

## *Kata'ib Sayyid al Shuhada*

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**Name:** Kata'ib Sayyid al Shuhada

**Type of Organization:**

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

**Ideologies and Affiliations:**

- Iranian-sponsored
- Shiite
- Jihadist
- Khomeinist

**Place of Origin:**

Iraq

**Year of Origin:**

2013

**Founder(s):**

Abu Mustafa al Sheibani

**Places of Operation:**

Iraq, Syria

**Overview**

*Executive Summary*

Kata'ib Sayyid al Shuhada (KSS) is an Iraqi militia that has fought in both Iraq and Syria and is closely connected to Iran's [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#) (IRGC) and the [Houthis](#).<sup>1</sup> Its leader is Abu Mustafa al Sheibani, a U.S.-designated terrorist who also assisted in forming the IRGC-backed [Asaib Ahl al-Haq](#) (AAH) and [Kata'ib Hezbollah](#) (KH) militias.<sup>2</sup>

The group was founded in 2013. Its first public announcements were three martyrdom notices for members killed fighting in southern Damascus alongside Syrian regime forces.<sup>3</sup> In Syria, KSS operates within the fold of the mixed Syrian and Iraqi Liwa Abu Fadl al-Abbas, another Iranian-backed militia.<sup>4</sup>

KSS follows the same Shiite jihadist ideology as fellow pro-Iranian Iraqi militias, framing its fight in Syria as a defense of Shiites and the Shiite shrine of Sayyida Zaynab.<sup>5</sup> In a 2013 interview, KSS's information office stated that the group sent 500 militants to Syria.<sup>6</sup> Other media statements have affirmed the presence of KSS fighters in rural Damascus along the frontlines in eastern Ghouta.<sup>7</sup> The Associated Press has reported that KSS fighters enter Syria via Iran.<sup>8</sup>

In 2015, KSS declared Saudi Arabia "a legitimate and permissible target" after that country executed a prominent Shiite cleric.<sup>9</sup> A 2018 KSS statement indicated the group was ready to send fighters to Yemen. KSS's leader wrote, "I am a soldier standing at the signal of Sayyid Abdel

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Malek al Houthi [leader of the Houthis].”<sup>10</sup> Both of these actions indicate that KSS firmly sees itself as part of a global Shiite jihadist movement. In June 2020, the Republican Study Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives recommended designating KSS as a terrorist group. The recommendation also included other PMF factions Badr Organization, Kataib al-Imam Ali, Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas, and Jund al-Islam.<sup>11</sup>

### *Doctrine*

KSS follows the same global Shiite jihadist ideology as other IRGC-backed Shiite militant groups such as [Asaib Ahl al-Haq \(AAH\)](#) and [Kata'ib Hezbollah \(KH\)](#).<sup>12</sup> Its militant activity in Syria was framed as a holy war to protect the Shiite shrine of Sayyida Zaynab, and KSS has publicly pledged its loyalty to the Houthis, indicating its support for a global Shiite armed movement.<sup>13</sup>

### *Organizational Structure*

Shiite-militia expert Phillip Smyth claimed in late 2013 that KSS appears to be closely tied to the [Badr Organization](#), both ideologically and in terms of shared fighters in Syria.<sup>14</sup> KSS claims to have sent 500 militants to Syria in 2013, where it fought alongside the Syrian regime until at least 2015.<sup>15</sup>

The group corresponds to the 14th Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) brigade.<sup>16</sup> KSS is connected to the Syrian Liwa al-Muntadhir and corresponds to the 7th PMF Brigade led by Dagher al-Mousawi.<sup>17</sup> According to Smyth, KSS may be essentially a front for the military arm of the Sayyid al-Shuhada Movement, a jihadist political group allegedly backed by Iran and based in Basra, Iraq.<sup>18</sup> Many of KSS's reported casualties have been militants from the Basra region.<sup>19</sup>

### *Financing*

KSS receives funding directly from the IRGC's Quds Force—a special branch of the IRGC tasked with achieving sensitive missions beyond Iran's borders—and, as a member of the PMF, from the Iraqi government.<sup>20</sup>

### *Recruitment*

Based on its reported losses, apparently KSS largely recruits from the southern Iraqi city of Basra, as well as from the Dhi Qar Province.<sup>21</sup> On September 15, 2016, KSS released a new call for recruits.<sup>22</sup>

