121016>.
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**Key Leaders**



**Jamal Jaafar Ibrahimi a.k.a.  
Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes**  
Leader (deceased)



**Ahmad al-Hamidawi**  
Secretary-general



**Jaafar al-Husseini**  
Spokesman



**Omar Abdullah al-Jbara**  
Leader (as of April 2015)



**Jassim al-Saidi**  
Commander (as of December 2014)



**Abu Hamza**  
Commander (as of November  
2014)



**Abu Abdullah**  
Commander (as of November  
2014)



**Raad Al Kafaji**  
Commander (as of November  
2014)



**Abu Fadl**

Commander (as of June 2016)



**Erfad**

Commander (as of June 2016)



**Seyyed Hashem al-Haydari**

Former secretary-general



**Hussein Falih Aziz a.k.a.  
Abu Zainab al-Lami**

Commander of the Central Security  
Directorate of the PMF



**Abu Ali al-Askari**

Security leader



**Abu Fadak Al-  
Mohammedawi a.k.a. Abd  
al-Aziz Malluh Mirjirash al-  
Muhammadawi**

PMF chief of staff



**Mohammed Mohi**

Spokesman



**Abu Baqir Al-Saadi**

Commander of Operations in Syria  
(deceased)

## *Kata'ib Hezbollah*

### History:

- **April 21, 2024 - April 22, 2024:** On April 21, Iraqi militants in Zummar launch five rockets toward a U.S. military base in Rumalyn, Syria. No U.S. personnel are injured in the attack. A U.S. official calls the launch a “failed rocket attack” in an interview with Reuters. Fighter jets from the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and Syria launch a counterstrike, destroying a rocket launcher-equipped pickup truck in Zummar. A KH-affiliated group on Telegram announces that KH and other Iraqi militias are resuming their attacks on U.S. forces. The KH-linked Sabreen News group on Telegram reports that KH had not issued an official statement. On April 22, KH issues a statement on Telegram denying reports that it would resume violent attacks on U.S. forces. KH calls the reports “fabricated news.” According to Pentagon press secretary Major General Patrick Ryder, the April 21 incident resulted from “some type of malfunction” in which a rocket-launching truck was “shooting rockets all over the place.” Sources: “Five rockets fired from Iraq towards U.S. military base in Syria,” Reuters, April 21, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/five-rockets-fired-iraq-towards-us-military-base-syria-security-sources-say-2024-04-21/>; “Iraq’s Kataib Hezbollah denies saying it resumes attacks on US forces,” Reuters, April 22, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iraqs-kataib-hezbollah-denies-saying-it-resumes-attacks-us-forces-2024-04-22/>; Beatrice Farhat and Jared Szuba, “Iraq’s Kataib Hezbollah denies resuming attacks on US bases,” Al-Monitor, April 22, 2024, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2024/04/iraqs-kataib-hezbollah-denies-resuming-attacks-us-bases>.
- **April 3, 2024:** KH senior official Abu Ali Al-Askari announces on Telegram that the Iraqi resistance is prepared to arm 12,000 fighters in Jordan in their ongoing campaign against Israel. Al-Askari notes the IRI is preparing to equip Jordanian fighters with “light and medium weapons, anti-armour launchers, tactical missiles, ammunition, and tons of explosives.” Mahdi Al-Kaabi, an official of IRI faction Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, further supports al-Askari’s announcement and states on the Iranian broadcast Al-Alam TV that the Iraqi resistance factions already closely coordinate with Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. Sources: “Iraq: Kataib Hezbollah ready to arm ‘12,000 fighters’ in Jordan,” Middle East Monitor, April 3, 2024, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240403-iraq-kataib-hezbollah-ready-to-arm-12000-fighters-in-jordan/>; “Mahdi Al-Kaabi Of The Iran-Backed Iraqi Hizbullah Al-Nujaba Militia: We Have Security Ties With Hamas, Muslim Brotherhood In Jordan; We Need To Open A Front Against Israel From Jordan,” Middle East Media Research Institute, April 3, 2024, <https://www.memri.org/tv/iran-backed-iraqi-hizbullah-nujaba-militia-mahdi-kaabi-we-have-ties-with-hamas-mb-jordan>.
- **February 7, 2024:** The United States carries out a precision drone strike in Baghdad. The strike reportedly kills three, including Abu Baqir Al-Saadi, KH’s commander of operations in Syria. According to Pentagon Press Secretary Major General Pat Ryder, al-Saadi was reportedly responsible for “directly planning and participating in attacks” on American troops in the region. Sources: Qassim Abdul-Zahra, Aamer Madhani, and Lolita C. Baldor, “US drone strike in Baghdad kills high-ranking militia leader linked to attacks on American troops,” Associated Press, February 7, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/iraq-kataib-hezbollah-drone-strike-bdd82ed18dd94f53e81cbc71d25049a>; “Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder Holds a Press Briefing,” U.S. Department of Defense, February 8, 2024, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/3671411/pentagon-press-secretary-air-force-maj-gen-pat-ryder-holds-a-press-briefing/>.
- In response to a January 28 IRI strike on a U.S. outpost in Jordan that killed three U.S. soldiers, Hamidawi releases a statement on January 30 announcing that KH will suspend military and security operations against U.S. forces to “prevent embarrassment of the Iraqi government” and will “continue to defend our people in Gaza in other ways.” On January 31, U.S. President Joe Biden confirms the IRI’s role in the January 28 attack while National Security Council Spokesman John Kirby dismisses KH’s claims of suspended operations, saying KH cannot be taken at face value. Sources: Max Matza, “Kataib Hezbollah: Iran-backed group suspends attacks against US after drone strike,” BBC News, January 31, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-68150359>; Jon Gambrell, Aamer Madhani, and Zeke Miller, “US pins blame for deadly drone strike on Iran-backed militias in the Islamic Resistance in Iraq,” Associated Press, January 31, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/yemen-houthi-us-navy-mideast-tensions-israel-hamas-red-sea-6d5662d09aad8aed0875025b75928ef5>.
- **November 21, 2023:** U.S. Central Command forces carry out precision strikes on two KH facilities south of Baghdad. The targets included a command-and-control node, as well as an operations center, used by the terror group to attack U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq and Syria. At least eight KH fighters are killed and four others are wounded. Sources: Matt Seyler, “US hits Iran-backed militants with 4th round of retaliatory airstrikes,” ABC News, November 21, 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/us-hits-iran-backed-militants-fourth-round-retaliatory/story?id=105081095>; Haley Britzky and Oren Lieberman, “US forces came under attack 4 times in Iraq and Syria on Thanksgiving,” CNN, November 24, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/24/politics/us-forces-attacked-iraq-syria-thanksgiving/index.html>.
- **October 17, 2023:** An umbrella group called the Islamic Resistance in Iraq (IRI) makes its first official claim of responsibility for an October 17 failed drone strike on an U.S. air base in Irbil, Iraq. The IRI is reportedly a coalition of all Iran-backed Shiite militias operating in Iraq, including KH, Kata’ib Sayyid al Shuhada (KSS), Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN), and Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) as well as lesser-known militias such as Tashkil al-Waritheen. The IRI targets U.S. elements across Iraq and Syria in retaliation for the United States’ perceived role in the Gaza crisis. Source: Hamdi Malik and Michael Knights, “Profile: The Islamic Resistance in Iraq,” Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 21, 2023, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-islamic-resistance-iraq>.
- **March 26, 2023:** KH senior official Abu Ali al-Askari warns of “direct confrontation” if U.S. forces target Iran-backed militias. Al-Askari warns KH will directly attack U.S. bases. Source: “Kataib Hezbollah warns US of direct confrontation,” Mehr News Agency, March 26, 2023, <https://en.mehrnews.com/news/198820/Kataib-Hezbollah-warns-US-of-direct-confrontation>.
- **December 7, 2022:** During an interview with a local Iraqi TV station, Iraqi parliamentary speaker Mohamed Al-Halbousi confirms Iran-backed militias kidnapped and killed hundreds of thousands of people between 2014 and 2016. According to Amnesty International, after the U.S.-led coalition, alongside Iraqi and Kurdish forces, launched the August 2015 battle for Mosul, Shiite paramilitary groups and government forces began executing revenge attacks on Sunni Arabs suspected of supporting ISIS. Media reports point out KH, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq, Badr Organization, and Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada are accused of responsibility for the mass killings. Al-Halbousi calls on the Iraqi government to provide compensation to the victims’ families. Source: “Iraq’s Parliament Speaker Confirms Killing Of Thousands By Iran-Backed Militia,” Iran International, December 11, 2022, <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202212114092>.
- **November 30, 2022:** After Iraq’s new government implies it will work toward reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, KH issues a statement calling on Iran-linked militias to strike inside Saudi Arabia. According to the statement, the “optimal solution” to dealing with Saudi Arabia is to “transfer the conflicts to the streets of Riyadh.” Source: Shelly Kittleson, “Iran-linked militia in Iraq threatens Saudi Arabia as Iraqi PM visits Tehran,” Al-Monitor, December 1, 2022, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/12/iran-linked-militia-iraq-threatens-saudi-arabia-iraqi-pm-visits-tehran>.



