

# STATUS UPDATE: SHI'A MILITIAS IN IRAQ

**V**iolence in Iraq today pales in comparison to the bloodshed of only a few years ago. Enemy networks including both al-Qaeda-Iraq (AQI) and Shi'a militias have been seriously degraded by Iraqi and U.S. operations; however, extremist organizations continue to seek to destabilize the country, weaken the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), and undermine confidence in the Iraqi government by continuing to conduct attacks across the country.<sup>1</sup> As the United States draws down its forces, Iraqi and U.S. officials must keep a close watch on the activities of enemy groups that can bring back sectarian violence and undermine the progress to date.

While Sunni terrorist groups such as AQI are responsible for most of the ongoing attacks, Shi'a militia groups still pose a threat. These groups are well-organized, well-trained and well-funded, making them a considerable long-term threat to the future of Iraq.

Shi'a militias in Iraq are largely organized into three main groups: the Promise Day Brigade, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, and Kata'ib Hezbollah. These groups kept a relatively low profile during the first half of 2010. Yet, they remain armed, funded, and trained and can be easily radicalized and mobilized. According to a quarterly report published by the military, "Shi'a militant groups have not renounced armed violence and continue attempts to reestablish networks despite arrests and disruptions."<sup>2</sup> All three groups have received Iranian assistance and their operational success can be easily translated to Iranian gains.

## THE ROLE OF IRAN

Iran continues to provide financial assistance, arms and training to all these groups. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF)—a paramilitary arm tasked with exporting the ideology of the Islamic Revolution abroad—is

the main arm of Iranian activity in Iraq. Under the direction of the Qods Force, Iran smuggles lethal aid across the border into Iraq, particularly in the southern provinces, and continues to train militia members within its territory. In addition, Iran smuggles large amounts of money into Iraq using front companies and by exploiting the tourist industry in Najaf.<sup>3</sup> Recently, Iran has adopted a more cautious line of support, moving from "direct support to indirect support."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, there is very little reason to believe Iran will change its policy of supporting various political and militant factions in Iraq. The Qods Force will likely continue to exploit internal strife and political vacuums in order to strengthen its influence and support its interests.

Brigadier General Qassem Suleimani, the commander of the IRGC-QF, has been in charge of assisting militia groups around the world. He is known to have overseen training, arming and funding of Iraqi militias since the early days of the U.S. invasion. In 2008, Suleimani showed his level of influence in Iraq by negotiating a ceasefire between government forces and his subordinate militias.<sup>5</sup> Suleimani has been keeping a low profile in recent years, in line with Iran's new and more cautious policy of intervention in Iraq. Yet, he remains personally involved with the

aforementioned militia groups.<sup>6</sup>

Iran's involvement in Iraq is not confined to support for militia groups. Iran uses a multi-layered strategy which includes soft power initiatives and political outreach.<sup>7</sup> U.S. military officials reported in February 2010 that Iran was funneling around eight million dollars a month in covert aid to Muqtada al-Sadr's party for campaign assistance.<sup>8</sup> Some sources claim that after the March 2010 parliamentary elections Qassem Suleimani was tasked with assisting the two main Shi'a political blocs—Nuri al-Maliki's State of Law Coalition (SoL) and the Iraqi National Alliance (INA)—in forming an alliance and gaining key government posts.<sup>9</sup> This was further confirmed when delegations from SoL and the Sadr Trend (a member of INA) traveled to Iran in July to discuss the crisis between them under Suleimani's supervision.<sup>10</sup>

U.S. military sources see a threefold Iranian strategy for Iraq in the near future. Iran will continue supporting the democratic process in Iraq "in order to consolidate a strong Shi'a voice in the new government;" Iran will continue supporting various religious and militant actors in Iraq while at the same time refraining from causing too much disorder, as that could jeopardize Iran's own stability<sup>11</sup>. Iran also uses its financial, economic and religious proximity to Iraq to leverage its influence in the country. Its goal is a stable Iraq, but one weak enough that it cannot rival Iran. Supporting various militia elements as well as Shi'a political actors will help Iran achieve its objectives in Iraq.<sup>12</sup>