### *Training*

An August 2016 video, which has since been removed by YouTube, showed KSS fighters training in Syria with heavy machine guns.<sup>23</sup> The group also receives training directly from the IRGC. The U.S. Treasury Department accused IRGC commander Ahmed Foruzandeh of training the Basra-based Sayyid al-Shuhada movement. Shiite-militia expert Phillip Smyth believes KSS is a front for the Sayyid al-Shuhada organization's military arm.<sup>24</sup>

KSS has also reportedly trained extensively in the use of drones. KSS Secretary General Abu Waala al Wa'eli expressed “enthusiasm for [drone warfare](#)” and stated in a 2019 interview, “We are working day and night to develop drones that can be put together in a living room.”<sup>25</sup>

### *Also Known As*

- Kata'ib Abu Fadl al-Abbas<sup>26</sup>
- Kata'ib Karbala<sup>27</sup>
- Battalion of the Sayyid's Martyrs<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Caleb Weiss, “Iraqi Shia Militia ‘Willing to Send Fighters to Yemen,’” Long War Journal, July 9, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/iraqi-shia-militia-willing-to-send-fighters-to-yemen.php>.



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<sup>28</sup> “Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS),” Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, accessed March 24, 2020, <https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/kata'ib-sayyid-al-shuhada-kss>.

**Key Leaders**



**Abu Waala al Wa'eli**  
Secretary-General

**Falih Khazali**  
Spokesman

**Abu Mustafa al  
Sheibani**  
Senior leader and commander

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**History:**

- **April 25, 2023:** KSS spokesman Kadhimi al-Fartousi tells the Al-Araby Al-Jadeed website KSS is prepared to expel the United States from Iraq if it refuses to withdraw.  
According to al-Fartousi, KSS is waiting on the Iraqi government to complete its diplomatic effort to expel the United States before it acts. Source: "Iraqi Resistance Group Says Ready to Expel US Troops," Tasnim News Agency, April 25, 2023, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2023/04/25/2884962/iraqi-resistance-group-says-ready-to-expel-us-troops>.
- **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 KSS, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, Kata'ib Hezbollah, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, and Badr Organization 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>.
- **October 5, 2022 - October 6, 2022:** Following a violent confrontation on October 5 between gunmen from Saraya Salam and AAH, Shiite cleric Muqtada al-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 Kadhimi 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://theArabweekly.com/sadr-suspends-all-armed-factions-including-peace-brigades>.
- **November 19, 2021:** The Iraqi Resistance Coordination Commission calls on the United States to hold by a December 31 deadline to withdraw from Iraq or the weapons of Iraqi militias "will be ready to dismember the occupation."  
Wa'eli tweets a call for Iraqis to join KSS and for the Iraqi people and militias to "raise the level of readiness" in preparation for a "decisive and historic confrontation" with the United States after midnight on December 31. Source: Tom O'Connor, "Iraq Militias, Seeing Taliban's Success, Plan to Force U.S. Troops Out After Dec. 31," *Newsweek*, November 22, 2021, <https://www.newsweek.com/iraqi-militias-seeing-talibans-success-plan-force-us-troops-out-after-dec-31-1652065>.
- **July 6, 2021:** In an exclusive interview with the Associated Press, Wa'eli vows to avenge the deaths of KSS fighters in the previous month's U.S. airstrike.  
Wa'eli promises "an operation in which everyone says they have taken revenge on the Americans." Wa'eli praises Iranian president-elect Ebrahim Raisi. He claims Iran-backed militant groups "will have their best times." Source: Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Iraqi militia commander vows to avenge deaths in US strike," Associated Press, July 6, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-middle-east-iraqi-government-and-politics-d6b61b979b2ca123bc04b12ae5576bf6>.
- **June 27, 2021:** U.S. forces launch airstrikes against weapons and storage facilities along the Iraq-Syria border used 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/iraqi-us-airstrikes-militias-iran.html>.
- **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>.
- **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/iraqi-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 Kata'ib Hezbollah and Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces.  
According to the Pentagon, the strikes target a weapons shipment from Iraq to Syria and struck facilities belonging to KH and KSS. The Pentagon says the strikes are in retaliation for a February 15 rocket attack on an Iraqi base that killed a civilian contractor and wounded an American service member. KH denied responsibility for recent attacks on U.S. interests in the region. The airstrikes are the first military action taken by the Biden administration. Sources: Robyn Dixon and Sarah Dadouch, "Russia says U.S. gave only a few minutes' warning before strike in Syria," *Washington Post*, February 26, 2021, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/russia-syria-us-strike/2021/02/26/57e602b2-782a-11eb-9489-8f7dadc51e75\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/russia-syria-us-strike/2021/02/26/57e602b2-782a-11eb-9489-8f7dadc51e75_story.html); Lolita C. Baldor and Robert Burns, "US bombs facilities in Syria used by Iran-backed militia," Associated Press, February 26, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/ap-top-news-john-kirby-iran-syria-iraqi-c10b1fb0ed653e687bf57d04b591b5>.
- 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 following day, KH and other militias announced their agreement to suspend attacks on U.S. interests on the condition the Iraqi government works toward a full U.S. withdrawal from the country. 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. A KH spokesman also promises renewed violence if the United States chose to remain in Iraq. The joint statement does not set a deadline for an Iraqi plan of action, but the KH spokesman calls for a parliamentary resolution by January 2021. Sources: John Davison, "Iraqi militias say they have halted anti-U.S. attacks," Reuters, October 11, 2020, [https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-iraqi-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-iraqi-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-iraqi.html?utm\\_source=iterable&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=1570526](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/29/us/politics/pompeo-embassy-baghdad-iraqi.html?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=1570526); "We'll cut the ground from under Americans: Iraqi resistance leader," *Tehran Times*,