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- **October 5, 2022 - October 6, 2022:** Following a violent confrontation on October 5 between gunmen from Saraya Salam and AAH, Sadr orders all armed factions in Iraq to freeze their activities. He also orders a ban on "the use of weapons in all provinces except for Salah al-Din, (Samarra and its surroundings) or as directed by the current commander-in-chief of the armed forces." Sadr calls on Kadhimī to "rein in the insolent militias...and their ilk, as they know only terrorism, money and power." Source: "Sadr suspends all armed factions, including Peace Brigades," Arab Weekly, October 7, 2022, <https://the arabweekly.com/sadr-suspends-all-armed-factions-including-peace-brigades>.
- **June 23, 2022:** Haquq withdraws from the Iraqi parliament. Muanis says his party will not "become substitutes for the brothers in the Sadist bloc," referring to the resignation of five Sadrists earlier in the month. Haquq had been positioned to receive those five seats after the resignations. Source: Chenar Chalak, "Party linked to Iran-backed militia withdraws from Iraqi parliament," Rudaw, June 24, 2022, <https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/24062022>.
- On March 7, an Israeli airstrike against a weapons depot in Damascus, Syria, kills two Quds Force members, identified as Colonel Ehsan Karbalayi-Poor and Colonel Morteza Saeed-Nezhad. Two civilians are also reportedly killed, and six militiamen are wounded. On March 8, an IRGC Public Relations Office statement warns "the Zionist regime will pay the price of this atrocity." On March 13, an Iranian barrage of 10 missiles strikes near the U.S. consulate in Erbil, Iraq. There are no U.S. casualties or damage to U.S. property. The IRGC claims it targeted a training center belonging to Israel's Mossad spy agency. Iranian media reports multiple Israeli casualties, which Israel does not confirm. Iranian media calls the strikes a response to "recent crimes of the fake Zionist regime," referring a March 7 Israeli airstrike in Syria that killed two Quds Force commanders. KH praises the attack as a "a reaction to the bombing of the interior of Iran by the Zionists from the territory of Iraq" and part of a "process that represents a different phase of the conflict in Iraq. Sources: "Iran vows to avenge two IRGC members killed in Israeli attack in Syria -Press TV," Reuters, March 8, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-vows-avenge-two-irgc-members-killed-israeli-attack-syria-press-tv-2022-03-08/>; "Iran says Israel will pay for Syria attack that killed 2 Revolutionary Guards," Reuters, March 9, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-condemns-israels-attack-damascus-isna-2022-03-09/>; "Heavy Toll on Zionists Very Likely in IRGC Missile Attack on Erbil: Source," Tasnim News Agency, March 14, 2022, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2022/03/14/2682015/heavy-toll-on-zionists-very-likely-in-irgc-missile-attack-on-erbil-source>; Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Iran claims missile barrage near US consulate in Iraq," Associated Press, March 14, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/iran-missile-attack-erbil-iraq-us-consulate-7a4ea6281fe6191a4e4b640c58c7fd49>; Louisa Loveluck and Alex Horton, "After nuclear talks break down, Iran claims ballistic missile attack in Iraq," Washington Post, last updated March 13, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/12/irbil-attack-iraq/>; "IRGC confirms it hit Mossad training centers inside Iraqi Kurdistan," Tehran Times, March 13, 2022, <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/470982/IRGC-confirms-it-hit-Mossad-training-centers-inside-Iraqi-Kurdistan>; "IRGC Quds Force commander says Erbil attack was decisive," Mehr News Agency, March 15, 2022, <https://en.mehrnews.com/news/184909/IRGC-Quds-Force-commander-says-Erbil-attack-was-decisive>; Seth J. Frantzman, "Pro-Iranian groups in Iraq back Tehran's attack on US, Israel - analysis," Jerusalem Post, March 14, 2022, <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-701217>.
- **February 2, 2022:** The United Arab Emirates intercepts and destroys three drones headed toward its airspace. The little-known Iraqi group Awliya al-Waad al-Haq ("The True Promise Brigades") claims responsibility for launching "four drones targeting vital facilities in Abu Dhabi" in retaliation for the UAE's policies in Iraq and Yemen. Some analysts have linked the group to KH and suggest it may be directly controlled by the Quds Force. Sources: "UAE says it destroyed three drones with 'hostile' intent," Al Jazeera, last updated February 3, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/2/uae-destroys-three-drones-with-hostile-intent-ministry>; "Iraqi militia attack on UAE a 'message from Iran,'" Al Jazeera, February 4, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/4/iraqi-militia-attack-on-uae-a-message-from-iran-say-analysts>; "Crispin Smith, Hamdi Malik, and Michael Knights, "Profile: Alwiya al-Waad al-Haq," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, April 1, 2021, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-alwiya-al-waad-al-haq>.
- **January 6, 2022:** Unidentified gunmen attack the Baghdad home of KH and PMF member Ahmad al-Muttalib, wounding Muttalib and killing five members of his family. Sources: Tzvi Joffe, "Iran-backed militant targeted by shooting near Baghdad - report," Jerusalem Post, January 6, 2022, <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-691769>; "Five people from PMF member's family killed in Baghdad: statement," Rudaw, January 6, 2022, <https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/060120223>.
- KH reportedly launches a fundraising campaign over social media. The group promotes itself as a grassroots youth initiative. The alleged purpose of the campaign is to encourage Iraqi youth to help Houthi rebels acquire drones that could be used to attack the UAE. Source: "Who is the shadowy Iraqi militia that attacked the UAE?," Al Jazeera, February 3, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/3/true-promise-brigades-iraqi-militia-attacks-uae>.
- Fatah Alliance and Badr Organization leader Hadi al-Amiri hosts other Iraqi Shiite leaders at his home in an effort to break Iraq's political deadlock. Iraq's supreme court ratifies the election results on December 27. Sadr's supporters in the parliament align with him under the Sadrist bloc with 72 seats while the Shiite parties and other opponents align under the banner of the Coordination Framework with 59 seats. The KH-affiliated Huquq party wins one seat in the parliament. Sources: "Iraq's Supreme Court ratifies October election results," Al Jazeera, December 27, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/27/iraq-court-rejects-bid-to-annul-election-results-by-ex-paramilita>; Ali Mamouri, "Shiite leaders gather in Baghdad to break political deadlock," Al-Monitor, December 3, 2021, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/12/shiite-leaders-gather-baghdad-break-political-deadlock>.
- Following a November 18 call by Iraqi cleric Muqtada al-Sadr for all Iraqi militias to disband and turn over their weapons to the state, KH disbands its Saraya al-Difa al-Shaabi (Popular Defense Brigades). KH says former members of the brigade will be transferred to the PMF. Sources: "Iraqi cleric Sadr urges militias to purge 'undisciplined' members," Reuters, November 18, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iraqi-cleric-sadr-urges-militias-purge-undisciplined-members-2021-11-18/>; Karwan Faidhi Dri, "Kataib Hezbollah dissolves militia following Sadr's call," Rudaw, November 19, 2021, <https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/191120211>.
- Following a November 7 drone attack on Kadhimī's Baghdad home, suspicions fall on KH and AAH, which deny responsibility. Iran also denies its involvement or the involvement of its proxies. Reports emerge of fractures between Iran and its proxies. AAH and KH have reportedly openly defied orders from Ghaani. Khazali and KH commander Abu Hussein al-Hamidawi allegedly tell the Iranians that Tehran's support for Kadhimī receiving a second term in office has broken the allies' bond. Some security analysts in Iraq allege Ghaani has lost control over the Iraqi militias. Sources: Suadad al-Salhy, "Betrayed by Iran? Iraqi armed factions given 'slap' with Kadhimī drone attack," Middle East Eye, November 29, 2021, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iraq-iraqi-kadhimī-drone-attack-armed-groups-betrayed>; Jared Malsin, Ghassan Adnan, and Benoit Faucon, "Iraq Struggles to Control Iran-Allied Militias Believed Responsible for Attack on Prime Minister," Wall Street Journal, November 9, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/iraq-struggles-to-control-iran-allied-militias-believed-responsible-for-attack-on-prime-minister-11636475084>.
- Iraq holds parliamentary elections on October 10, which are marked by a record low voter turnout of 41 percent. KH member and former chief of security Hussein Muanis runs under the banner of the Harakat Huquq party. He is the first member of KH to openly affiliate with the group in elections, leading to reports KH has officially entered Iraqi politics. KH and Huquq deny any affiliation between the two entities. Shiite factions win only 14 seats in the

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elections, dropping from 48 seats in the 2018 election. That evening, leaders of the Iran-backed militias and other Shiite factions meet at the home of former prime minister Nouri al-Maliki to discuss how to respond to what they call a "British-American plot" and a "coup" by Sadr, whose party placed first in the elections. The factions reportedly call to "escalate" their activities in Iraq. KH reportedly insists on military options, though others at the meeting did not support KH's calls. Estimated results on October 12 saw Huquq win two seats. On October 12, Fatah Alliance and Badr Organization leader Hadi al-Amiri rejects the election results on behalf of Iraq's Shiite parties. He calls the results a "fabrication" and threatens to "defend the votes of our candidates and voters with full force." KH pledges to "stand firmly and insist to restore things to their rightful place." Sources: Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Iraq's militias seek to consolidate political power in vote," Associated Press, October 5, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/hezbollah-baghdad-iran-middle-east-iraq-c30340c8ce4e98be2cf652e9abc18470>; Bel Trew, "'We want real change': Iraqis vote in early election seen as test of democracy," *Independent* (London), October 10, 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iraq-baghdad-elections-democracy-reforms-b1935610.html>; Suadad al-Salhy and Alex MacDonald, "Iraq elections 2021: Shia parties reject results as armed group threatens violence," Middle East Eye, October 12, 2021, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iraq-elections-shia-parties-reject-results-militia-threatens-violence>; Dilan Sirwan, "Iraq election results see giant parties fall, unexpected victories," Rudaw, October 12, 2021, <https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/121020212>; "Pro-Iranian groups reject early Iraq election results as 'scam,'" Al Jazeera, October 12, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/12/iraqi-pro-iranian-groups-reject-elections-a-scam>.

- **June 27, 2021:** U.S. forces launch airstrikes against weapons and storage facilities along the Iraq-Syria border used by KH and KSS. The strikes kill at least four KSS militants. According to the U.S. government, the specific targets were chosen because they were connected to unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks against U.S. personnel and facilities in Iraq. The Iraqi government condemns the U.S. airstrikes as a violation of Iraqi sovereignty. KSS promises an open war with the United States, which will begin by targeting U.S. planes in Iraqi airspace. The PMF denies the strikes targeted weapons storehouses and claims they instead targeted PMF fighters. The PMF promises to "make the enemy taste the bitterness of revenge." The Iranian Foreign Ministry accuses the United States of disrupting regional security with the strikes. Sources: "Statement by the Department of Defense," U.S. Department of Defense, June 27, 2021, <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2672875/statement-by-the-department-of-defense/>; Jane Arraf, "Iraq Condemns U.S. Airstrikes on Iranian-Backed Militias," *New York Times*, June 28, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/28/world/middleeast/iraq-us-airstrikes-militias-iran.html>.
- **June 22, 2021:** The United States seizes 33 websites used by the Iranian Islamic Radio and Television Union (IRTVU) and three websites operated by KH in violation of U.S. sanctions. The three domains operated by KH were owned by a United States company. KH did not obtain a license from OFAC prior to utilizing the domain names. According to the U.S. government, the seized sites were "disguised as news organizations or media outlets" and "targeted the United States with disinformation campaigns and malign influence operations." Sources: "United States Seizes Websites Used by the Iranian Islamic Radio and Television Union and Kata'ib Hizballah," U.S. Department of Justice, June 22, 2021, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/united-states-seizes-websites-used-iranian-islamic-radio-and-television-union-and-kata-ib>; "US seizes three dozen websites used for 'Iranian disinformation,'" Al Jazeera, June 23, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/23/us-seizes-three-dozen-websites-used-for-iranian-disinformation>.
- **June 13, 2021:** Militant groups within the PMF display new long-range unmanned aerial vehicles. The new UAVs are capable of striking other countries in the region, including Israel. Source: Robert Tollast, "Iran-backed militias display long-range drone power in regional escalation," *National* (Abu Dhabi), June 14, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/iran-backed-militias-display-long-range-drone-power-in-regional-escalation-1.1240825>.
- KH reportedly sets up a new training camp in Syria's Raqqa. More than 100 tunnel diggers and other heavy machinery is reportedly moved to the area. According to unidentified sources, KH began scaling up its training facilities in Syria without any interference from the Syrian government. Source: "Iraq's 'Hezbollah Brigades' Militia Digs Tunnels East of Raqqa, Sets Up New Camp," *Asharq al-Awsat* (London), June 16, 2021, <https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/3030646/iraq%E2%80%99%E2%80%98hezbollah-brigades%E2%80%99-militia-digs-tunnels-east-raqqa-sets-new-camp>.
- **May 26, 2021:** Iraqi forces arrest PMF commander Qasim Muslih, accused of involvement in the May 9 killing of two young Iraqi activists by gunmen in the Shiite holy city of Karbala. Muslih is head of the PMF in Anbar province but is not linked to a specific Iran-backed militia. KH condemns his arrest as a kidnapping. Armed militia members block roads outside of Baghdad's Green Zone and surround government buildings. The fighters stand down after Muslih is handed over to the PMF. On June 9, the PMF releases Muslih after a judge finds there is insufficient evidence against him. Sources: Jane Arraf and Fahim Hassan, "Iraq Arrests Militia Leader, Inciting a Standoff With Iran-Backed Forces," *New York Times*, May 27, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/27/world/middleeast/iraq-militia-arrest.html>; "Iraq releases Iran-aligned commander Qasim Mahmoud Muslih," Al Jazeera, June 9, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/9/iraq-releases-iran-aligned-commander-arrested-on-terror-charges>.
- **May 24, 2021:** Iran-backed Iraqi militias declare they are ending the unofficial truce they had announced in October 2020 and would resume attacks on U.S. forces. The militias make the decision because of "the lack of seriousness of the Iraqi and US governments in scheduling the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq," one commander tells international media. Source: Suadad al-Salhy, "Iraq: Armed factions end truce with US over failure to withdraw troops," Middle East Eye, May 24, 2021, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iraq-armed-factions-truce-us-over-vow-increased-attacks>.
- **February 26, 2021:** The United States launches airstrikes in Syria against targets linked to Iran-backed militias, reportedly killing at least 22 members of KH and the PMF. According to the Pentagon, the strikes target a weapons shipment from Iraq to Syria and struck facilities belonging to KH and Kata'ib Sayyid al Shuhada. 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 denies responsibility for recent attacks on U.S. interests in the region. KH claims only one of its soldiers is killed in the strike. 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-9489-87fdac51e75\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/russia-syria-us-strike/2021/02/26/57e602b2-782a-11eb-9489-87fdac51e75_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-c10b1fb0ed653e687bfb57d04b591b5>.
- **December 20, 2020:** An unidentified "outlawed group" launches 20 rockets targeting the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad's diplomatic Green Zone. According to media reports, some of the rockets were intercepted, however, the particular rockets launched have been more accurate and larger than in past attacks. One civilian casualty was reported. Several groups, including KH, condemned the attack, stating "bombing the (U.S.) embassy of evil at this time is considered out of order." The attack occurred two weeks ahead of the one-year anniversary of the airstrike that killed Qasem Soleimani. Sources: Seth J. Frantzman, "Iranian-backed militias' rockets target US embassy in Baghdad," *Jerusalem Post*, December 20, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/rockets-targeting-us-embassy-in-iraq-land-inside-baghdads-green-zone-652739>; "Rockets hit near US Embassy in Iraq ahead of Soleimani anniversary," *Deutsche Welle*, December 20, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/rockets-hit-near-us-embassy-in-iraq-ahead-of-soleimani-anniversary/a-56003157>; Ahmed Rasheed and Hesham Abdul Khalek, "Rockets fired at U.S. embassy land inside Baghdad's Green Zone, damaging compound," *Reuters*, December 20, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-security-idUSKBN28U0QF>; Luis Martinez, "Top US Gen. Frank McKenzie continues to see 'heightened risk' from Iran," *ABC News*, December 23, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/top-us-gen-frank-mckenzie-continues-heightened-risk/story?id=74866841>.