Iranian-backed militia activity has increased in recent weeks, specifically in advance of the September 1 deadline for the drawdown of U.S. troops in Iraq to 50,000. On July 13, 2010, General Ray Odierno, Commander of U.S. Forces-Iraq, ordered an increase in security at U.S. bases due to an increased threat by the Iranian-backed Kata'ib Hezbollah. Gen. Odierno called the threat "another attempt by Iran and others to influence the U.S. role" in Iraq.<sup>13</sup> Gen. Odierno confirmed that the Hezbollah Brigades are connected to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps and that members have been training in

Iran for attacks on U.S. forces as they withdraw from Iraq. In a press conference one week later, Odierno reiterated his earlier comments and added the Promise Day Brigade and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq to the mix of Iranian supported militias, saying the Iranians have "gone to a more sophisticated program with a smaller set of extremists."<sup>14</sup>

## ASA'IB AHL AL-HAQ (AAH)

Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (League of the Righteous) emerged in 2006.<sup>1</sup> It has been led by Qais Khazali, a student of the late Mohammed Sadeq al Sadr—an esteemed religious cleric who was assassinated by the Ba'athist regime in 1999—and former leader at Muqtada al-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM). Khazali broke with al-Sadr following the second Najaf Intifada due to clashes over authority and strategy.<sup>15</sup> Khazali and his followers reconciled with Sadr in 2005 but not for long. By 2006, Khazali broke with Sadr again and was officially named the leader of the Iranian-backed AAH. Khazali's fighters traveled to Iran for special training by the IRGC-QF and members of the Lebanese Hezbollah. "They received four to six weeks of training in the camps in the use of mortars, rockets, sniper tactics, intelligence gathering, kidnapping operations, and explosively formed penetrators (EFPs)."<sup>16</sup> AAH conducted attacks on coalition forces from as early as the summer of 2006 and continued intermittently through 2010, also engaging in kidnappings and sectarian violence.<sup>17</sup>

In a raid in Basra on March 20, 2007, Qais Khazali was arrested along with his brother Laith Khazali and Ali-Mussa Daqduq—a member of Lebanese Hezbollah who was sent to Iraq by IRGC-QF to monitor the training and arming of Special Groups in Iraq and organize them into a Lebanese Hezbollah-like structure.<sup>18</sup> Following Khazali's arrest, Akram al-Kaabi assumed leadership of the movement. Al-Kaabi had been a prominent JAM commander until 2007, and a close associate of Khazali.<sup>19</sup> Assisting Kaabi was Muhammad

<sup>1</sup> AAH are also known as the Khazali Special Group or Khazali Network.

Tabatabai, another former student of Sadeq al-Sadr who serves as a religious authority within AAH.

AAH has been responsible for some of the most brazen and complex attacks in Iraq. In May 2007, AAH members kidnapped Peter Moore, a British computer expert, and four security guards from the Iraqi Ministry of Finance Technology Center in Baghdad. Sources say a group of forty men entered the Ministry dressed in Iraqi Police uniforms, took the five men, and escaped through Baghdad traffic.<sup>20</sup> The complex nature of the attack led to widespread suspicion that IRGC-QF was involved in the planning and execution. It was also believed that the hostages were held in Iran during their captivity.<sup>21</sup>

By late 2008, AAH entered into negotiations with the Iraqi government, having declared a ceasefire. The Iraqi government sought to disarm the movement and incorporate it into the political process. According to Sami al-Askari, a negotiator for the Iraqi government, the movement was willing to “abandon its armed activities” but only if their leader, Qais Khazali was released.<sup>22</sup> AAH members Abd al-Hadi al-Darraji, and Laith Khazali were released from custody on June 6, 2009. Two weeks later, the bodies of two of the hostages were returned to the British Embassy.<sup>23</sup> The negotiations were presented by U.S. and Iraqi officials as a reconciliation effort with the hostage release being just part of a variety of confidence building steps.<sup>24</sup>