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- October 28, 2020, <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/454043/We-ll-cut-the-ground-from-under-Americans-Iraqi-resistance-leader>; Suad 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>; Sinan Mahmoud, "Militias threaten to increase attacks on US assets in Iraq," *National* (Abu Dhabi), May 23, 2021, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/iraq/militias-threaten-to-increase-attacks-on-us-assets-in-iraq-1.1228054>.
- On March 11, suspected Iranian-backed militias in Iraq launch rocket attacks from the Rashediya area of northeast Baghdad. The missiles target a military base at Camp Taji, 17 miles north of Baghdad. The attack kills three—two Americans and one British soldier—and injures at least 14 others. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the airstrikes were allegedly in retaliation for airstrikes previously carried out across the Iraqi border around the Syrian city of Abu Kamal. No group claims responsibility for the attack. On March 12 and into the morning of March 13, the United States launches airstrikes in the Baghdad region, targeting five KH weapons facilities as well as a military base shared by KH, KSS, and other militias. The U.S. Department of Defense calls the retaliatory strikes "defensive, proportional, and in direct response to the threat posed by Iranian-backed Shia militia groups ... who continue to attack bases hosting ... coalition forces." Sources: Dan Lamothe and Louisa Loveluck, "U.S. and coalition troops killed in rocket attack in Iraq, potentially spiking tensions with Iran," *Washington Post*, March 11, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2020/03/11/us-coalition-troops-killed-rocket-attack-iraq-potentially-spiking-tensions-with-iran/>; Alissa J. Rubin and Eric Schmitt, "Rocket Attack Kills Three U.S. Coalition Members in Iraq," *New York Times*, March 11, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/world/middleeast/us-troops-killed-iraq-rocket-attack.html>; "UK soldier and two Americans killed in rocket attack in Iraq," BBC News, March 12, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-51842744>; Lolita C. Baldor, "Pentagon: US strikes Iran-backed group that hit Iraq base," Associated Press, March 12, 2020, <https://apnews.com/5ff9d48d1b2d2d2b1e4243d18930b159>; Carla Babb and Jeff Seidin, "US Hits Back in Iraq, Targeting Militia Behind Deadly Rocket Attack," *Voice of America*, March 13, 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/usa/us-hits-back-iraq-targeting-militia-behind-deadly-rocket-attack>; "Statement by the Department of Defense," U.S. Department of Defense, March 12, 2020, <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2110827/statement-by-the-department-of-defense/>; Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, "Pentagon Order to Plan for Escalation in Iraq Meets Warning From Top Commander," *New York Times*, March 27, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/27/world/middleeast/pentagon-iran-iraq-militias-coronavirus.html?searchResultPosition=1>; John Davison and Ahmed Rasheed, "Fractures grow among Iraq militias, spell political retreat," Reuters, April 1, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-militias/fractures-grow-among-iraq-militias-spell-political-retreat-idUSKBN21J5EZ>; Ali Mamouri, "Iran-backed militias in Iraq under fire after attack on base kills two Americans," *Al-Monitor*, March 12, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/03/iraq-us-troops-taji-baghdad-iran-pmu.html>.