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- **November 17, 2020:** Rocket attacks resume on Baghdad's Green Zone after a lull of several weeks as seven rockets are fired toward the U.S. Embassy.  
At least three of the rockets are intercepted but others fall in civilian areas, killing a child. Suspected KH subgroup Ashab al-Kahf, "the Cave Companions," initially claims responsibility on social media. But after news of the child's death becomes public, KH and the Fatah Coalition issue a statement denying any responsibility or connection between the rocket attack and Shiite militias. KH labels the attack an attempt to deflect attention from Trump's loss in the U.S. presidential election earlier that month. Source: Namo Abdulla, "Iran-backed Militias Resume Rocket Attacks Toward US Embassy in Iraq," Voice of America, November 19, 2020, [https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/iran-backed-militias-resume-rocket-attacks-toward-us-embassy-iraq?utm\\_source=iterable&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=1738667](https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/iran-backed-militias-resume-rocket-attacks-toward-us-embassy-iraq?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=1738667).
- **- :** Rocket attacks continue to target U.S. troops and other foreign targets in Iraq.  
In late September, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo threatens to close the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad if the Iraqi government does not confront militias. On October 10, representatives from various militias, calling themselves the Iraqi Resistance Coordination Commission, publish a joint statement agreeing to suspend attacks in exchange for the Iraqi government presenting a plan for a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. The commission includes KH, Asa'ib Ahl Al Haq, KSS, and Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba. Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei reportedly orders the factions to stand down. On October 11, KH joins with other militia factions in announcing a conditional ceasefire. The militias agree not to target U.S. interests on the condition that the Iraqi government work toward a full U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei reportedly ordered the factions to stand down. A KH spokesman threatens renewed violence if U.S. forces "insisted on staying." Sources: John Davison, "Iraqi militias say they have halted anti-U.S. attacks," Reuters, October 11, 2020, [https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-iraq-militias/iraqi-militias-say-they-have-halted-anti-us-attacks-idUSKBN26W0IT?utm\\_source=iterable&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=1604119](https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-iraq-militias/iraqi-militias-say-they-have-halted-anti-us-attacks-idUSKBN26W0IT?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=1604119); Edward Wong, Lara Jakes, and Eric Schmitt, Pompeo Threatens to Close U.S. Embassy in Iraq Unless Militias Halt Attacks," *New York Times*, September 29, 2020, [https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/29/us/politics/pompeo-embassy-baghdad-iraq.html?utm\\_source=iterable&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=1570526](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/29/us/politics/pompeo-embassy-baghdad-iraq.html?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=1570526); Suadad al-Salhy, "EXCLUSIVE: Iran's Khamenei ordered end to Iraqi attacks on US interests," Middle East Eye, October 22, 2020, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iran-khamenei-iraq-attacks-us-interests-end>.
- On June 25, Iraqi forces arrest 14 KH members in an anti-terrorism raid ordered by Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi.  
The KH members were allegedly planning an attack on Baghdad's Green Zone, which houses the U.S. Embassy and other diplomatic compounds. The following day, KH members in more than a dozen armed vehicles protest outside Kadhimi's residence, demanding the release of their compatriots. KH calls the demonstration an attempt "to prevent the situation from spinning out of control." On June 29, citing a lack of evidence of wrongdoing, a judge within the PMF orders the detained to be released to PMF custody for an internal trial. Following their release, the 14 KH members set fire to posters of Kadhimi, as well as U.S. and Israeli flags. KH tells Iraqi media that it will never give up its weapons. Sources: Namo Abdulla, "Release of Pro-Iran Militants Signals Governance Challenge in Iraq, Experts Say," Voice of America, July 1, 2020, [https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/release-pro-iran-militants-signals-governance-challenge-iraq-experts-say?utm\\_source=iterable&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=1332330](https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/release-pro-iran-militants-signals-governance-challenge-iraq-experts-say?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=1332330); Seth J. Frantzman, "Kataib Hezbollah in Iraq says it will never surrender weapons," *Jerusalem Post*, June 30, 2020, [https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/kataib-hezbollah-in-iraq-says-it-will-never-surrender-weapons-633290?utm\\_source=iterable&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=1329077](https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/kataib-hezbollah-in-iraq-says-it-will-never-surrender-weapons-633290?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=1329077).
- 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. The next day 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." In response to continued attacks by Iran-backed militias, the Pentagon in late March 2020 reportedly orders U.S. military commanders in Iraq to draw up plans to target and destroy KH. In late March, KH issues a statement that it will attack any faction aiding the United States in attacking militias. 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/5ff9d48d1bdb2d2b1e4243d18930b159>; 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>.
- KH announces that KH commander Abdul Aziz al-Mohammedawi, a.k.a. Abu Fadak, will become the new military chief of the PMF.  
Factions within the PMF and within KH reportedly oppose Mohammedawi's appointment. Source: 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>.
- On January 3, a U.S. airstrike near Baghdad International Airport kills Ibrahim and Qasem Soleimani, head of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force.  
The Pentagon confirms shortly after that U.S. President Donald Trump ordered the strike because Soleimani was "actively developing plans" to attack U.S. troops and officials. Ibrahim was identified as one of the KH members leading protesters in the December 2019 assault on the U.S. Embassy. Thousands attend a funeral procession for Ibrahim and Soleimani in Baghdad on January 4. KH joins other Iran-backed Iraqi militias in vowing revenge against the United States. KH security official Abu Ali al Askari calls for volunteers for suicide bombings in a Twitter post. The United States holds KH responsible for multiple rocket attacks on Baghdad on January 4 and January 5 that wound at least six people. Sources: Frank Miles, "Baghdad rocket attack kills Iranian military leaders including Gen. Qasim Soleimani, reports say," Fox News, January 2, 2020, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/rockets-baghdad-airport-injuries-reported>; Missy Ryan and Dan Lamothe, "Pentagon launched airstrike that killed Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani, Defense Sec. Mark Esper says," *Washington Post*, January 2, 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/defense-secretary-says-iran-and-its-proxies-may-be-planning-fresh-attacks-on-us-personnel-in-iraq/2020/01/02/53b63f00-2d89-11ea-bcb3-ac6482c4a92f\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/defense-secretary-says-iran-and-its-proxies-may-be-planning-fresh-attacks-on-us-personnel-in-iraq/2020/01/02/53b63f00-2d89-11ea-bcb3-ac6482c4a92f_story.html); Shelly Kittleson, "Iraqi armed factions vow revenge for Shiite commanders' killings," Al-Monitor, January 5, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/01/soleimani-assassination-iran-iraq-us-pmu.html>; Abu Ali al Askari, Twitter post, January 3, 2020, 3:27 p.m., <https://twitter.com/abualiaaskary/status/1213195091625598977>; Fernando Alfonso III, Ivana Kottasová, Amir Vera, Jessie Yeung, and Eliza Mackintosh, "Crowds swarm Tehran to mourn slain Iran military leader Soleimani," CNN, last updated January 6, 2020, [https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/us-iran-soleimani-tensions-live-intl-01-05-20/h\\_6a85a53149579c7cedb252b3b616085a](https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/us-iran-soleimani-tensions-live-intl-01-05-20/h_6a85a53149579c7cedb252b3b616085a); "Rockets target Baghdad's Green Zone for second successive night," Al Jazeera, January 5, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/rockets-target-baghdad-green-zone-successive-night-200105205154964.html>.



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- **December 29, 2019 - January 1, 2020:** On December 29, 2019, the U.S. military launches “defensive strikes” against five facilities in Iraq and Syria.

The five targets include three of KH’s locations in Iraq and two in Syria. According to the Pentagon, they served as weapons-storage facilities and command and control locations for the Iranian-backed Shia militia. The U.S. airstrikes were carried out in retaliation for an attack on December 27 in which more than 30 missiles were fired at an Iraqi military base in Kirkuk, killing a U.S. contractor and wounding U.S. troops. On December 31, protesters, including KH leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, as well as members and supporters of KH, throw stones and torch a security post at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. On January 1, 2020, following orders from Mohammed Mohyee, KH’s political spokesman, thousands of protestors disperse from the American Embassy in Baghdad. The withdrawal was reportedly agreed to upon the condition that the Iraqi Prime Minister, Adel Abdul Mahdi, will move ahead with legislation to force American troops out of Iraq. Sources: Barbara Starr, Kevin Bohn, and Ross Levitt, “US strikes 5 facilities in Iraq and Syria linked to Iranian-backed militia,” CNN, December 29, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/29/politics/us-strikes-iran-backed-militia-facilities-in-iraq-syria/index.html>; Reuters, “US military carries out ‘defensive strikes’ in Iraq and Syria,” Guardian, December 29, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/dec/29/us-military-carries-out-defensive-strikes-in-iraq-and-syria>; Michael R. Gordon and Nancy A. Youssef, “U.S. Strikes Shia Militia Targets in Iraq and Syria,” Wall Street Journal, December 29, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-strikes-shiamilitia-targets-in-iraq-and-syria-11577642168>; Ghassan Adnan, Isabel Coles, and Michael Gordon, “Trump Blames Iran After Militia Supporters Try to Storm U.S. Embassy in Baghdad,” Wall Street Journal, December 31, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/protesters-attempt-to-storm-u-s-embassy-in-baghdad-11577787978>; Falih Hassan and Alissa J. Rubin, “Pro-Iranian Protesters End Siege of U.S. Embassy in Baghdad,” New York Times, January 1, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/01/world/middleeast/us-embassy-baghdad-iraq.html>; Mustafa Salim and Liz Sly, “Supporters of Iranian-backed militia end siege of U.S. Embassy in Baghdad,” Washington Post, January 1, 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/supporters-of-iranian-backed-militia-start-withdrawing-from-besieged-us-embassy-in-baghdad-following-militia-orders/2020/01/01/8280cb34-2c9e-11ea-9b60-817cc18cf173\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/supporters-of-iranian-backed-militia-start-withdrawing-from-besieged-us-embassy-in-baghdad-following-militia-orders/2020/01/01/8280cb34-2c9e-11ea-9b60-817cc18cf173_story.html).
- **September 9, 2019:** Airstrikes reportedly originating from Israel hit Iranian and Iranian-backed PMF positions at the Iraq-Syria border, killing at least 18 militants.

KH is among the PMF forces present at the targeted base in Abukamal. Source: Kosar Nawzad, “Airstrikes kill 18 Iranians, Iran-backed militiamen near Syrian-Iraqi border: report,” Kurdistan 24, September 9, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/0dd77a7a-8d86-4fd4-b94f-628852d0242e>.
- **August 25, 2019:** Suspected Israeli drone strikes kill Kazem Mohsen, the logistical support chief of KH’s 45th Brigade, as well as between one and five other KH members near al-Qaim on the Iraq-Syria border.

The strike comes a month after mysterious blasts at PMF arms depot and training camps. Paramilitary forces suspect the U.S. and Israel were responsible for the previous attacks. Sources: “Two Fighters Killed in Drone Attack: Iraq Paramilitary Force,” RFI, August 25, 2019, <http://en.rfi.fr/contenu/20190825-two-fighters-killed-drone-attack-iraq-paramilitary-force>; “Drone strikes kill 6 Iran-backed militiamen near Iraqi-Syrian border: source,” Kurdistan 24, August 25, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/cf4f516c-347e-408c-bb19-396e872dd751>; “Iraq investigating strike on Kataib Hezbollah near Syria border,” Defense Post, August 26, 2019, <https://thedefensepost.com/2019/08/26/iraq-strike-kataib-hezbollah/>.
- **August 22, 2019:** Following a number of mysterious explosions targeting paramilitary stations throughout Iraq, KH members release a statement targeted at the U.S. claiming, “we issue a final warning to the American enemy that any new targeting of any Iraqi positions will be met with a tough, categorical response.”