Peter Moore was released from captivity and handed over to the Iraqi government on December 30, 2009. Qais Khazali was released from prison less than a week later, on January 5, 2010. Even though the timing of the releases suggests that they were related, General David Petraeus insisted that Khazali’s release “was part of an overall effort led by Prime Minister al-Maliki and the Iraqi government to reconcile with a group that he led.”<sup>25</sup>

Following his release, Khazali traveled to Iran, stopped negotiations with Iraqi officials, and ended the ceasefire he agreed to while in custody. Just weeks after his release, AAH kidnapped Issa T. Solomi, an American military contractor in

Baghdad. AAH claimed that the kidnapping was in retaliation for an operation by U.S. and Iraqi forces in Baghdad on January 17, 2010 in which two of their members were taken into custody.<sup>26</sup> The kidnapping showed the fragility of government reconciliation with AAH. Weeks later, Solomi was released in exchange for the release of AAH members. All aforementioned reconciliation steps were portrayed on AAH’s website as great victories for the movement. The site’s editor praised the movement’s leaders, al-Kaabi and Tabatabai, for their cunning cooperation with the Iraqi government which allowed AAH leaders and members to be released and the resistance to continue.<sup>27</sup>

The same view of the supposed reconciliation was echoed by Akram al-Kaabi in the spring of 2010. In an interview posted on AAH’s website he claimed: “we did not announce any intention to put down our weapons and we will not stop our resistance as long as there is an occupying force in Iraq.”<sup>28</sup> He later added that his group’s negotiations with the government were meant only to achieve the desired result of releasing AAH members and leaders from jail.<sup>29</sup> AAH member Salam al-Maliki reiterated in a February interview to a Jihadist website that AAH did not and will not abandon the resistance as long as U.S. forces are in Iraq and that all statements to the opposite are U.S. propaganda.<sup>30</sup> In reality, the release of Khazali and others offered AAH a propaganda opportunity.

There are signs that some AAH members wish to continue armed resistance while others would like to integrate into the political process, in an indication that there has been a possible split within AAH since their negotiations with the Iraqi government began over a year ago. In a recent statement, General Stephen Lanza, spokesman for U.S. forces in Iraq said: “We have not seen a large amount of violence with the Shi'a militia groups. I would attribute that to a lot of the reconciliation that's been done, led by the prime minister through IFCNR, which is a reconciliation council.”<sup>31</sup> If a split has occurred it is likely that al-Kaabi continues to lead the more militant faction. His recent statements point to a non-conciliatory posture that is meant to fire up his supporters and encourage them to fight U.S. forces. Some

U.S. officials still believe Qais Khazali is willing to work with the Iraqi government and replace his military might with political influence; however, it is probable that Khazali's release prompted a renewed effort to maintain group cohesion.

In addition to potential internal divisions within AAH, the group also maintains a contentious relationship with the Sadr Trend. Just a few days after his release from custody, Khazali traveled to Qom in Iran for a high profile meeting with Muqtada al-Sadr on January 16, 2010. The two were seen embracing and sitting side-by-side. Following the meeting Khazali kept a low profile, barely seen or heard from. It is safe to assume that while in Iran, Khazali and Sadr met to discuss a possible reintegration of AAH into the Sadr movement. Yet, recent statements imply that talks have reached an impasse and the power struggle between the two leaders resumed. On June 30, Sadr released a statement calling AAH members to abandon Khazali and re-align themselves with him. Sadr went on to accuse AAH of negotiating with the occupier, attempting to discredit it as a formidable resistance movement.<sup>32</sup>