  - **August 28, 2019:** KSS Secretary-General Abu Waala al Wa'eli threatens to kidnap U.S. civilians in Iraq during an interview with Iraqi television station al-Dijla. Wa'eli also threatens to attack the U.S. Embassy in Iraq and send drones into Israel. Sources: Kosar Nawzad, "Head of pro-Iran militia threatens Americans in Iraq," *Kurdistan 24*, August 30, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/20578-Head-of-pro-iran-militia-threatens-Americans-in-Iraq>; "Iraqi Shiite Militia Leader Abu Alaa Al-Walal: If U.S.-Iran War Breaks Out, We Will Fight alongside Iran, All Americans in Iraq Will Be Held Hostages by the Resistance; We Could Easily Send Drone to Strike (U.S.) Embassy," Middle East Media Research Institute, August 28, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/tv/iraqi-shiite-militia-leader-walal-sayyid-shuhada-battalions-war-america-iran-side>.
  - A weapons depot run by KSS explodes, killing one and injuring 37, in southern Baghdad. Source: Kosar Nawzad, "Head of Pro-Iran Militia Threatens Americans in Iraq," *Kurdistan 24*, August 30, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/bd6f683c-8a20-4d19-a081-c12edd56915>.
  - KSS's secretary general declares that the group would send militants to support the Houthis in Yemen if requested. Source: Caleb Weiss, "Iraqi Shia Militia 'Willing to Send Fighters to Yemen,'" *Long War Journal*, July 9, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/iraqi-shia-militia-willing-to-send-fighters-to-yemen.php>.
  - KSS accuses and denounces Israel, the United States, and the Iraqi government for airstrikes carried out against KH in Syria. Source: Caleb Weiss, "Shia Militias across the Middle East Send Condolences to Hezbollah Brigades," *Threat Matrix*, June 22, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/06/shia-militias-across-the-middle-east-send-condolences-to-hezbollah-brigades.php>.
  - A KSS video shows militants using a U.S.-made M1 Abrams tank. The United States suspends maintenance of Abrams tanks in Iraq in response. Sources: Caleb Weiss, "Iranian-Backed Militia Seen with US Tank in Iraq," *Threat Matrix*, February 8, 2016, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/02/iranian-backed-militia-seen-with-us-tank-in-iraq.php>; David Axe, "Made in America, But Lost in Iraq," *Foreign Policy*, March 2, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/02/u-s-made-tanks-that-fell-into-militia-hands-in-iraq-sparks-assistance-standoff>.
  - KSS declares that Saudi Arabia is "a legitimate and permissible target" after the country executes a prominent Shiite cleric. Source: Caleb Weiss, "Iraqi Shia Militia 'Willing to Send Fighters to Yemen,'" *Long War Journal*, July 9, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/iraqi-shia-militia-willing-to-send-fighters-to-yemen.php>.
  - **October 15, 2014:** After Saudi Arabia issues a death sentence for a prominent Shiite cleric, KSS issues a statement claiming "anything of Saudi origin on the level of building or person [is] a target for [KSS]; and [it] will not hold back capability in burning or destroying anything tied to this tyrannical kingdom if these authorities do not review this unjust execution decision." Source: Aymenn al-Tamimi, "Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada—Threats to Saudi Arabia: Translation and Analysis," Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi's Blog, October 17, 2014, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2014/10/kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-threats-to-saudi-arabia>.
  - KSS officially announces its presence in Syria, fighting alongside Syrian regime forces. Source: Phillip Smyth, "Appendix 1: Phases Of Shiite Militia Development and Deployment In Syria and Iraq," in *The Shiite Jihad in Syria and Its Regional Effects* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2015), [https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PF138Appendices/PF138\\_Appendix\\_1.pdf](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PF138Appendices/PF138_Appendix_1.pdf).
  - **January 9, 2008:** The U.S. Treasury Department sanctions future KSS leader Abu Mustafa Al-Sheibani "for threatening the peace and stability of Iraq and the Government of Iraq." Source: "Treasury Designates Individuals, Entity Fueling Iraqi Insurgency," U.S. Department of the Treasury, January 8, 2008, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/hp759.aspx>.