Source: “Two fighters killed in drone attack: Iraq paramilitary force,” RFI, August 25, 2019, <http://en.rfi.fr/contenu/20190825-two-fighters-killed-drone-attack-iraq-paramilitary-force>.
- **August 20, 2019:** A blast hits an arms depot belonging to Iranian-backed paramilitaries near Balad air base north of Baghdad.

The explosion is the latest in a series of mysterious blasts in recent weeks, targeting bases and warehouses belonging to PMF militias. Some have been blamed on drone attacks, others on faulty storage. Source: “Explosion rocks arms depot north of Iraq’s Baghdad,” Al Jazeera, August 20, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/explosion-rocks-arms-depot-north-iraq-baghdad-190820171200992.html>.
- **August 12, 2019:** A series of explosions occur at a weapons and ammunition storage warehouse run by KH and Kataeb Sayyed Al Shuhada militias in south Baghdad.

One person is killed and another 29 are injured. It is suspected that Israel is behind the strikes given that the incident follows recent reports that Israel has carried out strikes against pro-Iran forces in Iraq. Source: Joyce Karam, “Explosions at ammunition warehouse kill one and injure 29 in Baghdad,” The National, August 12, 2019, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/explosions-at-ammunition-warehouse-kill-one-and-injure-29-in-baghdad-1.897639>; Qassim Abdul-Zahra, “Iran-backed militias blame US for attacks on bases in Iraq,” Associated Press, August 21, 2019, <https://www.apnews.com/10911b33c35e475999ed859626b1b90f>.
- **July 19, 2019:** Israeli forces carry out an airstrike on a weapons depot near Balad airbase in north Baghdad.

No casualties or injuries are reported. Iraqi militias, KH included, stored their weapons at the targeted facility. The attack is believed to be the first Israeli bombing in Iraq in nearly four decades. Source: Alissa J. Rubin and Ronen Bergman, “Israeli Airstrike Hits Weapons Depot in Iraq,” New York Times, August 22, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/22/world/middleeast/israel-iraq-iran-airstrike.html?module=inline>.
- **July 16, 2019:** Joan Polaschik, the acting principal deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, tells the U.S. Senate that some Iran-backed PMF groups “plot against U.S. interests and plan operations that could kill Americans, coalition partners and Iraqis.”

Source: “Statement by Joan A. Polaschik,” United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, July 16, 2019, [https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/071619\\_Polaschik\\_Testimony.pdf](https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/071619_Polaschik_Testimony.pdf).
- **July 1, 2019:** Iraq’s Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi issues a decree ordering the country’s PMF militias to choose between full integration into the Iraqi armed forces or disarmament.

The decree is Mahdi’s latest attempt at gaining influence over the Iran-backed militias, which boast more than 120,000 fighters. However, KH vehemently opposes the decree while other factions choose to support integration. The prime minister’s decree stated that the PMF factions have to choose between political and paramilitary activity and remain within the state army. If they choose politics, they are not allowed to carry weapons. Sources: Jared Szuba, “Mahdi orders full integration of Shia militias into Iraq’s armed forces,” July 3, 2019, <https://thedefensepost.com/2019/07/03/iraq-mahdi-orders-popular-mobilization-units-integration/>; “Shia militia agrees to integrate into Iraq state army,” Middle East Monitor, July 3, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190703-shia-militia-agrees-to-integrate-into-iraq-state-army/>.
- **June 26, 2019:** U.S. forces launch a cyberattack on KH in an attempt to cripple its communications and limit its military capabilities.

The incident comes amid rising tensions in the Gulf region over the past few weeks due to multiple attacks on various oil tankers and installations in the Persian Gulf. The U.S. and its allies have accused Iran of attacking the vessels, an allegation which Tehran has denied. Source: “U.S. Launches Cyberattack on Kata’ib Hezbollah Communications,” Middle East Monitor, June 26, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190626-us-launches-cyberattack-on-kataib-hezbollah-communications/>.



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- **February 9, 2019:** A high-ranking commander in KH is assassinated in Basra.  
Source: "Top Hezbollah commander assassinated in Iraq," Al-Bawaba, February 9, 2019, <https://www.albawaba.com/news/top-hezbollah-commander-assassinated-iraq-935756>.
- **November 13, 2018:** U.S. President Trump places terrorist designations and bounties on several Hezbollah and Hamas officials including Jawad Nasrallah, the son of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah.  
The U.S. Department of State also announces \$5 million bounties for information about Hezbollah leaders Khalil Yusif Mahmoud Harb and Haytham Ali Tabatabai. In a statement, the Department of State claims the sanctions and bounties are "designed to deprive the regime of vital revenue it uses to conduct terrorism and support terrorist groups around the world, to include Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas, Kataib Hezbollah and the Taliban," Sources: "Intel: What's behind latest US sanctions and bounties on Hezbollah and Hamas," Al Monitor, November 13, 2018, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/11/intel-latest-sanctions-bounties-hezbollah-hamas.html>; "State Department Terrorist Designations of Jawad Nasrallah, al-Mujahidin Brigades, and Hizballah," U.S. Embassy in Lebanon, November 13, 2018, <https://fb.usembassy.gov/state-department-terrorist-designations-of-jawad-nasrallah-al-mujahidin-brigades-and-hizballah/>.
- **September 6, 2018:** Protesters set fire to dozens of mostly pro-Iran political party offices of in the city of Basra, including the offices of the Badr Organization, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, and KH.  
The following day the Fatah Alliance, of which Kataib Hezbollah is a member, demands that Iraqi Prime Minister Hadi al-Abadi step down due to his inability to rein in the protesters. Source: Ali Mamouri, "Mortars hit Iraq's Green Zone as violent protests continue," Al-Monitor, September 7, 2018, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/09/iraq-basra-green-zone-us-pmu-iran.html#ixzz5ixxo8DX2>.
- **Iran transfers short-range ballistic missiles to its allies in Iraq, according to Iranian, Iraqi, and U.S. officials.**  
Several of the reported missile factories in Baghdad operate in neighborhoods controlled by Kataib Hezbollah. Source: John Irish and Ahmed Rasheed, "Exclusive: Iran moves missiles to Iraq in warning to enemies," Reuters, August 31, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-iraq-missiles-exclusive/exclusive-iran-moves-missiles-to-iraq-in-warning-to-enemies-idUSKCN1LG0WB>.
- **July 13, 2018:** Largely Shiite protesters in southern Iraq attack the political offices of KH, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, and the Badr Organization as they call for Iran to withdraw from Iraq.  
Source: Seth J. Frantzman, "Mass Protests Sweep Iraq, Target Pro-Iran Militias and Parties," *Jerusalem Post*, July 16, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Mass-protests-sweep-iraq-target-pro-iran-militias-and-parties-562597>.
- **June 18, 2018:** Israeli forces launch an airstrike that kills more than 50 pro-Syrian regime fighters in the Syrian border town of Abu Kamal. Several KH fighters are reportedly killed in the strike. Sources: Weedah Hamzah, "Eastern Syria air strikes toll rises to 52," *Herald Sun*, June 18, 2018, <https://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/breaking-news/eastern-syria-air-strikes-toll-rises-to-52/news-story/d826bf6de3c7576611a81f744c94028>; Jonathan Spyer, "Israeli Jets Appear to Have Struck Iraq for the First Time Since 1981," *Wall Street Journal*, August 1, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/israeli-jets-appear-to-have-struck-iraq-for-the-first-time-since-1981-11564700841>.
- **June 12, 2018:** KH's Fatah Alliance allies with Muqtada al-Sadr's Sairoon Alliance after Sadr's party wins the Iraq elections.  
However, a leader within Fatah states that the new coalition will not alter Iraq's standing relations with Iran or the United States. Source: Ali Mamouri, "Sadr allies with Iran-backed coalition to form government in Iraq," Al-Monitor, June 14, 2018, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/06/iraq-election-muqtada-sadr-sairoon-fatah-hadi-amiri-iran.html>.
- **The U.S. House of Representatives passes legislation authorizing President Donald Trump to sanction AAH as they have designated the group as a foreign terrorist organization.**  
The Trump administration does not make use of its sanctions power. Sources: "H.R. 571," U.S. Congress, January 15, 2019, <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hr571/BILLS-116hr571ih.pdf>; Josh Rogin, "Iraqi terrorist turned politician told U.S. interrogators he worked with Iran to kill Americans," *Washington Post*, August 30, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/josh-rogin/wp/2018/08/30/iraqi-terrorist-turned-politician-told-u-s-interrogators-he-worked-with-iran-to-kill-americans/>.
- **March 29, 2018:** Two Saudi citizens are sentenced to 47 years total in prison in Saudi Arabia for joining KH.  
The men reportedly trained in KH camps in Iraq "in the use of weapons, explosives and grenades to carry out terrorist acts in the Kingdom to destabilize national security and create chaos" and were in contact with an Iranian regarding Saudi oil infrastructure. Source: Mohammed al-Sulami, "Two citizens sentenced to 47 years in prison for joining Iraqi Kata'ib Hezbollah," Arab News, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1275286/saudi-arabia>.
- **March 9, 2018:** Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi issues a decree formalizing the inclusion of Shi'ite paramilitary groups in the country's security forces.  
Iraq declared victory over the militants in December, but the militias, estimated to comprise more than 60,000 fighters, are still deployed in many of the predominantly Sunni areas which saw heavy fighting during the three-year war to oust ISIS. Source: "Iraq's Shi'ite Militias Formally Inducted Into Security Forces," Radio Farda, March 9, 2018, <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iraq-shiite-militias-inducted-into-security-forces/29088194.html>.
- **KH joins several PMF militias to form the Fatah Alliance, a political party running in the May 2018 elections.**  
Fatah is led by Badr Organization's Hadi al-Amiri and includes the Iran-backed Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq. Source: Ahmad Majidiyar, "Iraqi Hezbollah calls on Baghdad government to set up US exit timeline," Middle East Institute, March 6, 2018, <http://www.mei.edu/content/io/iraqi-hezbollah-calls-baghdad-government-set-us-exit-timeline>.
- **KH participates in an effort to liberate the Iraqi border from ISIS, clashing with the group at the border and firing rockets into Syria from the town of al-Qaim in Iraq.**  
Source: "Iraq's Shiite militias fighting ISIS across Syrian border," Rudaw, November 4, 2017, <http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/041120172>.
- **KH participates in an operation against Kurdish forces in Kirkuk. The Kurdish forces surrender on October 16.**  
Source: Jennifer Cafarella, "Iran's Role in the Kirkuk Operation in Iraq," Institute for the Study of War, November 9, 2017, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran%E2%80%99s-role-kirkuk-operation-iraq>.
- **KH reportedly releases more than two dozen hostages, including members of the Qatari royal family.**  
The hostages were kidnapped in December 2015, and were reportedly held by the group for over a year. Source: Martin Chulov, "Qatari royal family members used as leverage in Syrian population swap," *Guardian* (London), April 14, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/14/besieged-syria-towns-evacuated-as-regime-and->

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rebels-begin-huge-people-swap;Callum Paton, "QATAR AND IRAN POISED TO EXCHANGE 26 KIDNAPPED ROYALS FOR TOWNS IN SYRIA AND MILLIONS OF DOLLARS," *Newsweek*, April 20, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/qatar-and-iran-poised-exchange-26-kidnapped-royals-towns-syria-and-millions-586807>;David Andrew Weinberg and Thomas Joscelyn, "Analysis: Qatar's ill-timed hostage deal increases pressure on Washington," *Long War Journal*, April 22, 2017, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/04/analysis-qatars-ill-timed-hostage-deal-increases-pressure-on-washington.php>.