Following Sadr's accusation of AAH's cooperation with U.S. forces, Qais Khazali released a statement to his followers in early July directly challenging Sadr's claims. It was Khazali's first public statement in months, meant to encourage the continuation of the movement and lay out a strategic plan for the future. In his statement, Khazali called for cooperation and unity among resistance factions. He strongly denied accusations that AAH had laid down their arms and had been cooperating with the Iraqi government and U.S. forces, and challenged Sadr to present proof for his claims to the contrary.<sup>33</sup> Khazali described the need for a new transitional strategic plan that will deal with the upcoming withdrawal of U.S. troops and the move "from direct occupation to indirect one."<sup>34</sup>

The statement comes at a time when there have been increased, but unconfirmed, reports that in the past few months Khazali has resumed his ties with the Lebanese Hezbollah under guidance from Iran and has been visiting Lebanon with other AAH members to train and plan for future operations. In an interview with *al-Majalla* magazine (a publication sympathetic to the movement),

Akram al-Kaabi was asked if he trains his brigades in Lebanon. Al-Kaabi responded that he cannot answer the question for "security reasons."<sup>35</sup> This information, though reasonable considering the group's strong ties with Iran and Hezbollah, is unsubstantiated.

## JAYSH AL-MAHDI (JAM) AND THE PROMISE DAY BRIGADE (PDB)

The Jaysh al-Mahdi is the militant arm of the Sadr movement led by cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. Since the militia's inception in 2003, JAM has engaged in countless attacks on U.S. forces, Iraqi forces, and Sunni civilians. They were responsible for some of the most gruesome sectarian violence in Iraq. Early in 2007, at the beginning of the Surge, Sadr ordered his followers to stand down, and shortly thereafter he fled to Iran. Following the military campaign in Basra, Sadr City and Amarah in the spring of 2008, Sadr dissolved his militia. Several months later he announced the transition of his movement into a non-violent organization called the *Mumahidoon*. He did however maintain a small group of Iranian-supported militants called the Promise Day Brigade to carry out attacks only against coalition forces.<sup>36</sup>

When AAH was engaged in intense negotiations with the government in the summer of 2009, there was a concern that AAH militants that wished to continue fighting would leave the movement and join the ranks of PDB. It is likely that members have indeed turned to PDB for continued armed resistance. According to the Department of Defense, "PDB, continues to expand and become more active, checked somewhat by ISF and U.S. force targeting."<sup>37</sup>

In addition to PDB activity, there are also concerns of an overall JAM resurgence. In February 2010, Hussein Kamal, the head of intelligence at the Ministry of the Interior, said that the Mahdi Army had been reactivated. He pointed out an increase in training and heavy recruitment in Baghdad and the southern Shi'a provinces.<sup>38</sup> This is especially dangerous as many JAM leaders and members have been released from U.S. detention centers. The option of reactivation exists because JAM and PDB have maintained latent capabilities to be activated

when needed. Militant activity was halted when Sadr reorganized the movement around a social agenda; however, the militia was never completely disbanded. PDB has stated that it is preparing “quietly to launch qualitative attacks against the occupiers” if the withdrawal lingers longer than 2011.<sup>39</sup> The group wants to be seen as the one driving U.S. forces out of Iraq.

Sources claimed that Muqtada al-Sadr was seeking to exploit the sensitive time of government formation following the parliamentary election in March 2010 to organize the return of the Mahdi Army to operations in Iraq. Observers claim that he wanted to reassert his militia as a prelude for his return to Iraq under the protection of his movement and followers.<sup>40</sup> A series of bombings in April 2010 in the Shi'a district of Sadr City in Baghdad and the surrounding areas killed over sixty people. A day later, Sadr's militants turned out in force in Shi'a neighborhoods of Baghdad, after nearly two years of keeping a low profile.<sup>41</sup> Sadr and his militiamen were sending a clear message that violence against their followers will not be tolerated, a worrisome trend given that past sectarian violence was conducted under the banner of ‘protecting’ the Shi'a population. Since that time, there have been continued reports of a growing JAM presence, but there have not been such overt expressions of its presence.