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**Violent history:**

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

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<sup>29</sup> "Coalition Denies Bombing Iraqi Shiite Militia," Arab News, August 8, 2017, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1141601/middle-east>.

<sup>30</sup> Loaa Adel, "Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada Cuts Off IS Supply Line between al-Baa'j and al-Hadher," Iraqi News, April 25, 2017, [https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-cuts-off-supply-line-al-baa-j-al-hadher/?utm\\_content=kuku.io&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_campaign=kuku.io](https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-cuts-off-supply-line-al-baa-j-al-hadher/?utm_content=kuku.io&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=kuku.io).

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

<sup>32</sup> "Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada," Mapping Militant Organizations, Stanford University, last updated December 28, 2016, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/629>.

<sup>33</sup> Phillip Smyth, "Hizballah Cavalcade: Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada Emerges: Updates on the New Iraqi Shia Militia Supplying Fighters to Syria," Jihadology, September 9, 2013, <https://jihadology.net/2013/09/09/hizballah-cavalcade-kataib-sayyid-al-shuhada-emerges-updates-on-the-new-iraqi-shia-militia-supplying-fighters-to-syria/>.



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### Associations:

#### *Ties to Extremist Entities:*

- **Badr Organization**

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

- **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)**

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

- **Hezbollah**

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

- **Houthis**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Kata'ib Sayyid al Shuhada*

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**Rhetoric:**

*Abu Waala al Wa'eli, KSS Secretary-General, November 19, 2021*

“With the approaching hour of decisiveness and a major confrontation, the Islamic Resistance, the Sayyid al-Shuhada Brigades, announces the opening of the door to belonging and volunteering to its ranks and calls on our resistant Iraqi people and the resistance factions to raise the level of readiness in preparation for the decisive and historic confrontation with the American occupation on 12/31/2021 after 12:00 a.m.” (Tweet)<sup>44</sup>

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

“If fighting broke out between Satan and America, I would stand with Satan, because America is the Greater Satan.”<sup>45</sup>

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

“The easiest thing for me to do, if I were considering a disproportionate retaliation [for attacks on the PMU]... Just like drones bombed our bases, as well as our men near the Syrian border and our camp in Amerli, the easiest thing for us to do would be to send drones, armed with the same weapons or even better ones, and bomb their embassy and all their military bases.”<sup>46</sup>

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

“All Americans will be held hostage by the resistance factions in the event of a war.”<sup>47</sup>

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

“I declare I am a soldier standing at the signal of Sayyid Abdel Malek al Houthi [the leader of the Houthi movement]...I announce that Kata'ib Sayyid al Shuhada is a faction among your factions O' Ansar Allah [the official name of the Houthis].”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Tom O'Connor, “Iraq Militias, Seeing Taliban’s Success, Plan to Force U.S. Troops Out After Dec. 31,” *Newsweek*, November 22, 2021, <https://www.newsweek.com/iraq-militias-seeing-talibans-success-plan-force-us-troops-out-after-dec-31-1652065>.

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

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

<sup>47</sup> “Iraqi Shiite Militia Leader Abu Alaa Al-Walal: If U.S.-Iran War Breaks Out, We Will Fight alongside Iran, All Americans in Iraq Will Be Held Hostages by the Resistance; We Could Easily Send Drone to Strike (U.S.) Embassy,” Middle East Media Research Institute, August 28, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/tv/iraqi-shiite-militia-leader-walal-sayyid-shuhada-battalions-war-america-iran-side>.

<sup>48</sup> Caleb Weiss, “Iraqi Shia Militia ‘Willing to Send Fighters to Yemen,’” *Long War Journal*, July 9, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/07/iraqi-shia-militia-willing-to-send-fighters-to-yemen.php>.