- KH participates in the operation to retake Mosul from ISIS militants.  
Human Rights Watch has called upon Iraq to ban the abusive militia due to human rights abuses by the Badr Organization and other Shiite militia groups. In late November, Iraq's parliament formally recognizes KH and other Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) militias. Sources: Babak Dehghanpisheh, "Iran-trained militias join U.S.-backed campaign on Mosul, flying Shi'ite flags," Reuters, October 30, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-iran-idUSKBN12U0UI>; "Iraq: Ban Abusive Militias from Mosul Operation," Human Rights Watch, July 31, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/31/iraq-ban-abusive-militias-mosul-operation>; Hamza Hendawi and Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Iraq's parliament adopts law legalizing Shiite militias," Associated Press, November 26, 2016, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/38d21400b14444b08d8169ca03ecdb1b/mortars-kill-16-iraqi-civilians-mosul>.
- U.N. human rights officials call on Iraq to stop paramilitary groups fighting ISIS from taking revenge on civilians and to clarify the fate of hundreds who have gone missing.  
It is suspected that once Shiite militias recaptured Falluja from ISIS that over 49 men and boys were executed or tortured to death while in the custody of KH forces. Source: "U.N. warns of renewed cycle of sectarian strife in Iraq, urges prevention," Reuters, July 5, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-falluja-un-idUSKCN0ZL1KR>.
- KH is implicated in human rights abuses and retaliatory attacks against Sunnis near Fallujah.  
Source: Ned Parker and Jonathan Landay, "Special Report: Massacre reports show U.S. inability to curb Iraq militias," Reuters, August 23, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-massacres-falluja-special-report-idUSKCN10Y1VD>.
- - : KH participates in the Iraqi-led effort to recapture Fallujah.  
After Fallujah is retaken, the United Nations reveals gross human rights violations by KH, including the execution and torture of 49 boys and men in Fallujah. Sources: Caleb Weiss, "Video shows Hezbollah Brigades convoy heading for Fallujah," *Long War Journal*, May 19, 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/05/video-shows-hezbollah-brigades-convoy-heading-for-fallujah.php>; Bill Roggio and Caleb Weiss, "Iraqi forces, militias launch operation to recapture Fallujah," *Long War Journal*, May 23, 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/05/iraqi-forces-launch-operation-to-recapture-fallujah.php>; "U.N. warns of renewed cycle of sectarian strife in Iraq, urges prevention," Reuters, July 5, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-falluja-un-idUSKCN0ZL1KR>.
- KH releases a propaganda song threatening retribution for the Saudi execution of Shiite cleric Nimr Baqir al-Nimr.  
Source: Phillip Smyth, "Iran's Martyrdom Machine Springs to Life," *Foreign Policy*, January 5, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/05/irans-martyrdom-machine-springs-to-life/>.
- KH reportedly takes more than two dozen Qatari hunters hostage, including members of the Qatari royal family.  
The hostages are released more than a year later reportedly in exchange for a large payout. Source: Phillip Smyth, "Iran's Martyrdom Machine Springs to Life," *Foreign Policy*, January 5, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/05/irans-martyrdom-machine-springs-to-life/>; Martin Chulov, "Qatari royal family members used as leverage in Syrian population swap," *Guardian* (London), April 14, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/14/besieged-syria-towns-evacuated-as-regime-and-rebels-begin-huge-people-swap>; Callum Paton, "QATAR AND IRAN POISED TO EXCHANGE 26 KIDNAPPED ROYALS FOR TOWNS IN SYRIA AND MILLIONS OF DOLLARS," *Newsweek*, April 20, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/qatar-and-iran-poised-exchange-26-kidnapped-royals-towns-syria-and-millions-586807>; David Andrew Weinberg and Thomas Joscelyn, "Analysis: Qatar's ill-timed hostage deal increases pressure on Washington," *Long War Journal*, April 22, 2017, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/04/analysis-qatars-ill-timed-hostage-deal-increases-pressure-on-washington.php>.
- Kata'ib Hezbollah says it will prioritize fighting any Americans on Iraqi soil if Americans are deployed to Iraq.  
Source: Ahmed Rasheed and Stephen Kalin, "Iraqi PM, militias reject foreign troops after U.S. announcement," Reuters, December 1, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-usa-iraq-idINKBN0TK5L420151202>.
- **September 4, 2015:** Eighteen Turkish construction workers are abducted in Baghdad.  
KH is suspected of involvement. Source: Stephen Kalin, "Iraqi army raids militia HQ, suspecting link to Turkish abductees," September 4, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-turkey-idUSKCN0R417220150904>.
- Kata'ib Hezbollah raids the offices of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) in Basra, looting the offices and destroying equipment.  
Source: "Iraqi Hezbollah breaks into the headquarters of the Supreme Council in Basra," *Al Arabiya*, May 11, 2015.
- **April 23, 2015:** Kata'ib Hezbollah threatens to withdraw forces from Fallujah due to lack of Iraqi air support.  
The statement also said, "Let the Americans protect the areas in north of Amiriyah, Tariq camp and Baghdad Airport." Source: "Hezbollah threatens withdrawal over Baghdad 'lack of support,'" *Rudaw*, April 24, 2015, <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/240420151>.
- **April 20, 2015:** Kata'ib Hezbollah publishes a video showing its fighters allegedly unveiling the dead body of Ezzat Ibrahim al-Douri, former aide to Saddam Hussein.  
Source: "Iraqi Shi'ite militia says DNA tests prove Saddam aide dead," Reuters, April 20, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/20/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-douri-idUSKBN0NA10T20150420>.
- **April 1, 2015 - April 10, 2015:** Sunnis from liberated Tikrit and its surrounding towns claim that KH militants are responsible for looting and burning Sunni homes.  
Residents claim that the attacks by KH were motivated by sectarian hatred. Source: Alice Fordham, "After Retaking Iraqi City, Shiite Militias Accused Of Targeting Sunnis," *NPR*, April 7, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2015/04/07/398004441/after-retaking-tikrit-shiite-militias-accused-of-violence-against-sunnis>.
- **March 31, 2015:** Kata'ib Hezbollah joins Iraqi federal police and army forces in pushing forward to retake Tikrit from ISIS militants after Iraqi Prime Minister Abadi calls off U.S. airstrikes in the area.  
Source: Mahdi Talat, "Iraqi forces drive Islamic State out of central Tikrit: PM," Reuters, March 31, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/01/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-tikrit-idUSKBN0MR1G420150401>.

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- **March 26, 2015:** Protesting the expanded U.S. role in the fight for Tikrit, KH ends its participation in the military campaign to retake the city from ISIS militants.  
KH military spokesman Jaafar al-Husseini explains, "It is not possible for Kataib Hizbollah or any of the resistance factions to be in the same trench as the Americans." Source: Saif Hameed, "Iraq special forces advance in Tikrit, U.S. coalition joins fight," Reuters, March 27, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/27/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-idUSKBN0MM0R220150327>.
- **March 21, 2015:** Two Iraqi local officials and a police officer accuse KH militants of burning and looting homes in the Iraqi town of al-Dour after capturing it from ISIS.  
Both a KH spokesman and a security commander in the area deny the claim. Source: "Iraqi Sunnis accuse Shi'ite paramilitaries of burning homes outside Tikrit," Reuters, March 21, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/22/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-idUSKBN0MH0R720150322>.
- Wounded U.S. veterans and family members of deceased U.S. soldiers sue European banks for processing money from Iran that bankrolled terrorist attacks in Iraq.  
According to the lawsuit, KH is one of the groups that have allegedly received money from Iran to finance terrorist attacks against U.S. soldiers. Source: Alison Frankel, "U.S. veterans sue banks, claim they should pay for Iraq attacks," Reuters, November 10, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/10/us-usa-courts-banking-iran-idUSKCN0IU1Q120141110>.
- As the U.S. conducts airstrikes and ramps up its presence of military advisers in the region, KH pledges that it will abandon the battlefield if U.S. forces join in the ground fight against ISIS.  
Source: David D. Kirkpatrick, "Shiite Militias Pose Challenge for U.S. in Iraq," *New York Times*, September 16, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/17/world/middleeast/shiite-militias-pose-challenge-for-us-in-iraq.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/17/world/middleeast/shiite-militias-pose-challenge-for-us-in-iraq.html?_r=0).
- **July 25, 2014:** KH members mark Iran's anti-Israel holiday known as "Quds Day" by marching on an Israeli flag.  
Source: Reuters, "Iraqi Shi'ite Muslim men from the Iranian-backed group Kataib Hezbollah wave the party's flags during a parade marking the annual Quds Day in Baghdad," Thomson Reuters Foundation, July 25, 2014, <http://www.trust.org/item/20140725110922-1mk1i/>.
- Human Rights Watch finds that KH, AAH, and other Shiite militias have carried out "indiscriminate attacks in civilian areas" and have also conducted kidnapping operations and carried out summary executions of Sunnis.  
These attacks have occurred in the Iraqi towns of Buhriz, Mada'in, al-Heetawy, and others, according to Human Rights Watch's findings. Source: "Iraq: ISIS Advance Threatens Civilians," Human Rights Watch, June 12, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/06/12/iraq-isis-advance-threatens-civilians>.
- Shiite politicians in Iraq say that members of KH and AAH comprise the majority of Shiite forces helping Iraqi security forces fight al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which is now called the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).  
KH and AAH are part of the Sons of Iraq, a year-old paramilitary organization attached to the prime minister's military office and formed by Prime Minister Maliki to combat ISIS. Source: Ned Parker, Ahmed Rasheed, and Raheem Salman, "Before Iraq election, Shi'ite militias unleashed in war on Sunni insurgents," Reuters, April 27, 2014, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/04/27/uk-iraq-strife-idUKBREA3Q0FO20140427>.
- KH publishes a video claiming U.S. agents are attempting to destabilize Iraq.  
Meanwhile, the Maliki-led Iraqi government talks of combining Shiite militias KH, AAH, and the Mehdi Army into a single force to combat al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Sources: Ali Mamouri, "Iraq's Civil Society Under Siege," *Al-Monitor*, October 23, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/10/iraq-hostility-civil-society-politics.html>; Suad al-Salhy and Sylvia Westall, "Insight: Iraqis hesitate on the edge of chaos," Reuters, September 19, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/19/us-iraq-sectarian-insight-idUSBRE98I0FA20130919>.
- Intelligence officials say that Qasem Soleimani, leader of Iran's IRGC Quds Force, has called upon KH and Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) to send several hundred fighters to Syria.  
KH and AAH fighters pour into Syria to fight Sunni rebels near Damascus. Sources: Michael R. Gordon and Steven Lee Myers, "Iran and Hezbollah Support for Syria Complicates Peace-Talk Strategy," *New York Times*, May 21, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/22/world/middleeast/iran-and-hezbollahs-support-for-syria-complicates-us-strategy-on-peace-talks.html>; Thomas Hegghammer and Aaron Y. Zelin, "How Syria's Civil War Became a Holy Crusade," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, July 7, 2013, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/how-syrias-civil-war-became-a-holy-crusade>.
- After Lebanese Hezbollah, KH becomes the second group to declare it has lost fighters in Syria.  
Source: Matthew Levitt and Phillip Smyth, "Kataib al-Imam Ali: Portrait of an Iraqi Shiite Militant Group Fighting ISIS," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 5, 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/kataib-al-imam-ali-portrait-of-an-iraqi-shiite-militant-group-fighting-isis>.
- A Reuters report mentions that Shiite fighters from KH have been traveling to Syria to defend the Assad regime.  
Source: Suad al-Salhy, "Iraqi Shi'ite militants fight for Syria's Assad," Reuters, October 16, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/16/us-syria-crisis-iraq-militias-idUSBRE989F0PX20121016>.
- KH issues a statement threatening Kuwait and the workers who are building a port near Kuwait's border with Iraq.  
Source: Rafid Fadhil Ali, "Iraq's Kata'ib Hezbollah Seek Greater Popularity through Threats to Kuwaiti Port Development," *Terrorism Monitor* 9, no. 33 (August 19, 2011), [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=38344&VUtzlVlViko](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=38344&VUtzlVlViko).
- On June 6, an IRAM attack on a U.S. military camp near Baghdad International Airport kills six U.S. soldiers.  
KH claims responsibility for the attack. KH also claims responsibility for an IRAM attack that kills three U.S. soldiers at a base on June 29. June is considered the deadliest month in Iraq for U.S. forces in over two years. U.S. military officials say that Shiite militias, including Kata'ib Hezbollah, are ramping up attacks in an effort to claim credit for the impending U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq. Sources: Jay Solomon, "Iran Funnels New Weapons to Iraq and Afghanistan," *Wall Street Journal*, July 2, 2011, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303763404576420080640167182>; Michael Knights, "Shia strength - Iraqi militants adapt to the US drawdown," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 30, 2011, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/opeds/4e8b0eba7c0a2.pdf>; Mohammed Tawfeeq and Chelsea J. Carter, "Iraq's self-imposed deadline passes without decision on U.S. troops," CNN, July 25, 2011, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/meast/07/25/iraq.us.withdrawal/>.