Sadr's recent gains in the March elections—his party received forty seats, far more than any other party in the Iraqi National Alliance—have strengthened his negotiating position during government formation. Sadr's political ambitions are not at odds with his maintenance of a militia since he intends to deal with “the politicians in a political way and with the nonpoliticians in a nonpolitical way.”<sup>42</sup> Sadr continues his anti-American rhetoric and insistence that as long as there are U.S. forces in Iraq he will have a militia ready to fight them.<sup>43</sup>

It is important to note that even though both JAM and PDB have been funded and supported by the IRGC-QF, Sadr himself is by no means an Iranian puppet. Even though he has been living in Qom since 2007, maintains good relations with the Iranian leadership, and has come under significant pressure from the regime during government

formation, Sadr has at times demonstrated his independence. One example is the political squabble over forming the new Iraqi government. Iran has been urging Sadr to accept Nuri al-Maliki as candidate for the premiership but Sadr has adamantly refused.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, Sadr has sought to play up the nationalist nature of his movement, given the anti-Iranian sentiment of the Shi'a population at large.

## KATA'IB HEZBOLLAH (KH)

Kata'ib Hezbollah (Hezbollah Brigades) have been active in Iraq since 2007. They operate mainly in Shi'a areas of Baghdad, such as Sadr City, and throughout the south.<sup>45</sup> Like AAH and PDB, it is supported by Iran. KH is independent from Muqtada al-Sadr and has operated separately since its inception, albeit with some cooperation and operational overlap. Since 2007, KH members have conducted multiple “rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) and improvised rocket-assisted mortar attacks against U.S. forces.”<sup>46</sup> KH has been very closely linked to the IRGC-QF. KH is highly organized, making the group easier to command and control; they also have had training in operational security, which increases their operational capacity.<sup>47</sup> For these reasons KH functions as Iran's go-to militia in Iraq. KH has also received support from Lebanese Hezbollah, including training in weapons use; IED construction and operation; and sniper, rocket, and mortar attacks.<sup>48</sup>

KH's leadership is unclear in the open-source. In a recent interview, a “field commander” explained that the movement will not name a leader or spokesperson out of fear that his family will be persecuted by U.S. forces.<sup>49</sup> The person most closely linked with the militia is Abu Mahdi al-Muhandes, an advisor to Qassem Suleimani and the reported founder of KH.<sup>50</sup> Al-Muhandes provided technical and logistical support to KH, as well as other militia groups, for attacks on Iraqi and U.S. forces. He ran a weapon smuggling network in Iran and Iraq and coordinated the movement of Iraqi militants for training courses in Iran.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, al-Muhandes held a seat in the Iraqi parliament from March 2006 until March 2010, when he ran in the elections but failed to



IMAGE 1 | IMPROVISED ROCKET ASSISTED MUNITION (IRAM) CREDIT: MULTINATIONAL FORCES IRAQ.

win reelection. Despite his involvement in Iraqi politics, al-Muhandes spent the majority of the past three years in Iran. In a rare interview on January 26, 2010, al-Muhandes denied all allegations against him saying he abandoned military work in 2002. He explained that he stays in Iran because of American threats claiming that U.S. officials declared him *persona non grata* that should not attend parliamentary sessions.<sup>52</sup> Al-Muhandes also hinted in the interview that he plans to return to Iraq after U.S. forces withdraw.<sup>53</sup>

Since 2007, U.S. and Iraqi Forces have conducted numerous operations against KH in an effort to disrupt and dismantle the militia. In one of the most significant operations this year, U.S. and Iraqi forces conducted a raid in February 2010 against KH in Duwayjat City in Maysan province. As they entered the city, they were ambushed by KH fighters. In the ensuing fight, ten KH fighters were killed and twenty-two others were detained. Since February, there have been ongoing operations aimed specifically against KH militants.<sup>54</sup>

According to U.S. military sources, the multiple operations against KH have caused it to experience “difficulties in maintaining its networks and conducting operations in southern Iraq.”<sup>55</sup> They do, however, recognize KH’s effort and capability to reestablish its network. Recent arrests of KH members in charge of the facilitation of weapon transportation to locations in central Iraq indicate

that KH is still organized and operational.<sup>56</sup> In a recent interview, an unnamed KH field commander said that as the U.S. draws down its forces, KH will conduct fewer operations, but will increase the quality of their attacks aiming to inflict greater damage.<sup>57</sup>

General Ray Odierno revealed on July 13, 2010 that KH has been planning to increase its attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq. KH fighters have been training inside Iran and have recently returned to Iraq—accompanied by Iranian advisors—to execute attacks on U.S. forces. Gen. Odierno affirmed the connection between KH and the IRGC-QF.<sup>58</sup> Intelligence estimates also reveal that KH is planning attacks using Improvised Rocket-Assisted Munitions (IRAMs). The IRAM is essentially a propane tank filled with explosives and metal that is launched with 107mm rockets, usually from the backs of small trucks. The IRAM is among the most lethal improvised weapons and can be launched in an arch over base walls, inflicting serious damage. Over the past seven years there have only been sixteen IRAM attacks on U.S. bases as they are more sophisticated and expensive weapons.<sup>59</sup> KH has used the Iranian supplied IRAMs in attacks on coalition forces before.

KH maintains a technologically advanced interactive website containing countless videos from its attacks on coalition forces. The clips are organized by category of attack—snipers, mortar rounds, IEDs and so on. The most recent

videos are dated June 2010 and show bombings of military vehicles in Baghdad and Basra.<sup>60</sup> The complexity of the website and the constant maintenance of up-to-date information are rare among militia groups, which indicates the group's access to technical experts. The website also signals KH's concern with communicating its operations to the public and gaining credibility through them. A high profile attack on U.S. forces as they withdraw from the country can be used as effective propaganda, elevating the organization's image and authority. In their response to General Odierno's statement, KH confirmed their plan to attack the U.S. embassy and military bases, saying: "We will drive the occupation out of Iraq humiliated, as a reminder to never even contemplate returning to the area."<sup>61</sup>

### THE FUTURE: A UNITED RESISTANCE MOVEMENT?

There are indications that KH is working on uniting all three Shi'a factions in advance of the September 1 U.S. troop withdrawal deadline. In a recent statement, Muqtada al-Sadr referenced a KH program called "On the steps of Karbala," which is an attempt to unite all Shi'a militia groups (namely KH, AAH, and PDB) in order to create a more efficient and less scattered resistance in southern Iraq.<sup>62</sup> Both Sadr and Khazali seemed to respond positively to the proposed program, both stressing the need for unity among Shi'a militias but continually criticizing the other for their lack of resistance credibility.<sup>63</sup>

This possible reorganization is likely an Iranian effort to assert more command and control over the movement. 2008 witnessed a wave of anti-Iranian backlash since Iraqis felt that the Qods Forces were instigating sectarian violence by aiding Shi'a militias. Since then, Iran has been more cautious in its interference with the militias and seeks to enforce discipline among them. Iran might be counting on KH to unite the other two groups and bring some order to the movement. An efficient and united Shi'a militia could be a source of great influence for Iran inside Iraq, similar to their influence in Lebanon through Hezbollah. The strong ties to Iran and continued support from it make a KH unity program dangerous for

both the Iraqi government and U.S. troops.