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- U.S. General Ray Odierno warns of an imminent threat posed by KH and says that Iran continues to provide the group with funds, training, weapons, and ammunition.  
Sources: Scott Peterson, "Odierno: Militants trained in Iran prepare to attack US bases in Iraq," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 13, 2010, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2010/0713/Odierno-Militants-trained-in-Iran-prepare-to-attack-US-bases-in-Iraq>; Bill Roggio, "Iranian-backed Shia terror group remains a threat in Iraq: General Odierno," *Long War Journal*, July 13, 2010, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/07/iranianbacked\\_shia\\_t\\_1.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/07/iranianbacked_shia_t_1.php); Bill Roggio, "Iran backs three Shia terror groups in Iraq: General Odierno," *Long War Journal*, July 22, 2010, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/07/iran\\_backs\\_three\\_shi.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/07/iran_backs_three_shi.php).
  - On March 18, coalition forces capture a suspected KH operative.  
Source: American Forces Press Service, "Iraqis Arrest Terrorism Suspects," U.S. Department of Defense, March 18, 2010, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=58377>.
  - Iraqi forces arrest 22 KH suspects and kill at least five more when U.S. and Iraqi forces clash with KH in a southern Iraqi border town.  
Sources: American Forces Press Service, "Forces in Iraq Target Iranian-backed Terrorists," U.S. Department of Defense, February 12, 2010, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=57937>; "Five killed as U.S., Iraqi troops raid border village," Reuters, February 12, 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/02/12/us-iraq-violence-iran-idUSTRE61B24Y20100212>; Bill Roggio, "Iraqi, US forces kill 10 during clash with Hezbollah Brigades near the Iranian border," *Long War Journal*, February 12, 2010, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/02/iraqi\\_us\\_forces\\_kill.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/02/iraqi_us_forces_kill.php).
  - Iraqi forces arrest a suspected KH member wanted for executing rocket and mortar attacks in Baghdad.  
Source: American Forces Press Service, "Iraqi Forces Arrest 20 Terrorism Suspects," January 13, 2010, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=57489>.
  - On December 23, Iraqi forces arrest three suspected Kata'ib Hezbollah operatives, including one wanted for executing mortar attacks in September.  
On December 31, KH carries out a rocket attack in the Green Zone. Sources: American Forces Press Service, "Iraqi Forces Arrest 7 Terrorism Suspects," U.S. Department of Defense, December 23, 2009, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=57242>; Michael R. Gordon and Andrew W. Lehren, "Leaked Reports Detail Iran's Aid for Iraqi Militias," *New York Times*, October 22, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/23/world/middleeast/23iran.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.
  - Iraqi forces continue to arrest suspected KH operatives.  
Sources: American Forces Press Service, "Forces Arrest Terrorism Suspects in Iraq," U.S. Department of Defense, November 9, 2009, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=56606>; American Forces Press Service, "Iraqi Forces, U.S. Advisors Capture Terrorism Suspects," U.S. Department of Defense, November 20, 2009, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=56803>.
  - Iraqi security forces arrest at least three KH operatives.  
Source: Bill Roggio, "Iraqi forces detain Iranian Revolutionary Guards operative," *Long War Journal*, October 19, 2009, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/10/iraqi\\_forces\\_detain\\_3.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/10/iraqi_forces_detain_3.php).
  - **July 2, 2009:** The U.S. Treasury Department designates KH and its leader, Jamal Jaafar Ibrahim, for threatening stability in Iraq, claiming that KH and Ibrahim "committed, directed, supported, or posed a significant risk of committing acts of violence against Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces."  
The U.S. State Department notes that in addition to executing attacks against U.S., Iraqi, and coalition forces, KH has threatened the lives of Iraqi politicians, as well as civilians, who support Iraq's political process. Sources: "Treasury Designates Individual, Entity Posing Threat to Stability in Iraq," U.S. Department of the Treasury, July 2, 2009, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg195.aspx>; "Designation of Kata'ib Hizballah as a Foreign Terrorist Organization," U.S. Department of State, July 2, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/july/125582.htm>.
  - **June 24, 2009:** The U.S. State Department designates KH as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO).  
Source: "Designation of Kata'ib Hizballah as a Foreign Terrorist Organization," U.S. Department of State, July 2, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/july/125582.htm>.
  - On December 3, U.S. forces capture two suspected KH operatives.  
On December 7, coalition forces capture one known and two suspected KH operatives. Sources: Associated Press, "U.S.: Attacks in Iraq at lowest level since 2003," NBC News, December 3, 2008, [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/28036313/ns/world\\_news-mideast\\_n\\_africa/t/us-attacks-iraq-lowest-level/#.VUkYNfViko](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/28036313/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/us-attacks-iraq-lowest-level/#.VUkYNfViko); American Forces Press Service, "Coalition Forces Continue to Target Terror Network Members," U.S. Department of Defense, December 7, 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=52214>.
  - On November 11, coalition forces capture two suspected KH operatives.  
On November 29, KH launches a rocket attack that kills two U.N. contractors and injures 15 others. Sources: American Forces Press Service, "Coalition Kills, Captures Multiple Suspects in Terrorist Sweep," U.S. Department of Defense, November 12, 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=51908>; Katherine Zoepf, "Rocket Kills 2 Contract Workers at U.N. Compound in Baghdad," *New York Times*, November 29, 2008, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/30/world/middleeast/30iraq.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/30/world/middleeast/30iraq.html?_r=0); "Kata'ib Hizballah (KH)," GlobalSecurity.org, accessed May 11, 2015, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/kataib-hizballah.htm>.
  - Coalition forces continue to capture and arrest KH operatives.  
Sources: American Forces Press Service, "Coalition Forces Apprehend Kataib Hezbollah Suspects," U.S. Department of Defense, October 7, 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=51417>; American Forces Press Service, "Operations Continue Against al-Qaida, Hataib Hezbollah," U.S. Department of Defense, October 19, 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=51560>; American Forces Press Service, "Coalition Forces in Iraq Apprehend Terrorism Suspects," U.S. Department of Defense, October 21, 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=51586>; American Forces Press Service, "Coalition Forces in Iraq Capture Suspects, Seize Caches," U.S. Department of Defense, October 28, 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=51687>.
  - KH continues to target U.S. military bases, coalition and U.S. vehicles, and contractors working with coalition forces.  
Meanwhile, coalition forces continue to detain and arrest suspected KH operatives. Coalition forces have reportedly captured more than 30 KH operatives since the beginning of August. Sources: "Country Reports on Terrorism 2009: Chapter 6. Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, August 5, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2009/140900.htm>; American Forces Press Service, "Coalition Forces in Iraq Round Up Suspects, Find Weapons," U.S. Department of Defense, September 2, 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=51003>; American Forces Press Service, "Coalition, Iraqi Forces Continue Pressure on Insurgents," U.S. Department of Defense, September 28, 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=51323>.
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- **KH films seven attacks on U.S. and coalition forces.**  
By mid-August, coalition forces have captured 12 KH operatives, including three propagandists. Coalition forces continue to capture suspected KH operatives throughout the month. Sources: "Country Reports on Terrorism 2009: Chapter 6. Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, August 5, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2009/140900.htm>; Bill Roggio, "Iran continues to train Shia terror groups for attacks in Iraq," *Long War Journal*, August 15, 2008, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/08/map\\_details\\_irans\\_op.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/08/map_details_irans_op.php); American Forces Press Service, "Troops Capture Suspected Hezbollah Associates in New Baghdad," U.S. Department of Defense, August 22, 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=50903>; American Forces Press Service, "Coalition Captures Kataib Hezbollah Suspects, Numerous Others," U.S. Department of Defense, August 26, 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=50931>; American Forces Press Service, "Coalition Forces Capture 18 in Baghdad, Tikrit," U.S. Department of Defense, August 31, 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=50994>.
  - **KH rises in prominence.**  
On July 8, the group claims responsibility for an attack in northern Baghdad that injures one U.S. soldier and an interpreter. On July 21, coalition forces capture a KH propagandist in Baghdad. On July 31, coalition forces capture two KH members in eastern Baghdad. Sources: Bill Roggio, "Hezbollah Brigades propaganda specialist captured in Baghdad," *Long War Journal*, July 21, 2008, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/07/hezbollah\\_brigades\\_p.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/07/hezbollah_brigades_p.php); Bill Roggio, "Coalition forces capture Hezbollah Brigades operative in Baghdad," *Long War Journal*, July 31, 2008, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/07/coalition\\_forces\\_cap.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/07/coalition_forces_cap.php).
  - **June 4, 2008:** KH is believed responsible for an attack that kills 18 Iraqi civilians, injures 29, and destroys 19 homes.  
The attack reportedly was intended to target coalition forces. Source: American Forces Press Service, "Operations Continue Against al-Qaida, Hataib Hezbollah," U.S. Department of Defense, October 19, 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=51560>.
  - **May 13, 2008:** KH launches an RPG attack on a U.S. tank in northern Baghdad.  
Source: "Treasury Designates Individual, Entity Posing Threat to Stability in Iraq," U.S. Department of the Treasury, July 2, 2009, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg195.aspx>.
  - **- : Iraq launches a campaign against the Mahdi Army and allied Shiite terrorist groups, including KH.**  
Source: Bill Roggio, "Iran continues to train Shia terror groups for attacks in Iraq," *Long War Journal*, August 15, 2008, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/08/map\\_details\\_irans\\_op.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/08/map_details_irans_op.php).
  - **February 19, 2008:** KH launches an IRAM attack at a U.S. base southeast of Baghdad.  
The attack kills one U.S. civilian and injures U.S. civilians and additional coalition forces personnel. Source: "Treasury Designates Individual, Entity Posing Threat to Stability in Iraq," U.S. Department of the Treasury, July 2, 2009, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg195.aspx>.
  - **- : Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) launches a number of rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and improvised rocket-assisted mortars (IRAMs) at U.S. targets in Iraq.**  
Source: "Treasury Designates Individual, Entity Posing Threat to Stability in Iraq," U.S. Department of the Treasury, July 2, 2009, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg195.aspx>.

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**Violent history:**

- **January 28, 2024:** Suspected Iran-backed militants launch a drone strike on the Tower 22 U.S. outpost in Jordan. The strike kills three U.S. soldiers and wounds at least 40 others. The slain soldiers are later identified as Specialist Breonna Alexsondria Moffett, Sergeant William Jerome Rivers, and Specialist Kennedy Ladon Sanders. U.S. President Joe Biden accuses “radical Iran-backed militant groups operating in Syria and Iraq” of carrying out the attack. According to U.S. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby, KH supported the militants who carried out the attack. According to media reports, the IRI claims responsibility for the attack on January 29. On January 30, KH announces it will suspend military and security operations against U.S. forces to “prevent embarrassment of the Iraqi government” and will “continue to defend our people in Gaza in other ways.” On January 31, U.S. President Joe Biden confirms the IRI’s role in the attack. National Security Council Spokesman John Kirby dismisses KH’s claims of suspended operations, stating the group cannot be taken at face value.<sup>115</sup>
- **December 27, 2023:** IRI releases a statement claiming responsibility for attacking an undisclosed target in the Israeli-held Golan Heights. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) reportedly locate an explosive-laden drone that was launched from Syrian territory. News reports speculate that IRI’s failed attack could be in response to Israel’s targeted killing of Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp (IRGC) officer Reza Mousavi in Damascus, Syria, on December 25.<sup>116</sup>
- **December 25, 2023:** KH and IRI jointly claim responsibility for a drone strike targeting U.S. forces in Irbil, Iraq. The strike injures three U.S. troops. The next day, the United States launches retaliatory strikes targeting three KH locations in Iraq. The strikes destroy facilities and reportedly kill one KH fighter and injure 18 others.<sup>117</sup>
- **October 2023:** The IRI carries out an October 17 failed drone strike on an U.S. air base in Irbil, Iraq. The IRI carries out twenty more attacks across Iraq and Syria by the month’s end. However, no casualties are reported. <sup>118</sup>
- **May 15, 2023:** Alleged KH gunmen clash with Iraqi security forces in the Al-Buaitha neighborhood, southwest of Baghdad. Media reports give conflicting accounts of the confrontation. According to one report, the engagement began when militants insisted on owning some agricultural land in the area. According to other reports, police raided a KH oil smuggling site.<sup>119</sup>
- **Late March 2023:** Israeli-Russian academic Elizabeth Tsurkov is kidnapped in Baghdad after leaving a cafe. Her last social media post is dated March 21. In July, Israeli Prime Minister accuses KH of holding her hostage. Tsurkov is a doctoral student at Princeton University who was conducting research in Iraq. According to unnamed Arab sources in Israeli media, Tsurkov initiated contact with her kidnappers as part of her research. She entered Iraq using her Russian passport. A statement from Tsurkov’s family holds the Iraqi government responsible for her safety.<sup>120</sup>
- **March 14, 2023:** A group of KH militants engage in a firefight with the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) at Iraq’s Camp Speicher. KH shoots and wounds two CTS soldiers and burns multiple CTS vehicles.<sup>121</sup>
- **August 15, 2022:** Two Iranian-made two KAS-04 drones attack the Al-Tanf Garrison in eastern Syria, where U.S. forces train Syrian forces to counter ISIS. No casualties are reported. There are no claims of responsibility, but U.S. officials blame Iranian-backed militants in central Iraq. Officials tell media the attack originated from Iraq’s Babil province in an area controlled by Iran-backed militia Kata’ib Hezbollah, which denies responsibility for the attack. Despite KH’s denial, the model of drones used in the attack match drones previously displayed during KH military parades. KH also maintains tight control over the Jurf al-Sakhar complex in Babil, labeling it a closed military zone.<sup>122</sup>
- **November 7, 2021:** Two explosives-laden drones target the Baghdad home of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, lightly wounding Kadhimi and wounding seven members of his security detail. The Iraqi military shoots down one of the drones. Shortly after the attack, Kadhimi posts to Twitter calling for calm and calling the attack cowardly. The United States, Arab League, and Palestine Liberation Organization condemn the assassination attempt. Anonymous Iraqi security officials tell Reuters the drones were made by Iran. The officials say Iran-backed militias were responsible and specifically accuse KH and AAH of carrying out the attack together. A militia source tells Reuters KH was involved, though KH separately denies responsibility. KH spokesman Abu Ali al-Askari accuses Kadhimi of “playing the victim” and says there are “less expensive” ways to target him if that is what the group had wanted. IRGC-Quds Force commander Ismail Ghaani visits Baghdad on November 8 and denies Tehran had any connection to the attack.<sup>123</sup>
- **July 6, 2020:** Two militants on motorcycles shoot and kill academic Hisham al-Hashimi near Hashimi’s home in Baghdad. In July 2021, Iraqi police officer and KH member Ahmed Ouaid al-Kinani confesses to orchestrating the murder and shooting Hashimi himself. Hashemi had been critical of KH in his writings, calling it “the strongest and most dangerous group in the so-called Islamic resistance.” On May 7, 2023, Kinani is sentenced to death. At the end of that July, Iraq’s criminal court overturns the death sentence and sends the case back to investigators.<sup>124</sup>
- **March 11, 2020:** Suspected Iranian-backed militias in Iraq launch rocket strikes 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. The strikes bear similarities to an airstrike launched by KH on a military base in Kirkuk on December 27, 2019, that killed an American contractor. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the airstrikes were allegedly in retaliation for airstrikes previously

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carried out across the Iraqi border around the Syrian city of Abu Kamal. The next day on March 12 and into March 13, the United States launches airstrikes in the Baghdad region, targeting five KH weapons facilities. 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.”<sup>125</sup>

- **December 29, 2019 - January 1, 2020:** Beginning on December 29, 2019, protesters, including members and supporters of KH, attempt to storm the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. Demonstrators throw stones and torch a security post. Embassy guards respond with stun grenades and tear gas. The militia supporters withdraw from the embassy after prominent commanders reportedly spoke to them. KH flags are displayed at the entrance to the U.S. Embassy and graffiti on the wall read, “Soleimani is my leader,” referring to General Qasem Soleimani, the commander of Iran’s IRGC-Quds Force. On January 1, 2020, following orders from Mohammed Mohyee, KH’s political spokesman, thousands of protesters disperse from the American Embassy in Baghdad. The withdrawal was reportedly agreed to upon the condition that Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi will move ahead with legislation to force American troops out of Iraq.<sup>126</sup>
  - **December 27, 2019:** More than 30 missiles are fired at an Iraqi military base near Kirkuk, killing a U.S. contractor and wounding four U.S. troops as well as two members of the Iraqi security forces. The U.S. accuses KH of being responsible for the attack.<sup>127</sup>
  - **June 27, 2019:** KH members storm the Bahraini embassy in protest of Bahrain hosting America’s Israel-Palestine conference.<sup>128</sup>
  - **May 19, 2019:** A missile is launched from Amana Bridge in Baghdad, reportedly aimed at the American embassy but landing in an empty field near the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. No casualties are reported. According to a senior official in the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Services (CTS) the rocket was launched by KH.<sup>129</sup>
  - **May 14, 2019:** KH attacks two Saudi Arabia oil facilities using explosive-laden drones launched from their base in Jurf as-Sakr on the outskirts of Baghdad.<sup>130</sup>
  - **March 2018 - May 2018:** Units of KH join the Syrian regime’s offensive against opposition held-East Ghouta and ISIS-held Hajar al-Aswad regions of Damascus.<sup>131</sup>
  - **February 6, 2018:** KH warns that it might engage in armed confrontation with U.S. forces in Iraq at any moment. It is the second warning issued by KH against American troops in the country since the Iraqi government declared final victory over ISIS in late 2017. Jaafar Al-Husseini, spokesman for KH claims, “There is no stable Iraq with the presence of the Americans.”<sup>132</sup>
  - **February 9, 2017:** The secretary of KH, Bassem al-Mousawi, dies of wounds at a hospital in central Basra after attackers boarding a pickup truck shot at his vehicle, seriously wounding him and another companion. No one claims responsibility for the attack.<sup>133</sup>
  - **June 2016:** KH is implicated in human rights abuses and retaliatory attacks against Sunnis near Fallujah.<sup>134</sup>
  - **May 2016 - June 2016:** KH participates in the Iraqi-led effort to recapture Fallujah. After Fallujah is retaken, the United Nations reveals gross human rights violations by KH, including the execution and torture of 49 boys and men in Fallujah.<sup>135</sup>
  - **September 4, 2015:** Eighteen Turkish construction workers are abducted in Baghdad. Kata’ib Hezbollah is suspected of involvement.<sup>136</sup>
  - **Early April 2015:** Sunnis from liberated Tikrit and its surrounding towns claim that KH militants are responsible for looting and burning Sunni homes. Residents claim that the attacks by KH were motivated by sectarian hatred.<sup>137</sup>
  - **March 21, 2015:** Two Iraqi local officials and a police officer accuse KH militants of burning and looting homes in the Iraqi town of al-Dour after capturing it from ISIS. Both a KH spokesman and a security commander in the area deny the claim.<sup>138</sup>
  - **June 2014:** Human Rights Watch finds that KH, AAH, and other Shiite militias have carried out “indiscriminate attacks in civilian areas,” and have also conducted kidnapping operations and carried out summary executions of Sunnis. These attacks have occurred in the Iraqi towns of Buhriz, Mada’in, al-Heetawy, and others, according to Human Rights Watch’s findings.<sup>139</sup>
  - **February 2013:** KH is linked to a February 9 attack on a camp in Iraq hosting Iranian dissidents.<sup>140</sup>
  - **October 2012:** A Reuters report mentions that Shiite fighters from KH have been traveling to Syria to defend the Assad regime.<sup>141</sup>
  - **July 2011:** KH issues a statement threatening Kuwait and the workers who are building a port near Kuwait’s border with Iraq.<sup>142</sup>
  - **June 2011:** On June 6, an IRAM attack on a U.S. military camp near Baghdad International Airport kills six U.S. soldiers. KH claims responsibility for the attack.<sup>143</sup> KH also claims responsibility for an IRAM attack that kills three U.S. soldiers at a base on June 29.<sup>144</sup> June is considered the deadliest month in Iraq for U.S. forces in over two years.<sup>145</sup> U.S. military officials say that Shiite militias, including Kata’ib Hezbollah, are ramping up attacks in an effort to claim credit for the impending U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq.<sup>146</sup>
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- **July 2010:** U.S. General Ray Odierno warns of an imminent threat posed by KH, and says that Iran continues to provide the group with funds, training, weapons, and ammunition.<sup>147</sup>
- **December 2009:** On December 23, Iraqi forces arrest three suspected Kata'ib Hezbollah operatives, including one wanted for executing mortar attacks in September.<sup>148</sup> On December 31, KH carries out a rocket attack in the Green Zone.<sup>149</sup>
- **July 2, 2009:** The U.S. Treasury Department designates Kata'ib Hezbollah and its leader, Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes, for having “committed, directed, supported, or posed a significant risk of committing acts of violence against Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces.”<sup>150</sup> The U.S. State Department notes that in addition to executing attacks against U.S., Iraqi, and coalition forces, KH has threatened the lives of Iraqi politicians, as well as civilians, who support Iraq’s political process.<sup>151</sup>
- **November 29, 2008:** KH launches a rocket attack that kills two U.N. contractors and injures 15 others.<sup>152</sup>
- **September 2008:** KH continues to target U.S. military bases, coalition and U.S. vehicles, and contractors working with coalition forces.<sup>153</sup>
- **August 2008:** KH films seven attacks on U.S. and coalition forces.<sup>154</sup>
- **July 8, 2008:** KH claims responsibility for an attack in northern Baghdad that injures one U.S. soldier and an interpreter.<sup>155</sup>
- **June 4, 2008:** KH is believed responsible for an attack that kills 18 Iraqi civilians, injures 29, and destroys 19 homes. The attack reportedly was intended to target coalition forces.<sup>156</sup>
- **May 13, 2008:** KH launches an RPG attack on a U.S. tank in northern Baghdad.<sup>157</sup>
- **February 19, 2008:** KH launches an IRAM attack at a U.S. base southeast of Baghdad. The attack by KH kills one U.S. civilian and injures additional coalition force personnel and U.S. civilians.<sup>158</sup>
- **March 2007 - June 2008:** KH launches a number of rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and improvised rocket-assisted mortars (IRAMs) at U.S. targets in Iraq.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Natasha Bertrand, Oren Lieberman and Haley Britzky, “Drone that killed US soldiers in Jordan followed American drone onto base, causing confusion,” CNN, January 29, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/29/politics/us-soldiers-deaths-jordan/index.html>; Jon Gambrell, Aamer Madhani, and Zeke Miller, “US pins blame for deadly drone strike on Iran-backed militias in the Islamic Resistance in Iraq,” Associated Press, January 31, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/yemen-houthi-us-navy-mideast-tensions-israel-hamas-red-sea-6d5662d09aad8aed0875025b75928ef5>; Jane Arraf, “Who are the Iranian-backed militias attacking U.S. forces in Jordan,” “Who are the Iranian-backed militias attacking U.S. forces in Jordan,” NPR, January 29, 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/01/29/1227695808/who-are-the-iranian-backed-militias-attacking-u-s-forces-in-jordan>; Dan Sabbagh, “Jordan drone strike: who are Islamic Resistance in Iraq and what is Tower 22,” *Guardian* (London), January 29, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/29/jordan-drone-strike-who-are-islamic-resistance-in-iraq-and-what-is-tower-22>; C. Todd Lopez, “3 U.S. Service Members Killed, Others Injured in Jordan Following Drone Attack,” U.S. Department of Defense, January 29, 2024, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3659809/3-us-service-members-killed-others-injured-in-jordan-following-drone-attack/>.

<sup>116</sup> Joe Truzman and Bill Roggio, “Network of Iraqi militias claim responsibility for attack in Israel,” Long War Journal, December 28, 2023, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2023/12/network-of-iraqi-militias-claim-responsibility-for-attack-in-israel.php>.

<sup>117</sup> “Biden orders strikes on Iran-backed group after US troops hurt in Iraq drone attack,” Times of Israel, December 26, 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/biden-orders-strikes-on-iran-backed-group-after-us-troops-hurt-in-iraq-drone-attack/>.