Even though the benefits of a unity movement are clear, the implementation of such a program will be quite complicated. Despite some overlap, the three groups are quite distinct from each other with each having its own interests and ambitions. Muqtada al-Sadr and Qais Khazali have worked side by side before, yet they have been competing over Muhammad Sadeq al-Sadr's mantle for years. Their recent comments reaffirm a power struggle in which each leader tries to point fingers at the other. It is also unclear whether both of these leaders will agree to take a backseat and follow a plan led by KH. At the same time, each of the three militia groups is seeking to increase its own status and portray itself as 'the one that drove away the occupation.' It is unclear whether they will agree to share the credit for the sake of operational efficiency.

Another issue with a KH unity program is the aforementioned concern of Iranian control. AAH and PDB are not as associated with Iran as KH is. A KH umbrella operation could signal Iranian control of the Shi'a resistance, something that both Sadr and Khazali have shied away from. Sadr had great success in portraying his trend and militias as national Iraqi movements, independent from foreign influences. Khazali and al-Kaabi have tried to maintain a similar image—distancing themselves from a sectarian identity and claiming to represent all Iraqis.

### CONCLUSION

It is clear that PDB, AAH and KH are all still active in Iraq and continuously seek to boost their image by planning elaborate attacks on U.S. forces. These groups have benefited greatly from the provisions and training IRGC-QF has been providing and have proved highly proficient in using innovative technology against U.S. forces in Iraq.<sup>64</sup> There are signs that the three movements are seeking to unite and conduct joint operations against U.S. forces as they withdraw. A united militia, funded and armed by Iran is dangerous for Iraqi stability; however, it remains unclear if such an ambitious plan will succeed.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq March 2010*, Report to Congress, in accordance with the Department of Defense Supplemental Appropriations Act 2008 (Section 9204, Public Law 110-252), April 29, 2010, 7.
- <sup>2</sup> *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq March 2010*, DoD Report, 33
- <sup>3</sup> Department of Defense Bloggers Roundtable with Major General Stephen Lanza, Spokesman U.S. Forces Iraq, June 10, 2010.
- <sup>4</sup> Department of Defense Bloggers Roundtable with Major General Stephen Lanza, Spokesman U.S. Forces Iraq, June 10, 2010.
- <sup>5</sup> Patrick Devenny, "The List: The Middle East's Most Powerful Spooks," *Foreign Policy*, July 20, 2009.
- <sup>6</sup> "Mowaffaq al-Rubaie Confirms-Qassem Suleimani Controls the Iraqi File," *Al-Rashid*, June 30, 2010. Translated from Arabic by m.h
- <sup>7</sup> *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq March 2010*, DoD Report, 7
- <sup>8</sup> David Ignatius, "Buying the Vote; Iran is Backing Candidates-- in Iraq," *The Washington Post*, February 25, 2010.
- <sup>9</sup> "Iran Replaces Suleimani after his Failure to Bridge the Gaps between SoL and INA," *al-Rashid*, July 14, 2010. Translated from Arabic by m.h.
- <sup>10</sup> "State of Law Coalition, Al-Sadr Delegations Leave for Teheran," *Al-Sharqiyah TV*, Dubai, July 14, 2010. Translated from Arabic by BBC Monitoring Middle East, July 15, 2010.
- <sup>11</sup> "Hezbollahization or Iranian Exploitation?" Working paper by Nicole Brooks, Commander Initiative Group, Multi-National Force-Iraq, 2008-2009.
- <sup>12</sup> "Hezbollahization or Iranian Exploitation?" Working paper by Nicole Brooks, Commander Initiative Group, Multi-National Force-Iraq, 2008-2009.
- <sup>13</sup> Leila Fadel, "U.S. Bases in Iraq Take Precautions Against Iran-Backed Militants," *Washington Post*, July 14, 2010; Jim Loney, "Iran-Backed Forces Threatens U.S. Iraq Bases," *Reuters*, July 13, 2010.
- <sup>14</sup> "Iran Supports Three Insurgent Groups in Iraq," *Agence France Presse*, July 22, 2010.
- <sup>15</sup> Marisa Cochrane Sullivan, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and the Khazali Special Groups Network, *Background #38*, Institute for the Study of War, January 13, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Marisa Cochrane Sullivan, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and the Khazali Special Groups Network, *Background #38*, Institute for the Study of War, January 13, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> "Coalition Forces Continue to Target Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq Criminals (Baghdad)," Multi National Force - Iraq Press Release AO81123a 120, November 23, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Brig. Gen. Kevin Bergner, Spokesman, "Press Briefing, July 2," Multi-National Force-Iraq, July 2, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Marisa Cochrane, The Fragmentation of the Sadr Movement, *Iraq Report: 12*, Institute for the Study of War, January 2009.