<sup>118</sup> Hamdi Malik and Michael Knights, “Profile: The Islamic Resistance in Iraq,” Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 21, 2023, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-islamic-resistance-iraq>.

<sup>119</sup> Hassan al-Mustafa, “Kata’ib Hezbollah a perennial rebel against the Iraqi government,” Arab News, May 23, 2023, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2308961>.

<sup>120</sup> Maayan Lubell, “Israeli-Russian academic being held by militia in Iraq, Netanyahu says,” Reuters, July 5, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/israeli-russian-academic-being-held-by-shiite-militia-iraq-netanyahu-says-2023-07-05/>; Ronen Bergman, Patrick Kingsley, Alissa J. Rubin, and Adam Goldman, “Israeli Woman Held for Months in Iraq by Shiite Militia Linked to Iran,” *New York Times*, July 5, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/05/world/middleeast/iraq-iran-elizabeth-tsurokov.html>; Gianluca Pacchiani, “Israeli abducted in Iraq said to have initiated contact with her kidnappers,” Times of Israel, July 16, 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-abducted-in-iraq-said-to-have-initiated-contact-with-her-kidnappers/>.

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**Designations:**

*Designations by the U.S. Government:*

- ○ **July 2, 2009:** The U.S. Department of State designated “Kata’ib Hizballah” as a Foreign Terrorist Organization on July 2, 2009.<sup>160</sup>
- ○ **July 2, 2009:** The U.S. Department of the Treasury designated “Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes” as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist on July 2, 2009.<sup>161</sup>
- ○ **February 26, 2020:** The U.S. Department of State designated “Ahmad al-Hamidawi” a Specially Designated Global Terrorist on February 26, 2020.<sup>162</sup>
- ○ **March 26, 2020:** The U.S. Department of the Treasury designated “Shaykh ‘Adnan Al-Hamidawi” as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist on March 26, 2020.<sup>163</sup>
- ○ **January 13, 2021:** The U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets and Control designated “Abd al-Aziz Malluh Mirjirash al-Muhammawadi,” a.k.a. Abu Fadak al-Mohammedawi as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist on January 13, 2021.<sup>164</sup>

*Designations by Foreign Governments and Organizations:*

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- Japan has designated KH as a terrorist group.<sup>165</sup>
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- November 2014: The United Arab Emirates designated “Hizbollah Brigades in Iraq” as a terrorist organization in November 2014.<sup>166</sup>

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### **Associations:**

#### *Ties to Extremist Entities:*

- **Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH)**  
Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH), Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), and the Badr Organization are considered “Iran’s three big Iraqi militias.”<sup>167</sup> All three groups are part of the Haashid Shaabi, an umbrella organization of Shiite militias also called the popular mobilization forces or PMF. In January 2018, the three militias joined with other PMF units to form the Fatah Alliance political party in preparation for Iraq’s May 2018 elections.<sup>168</sup> As of April 2014, KH and AAH made up the bulk of Shiite militia forces aiding the Iraqi security forces (ISF) in combating Sunni extremists. At the time, KH and AAH members were, according to senior Shiite politicians, defending the country as part of an organization called the Sons of Iraq, a group reportedly attached to the prime minister’s military office.<sup>169</sup> Members of both AAH and KH have trained in Iranian training camps. The two groups have similarly recruited Iraqis to fight in Syria, allegedly at the behest of deceased IRGC Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani.<sup>170</sup>
- **Badr Organization**  
Jamal Jaafar Ibrahim, the leader of KH, joined the Badr Organization’s predecessor, the Badr Corps, in 1985. By 2001, he had risen to become one of the deputy commanders of the Badr Corps.<sup>171</sup> Ibrahim’s connection to the Badr Corps is not unique. According to U.S. intelligence officers, the majority of KH’s members as of 2010 had served in the Badr Corps before 2003.<sup>172</sup> The connection between KH and the Badr Organization (so renamed in 2003) has continued. In early 2013, KH and the Badr Organization formed Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS or “The Master of the Martyrs Brigade”) to fight in Syria.<sup>173</sup> Further, while KH does not affiliate with any one political party in Iraq, the group is reported to have a “familial” relationship with political figures within the Badr Organization, according to a RAND Corporation report.<sup>174</sup> KH and the Badr Organization, along with Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) comprise “Iran’s three big Iraqi militias,” according to Reuters.<sup>175</sup> All three groups are part of the Haashid Shaabi, an umbrella organization of Shiite militias also called the popular mobilization forces (PMF).
- **Hezbollah (Lebanon)**  
While Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) and Lebanese Hezbollah share a name, the two Iranian proxies operate independently. KH has ideological ties to Lebanese Hezbollah and may have received support from the latter group, according to the U.S. State Department.<sup>176</sup> In particular, KH has developed especially close ties with Unit 3800, the wing of Lebanese Hezbollah devoted to arming and training Iraqi Shiite militias.<sup>177</sup> The U.S. State Department wrote in 2010 that KH is suspected to receive its aid from Iran through its Lebanese Hezbollah proxy.<sup>178</sup> The U.S. Treasury Department wrote more explicitly in 2008 that KH had been receiving weapons training and support from Lebanese Hezbollah.<sup>179</sup>  
  
As described in a report by the RAND Corporation, “Kata'ib Hezbollah, like Lebanese Hezbollah, is used as a tool to ‘export the Islamic revolution’ as practiced in Tehran.”<sup>180</sup> According to 70 USF-I staff officers, KH, like Lebanese Hezbollah, “should be considered a direct action arm of the Quds Force.”<sup>181</sup>
- **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)**  
Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) formed KH in 2006 or early 2007, during the U.S.-led war in Iraq.<sup>182</sup> As of 2008, KH was being funded, trained, and controlled by the IRGC.<sup>183</sup> In September 2010, Michael Knights of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy wrote that the interaction between KH and the IRGC goes both ways, as KH leader Jamal Jaafar Ibrahim, a.k.a. Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes, acted not only as the head of his militia, but as an adviser to Iran’s military envoy to Iraq, IRGC Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani.<sup>184</sup> Soleimani reportedly oversaw the three main Shiite militias in Iraq —KH, the Badr Organization, and AAH.<sup>185</sup> The IRGC’s Quds Force is charged with spreading Iran’s Islamist ideology and system of governance beyond the country’s borders.<sup>186</sup> In Ibrahim’s first press conference in January 2015, he described himself as a military commander and “defector” from the IRGC.<sup>187</sup>

#### *Ties to Extremist Individuals:*

- **Bashar al-Assad**  
KH has sent fighters to defend the Assad regime in Syria, allegedly at the behest of IRGC-Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani.<sup>188</sup> In March 2013, KH became the second group to declare it has lost fighters in Syria, although the group had begun recruiting and sending fighters to defend the Assad regime in Syria long before.<sup>189</sup> As of January 2015, KH claims to have lost around forty fighters in total to the war in



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Syria. The group has even built a new martyrs section in Najaf's Wadi al-Salam cemetery devoted to these fighters. In support of Assad's regime, KH has also helped build Syria-based Shiite militias such as Liwa Abu Fadl al-Abbas (LAFA).<sup>190</sup>

### • Qasem Soleimani

KH leader Jamal Jaafar Ibrahim, a.k.a. Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes, worked closely with the deceased commander of Iran's IRGC Quds Force, Qasem Soleimani. In September 2010, Michael Knights of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy wrote that Ibrahim acted not only as the head of his militia, but as an adviser to Soleimani.<sup>191</sup> In his post as commander of the Quds Force, Soleimani reportedly oversaw military operations for the three main Shiite militias in Iraq—KH, the Badr Organization, and AAH.<sup>192</sup> U.S. diplomat Ali Khedery has confirmed Soleimani's strong connection with Ibrahim in particular. According to Khedery, "I heard from Sunni, Shiite, Kurdish officials and virtually all of them told me that the real prime minister of [Iraq] is Qasem Soleimani and his deputy is [Jamal Jaafar Ibrahim, also known as] Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis."<sup>193</sup> Ibrahim and Soleimani were both killed in a January 3, 2020, U.S. drone strike in Iraq. KH joined with other Iran-backed Iraqi militias in calling for revenge against the United States.<sup>194</sup>

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## Kata'ib Hezbollah

### Media Coverage:

#### Western Media

Although Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) has been active in Iraq since at least 2007, Western media did not cover the group significantly until the summer of 2008. At that time, the United States and coalition forces announced the arrests of various KH operatives, and the group began to receive limited coverage as a result.

The *Long War Journal* was one of the first Western media outlets to cover the arrests. In a July 21 article, the *Long War Journal* announced the coalition forces' arrest of a KH propagandist, and added that "[l]ittle information is publicly available on the Hezbollah Brigades [KH]" group itself.<sup>195</sup> The outlet then introduced KH as an "offshoot of Iranian-trained Special Groups," a U.S. classification for Iranian-backed paramilitary cells in Iraq. It went on to describe KH's logo which, as author Bill Roggio noted, resembled the logo of Hezbollah in Lebanon. Roggio continued by outlining the group's claims of responsibility for attacks on U.S. and coalition targets, including an improvised rocket-assisted mortar (IRAM) attack a few weeks prior.<sup>196</sup> Throughout the rest of the summer, the *Long War Journal* continued to cover the group as Multinational Forces Iraq and the U.S. army announced arrests of suspected KH operatives.<sup>197</sup> Around that time, other outlets mentioned KH in passing, including the Associated Press.<sup>198</sup>

Reuters, on the other hand, did not provide major coverage of the group until 2013 and 2014. During this time, extremism and sectarianism once again rose to the surface of Iraq's political landscape. As a result, KH was often mentioned by Reuters tangentially, and in relation to the general trend of resurgent sectarian tensions in Iraq.<sup>199</sup>

At the time, the *New York Times* tended to rely on Reuters when mentioning developments related to KH and other Shiite paramilitary groups. Indeed, the *New York Times* did not publish original articles mentioning KH by name until the fall of 2014.<sup>200</sup> In its first article mentioning KH by name, the *New York Times* described the group as one of Iraq's three main Iranian-backed Shiite militias. It distinguished KH from Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) and the Badr Organization, stating that KH "shares the Iranian patronage and ideology of the Lebanese group of the same name, but has no other known links to it."<sup>201</sup> The introduction ignored the body of research made by the U.S. government that linked Lebanese Hezbollah to Kata'ib Hezbollah through training and support systems.<sup>202</sup> In the same September 2014 article, the *New York Times* specifically noted that KH was opposed to any cooperation with the United States, and quoted the militia as saying that it would "not fight alongside the American troops under any kind of conditions whatsoever."<sup>203</sup> *New York Times* author David D. Kirkpatrick framed this anti-American stance as "[u]nderscoring the tensions in the de facto alliance" between Iraq's Iranian-backed Shiite militias.<sup>204</sup>

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**Rhetoric:**

*Abu Ali Al-Askari, KH security official, March 2023*

“We reiterate once again that the brigades will directly target US bases across the region in case the US enemy commits a folly and decides to strike our resistance fighters and their camps [in Iraq].”<sup>205</sup>

*KH statement, November 2022*

“The optimal solution to deal with the Saudi entity is to establish an alliance from the countries affected by its criminal deeds to transfer the conflicts into the streets of Riyadh.”<sup>206</sup>

*KH statement, August 2022*

*Statement during the August 5-7 confrontation between Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Israel:*

“We are not surprised by the assassination of our brethren in Gaza by the Zionist regime. We are astounded by the silence of the Arab world. Repeated Israeli attacks against the resilient Palestinian nation are the unfortunate outcome of normalization of ties with the Zionist regime. Targeted killings and bombardment of residential buildings is a confirmation of the enemy’s criminal approach.”<sup>207</sup>

*KH statement, March 2022*

*In response to a March 13 Iranian strike on an alleged Israeli spy facility in Erbil, Iraq:*

“[The] attack on the Mossad headquarters was a reaction to the bombing of the interior of Iran by the Zionists from the territory of Iraq. The bombing of an advanced Israeli base in Erbil by Iranian forces, in which a number of Israeli Mossad officers were killed or wounded, is a process that represents a different phase of the conflict in Iraq.”<sup>208</sup>

*KH statement, February 26, 2021*

“The American enemy persists in its criminality and kills the protectors of the nation and the honorable people of the country, not deterred from shedding innocent blood as long as the wages of murder are received from Saudi Arabia and the Emirates.”<sup>209</sup>

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