<sup>20</sup> "Revealed: Hand of Iran Behind Briton's Baghdad Kidnapping," *The Guardian*, April 30, 2009; "Militant Linked to British Kidnapping Handed to Iraq," *Agence France Presse*, June 9, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> "David Petraeus Says Hostage Peter Moore was 'Certainly' Held in Iran," *The Guardian*, January 1, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Alissa Rubin and Michael Gordon, "U.S. Frees Suspect in Killing of 5 G.I.'s," *The New York Times*, June 8, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Oliver August, "U.S. to Release Members of Iraqi Group that Kidnapped Five Britons," *The Times (UK)*, August 19, 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Alissa Rubin and Michael Gordon, "U.S. Frees Suspect in Killing of 5 G.I.'s," *The New York Times*, June 8, 2009; Oliver August, "U.S. to Release Members of Iraqi Group that Kidnapped Five Britons," *The Times (UK)*, August 19, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Marisa Cochrane Sullivan, *Fact Sheet: Iranian Proxy Group Kidnaps U.S. Contractor in Iraq*, Institute for the Study of War, February 8, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Ernesto Londoño and Leila Fadel, "U.S. Failure to Neutralize Shi'a Militias in Iraq Threatens to Snarl Pullout," *The Washington Post*, March 4<sup>th</sup> 2010; Oliver August, "Missing U.S. Contractor Paraded by Terrorist Group," *The Times (London)* February 8, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> See for example the editorial column after Khazali's release at <http://rowasialnatqen.com/>.

<sup>28</sup> "Interview with Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi", *Al-Intikhab Magazine*, March 25, 2010. Translated from Arabic by m.h.

<sup>29</sup> "Interview with Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi", *Al-Intikhab Magazine*, March 25, 2010; "Interview with Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq leader Akram al-Kaabi: We have British and American Hostages We are Bargaining Over," *Al-*

*Majalla*, February 3, 2010. Both translated from Arabic by m.h.

<sup>30</sup> “Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq has not Quit Resistance,” Open Source Center Summary of Jihadist Websites, February 23, 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Department of Defense Bloggers Roundtable with Major General Stephen Lanza, Spokesman U.S. Forces Iraq, June 10, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> “Sadr Calls AAH to Abandon Khazali and Return to his Trend,” *Al-Akhbar*, June 30, 2010. Translated from Arabic by m.h.

<sup>33</sup> “The Continuation of the Resistance and its Unity is the only Strategic Option for the Future,” posted on AAH official website, July 2010.

<sup>34</sup> “The Continuation of the Resistance and its Unity is the only Strategic Option for the Future,” posted on AAH official website, July 2010.

<sup>35</sup> “The leader of Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq Akram al-Kaabi: We Hold British and American Hostages we are Bargaining Over,” *Al-Majalla*, February 3, 2010. Translated from Arabic by m.h.

<sup>36</sup> For a detailed report on the founding of PDB as well as the evolution of the Mahdi Army, please see Marisa Cochrane, The Fragmentation of the Sadr Movement. *Iraq Report 12*, Institute for the Study of War, January 2009.

<sup>37</sup> *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq March 2010*, DoD Report, 33.

<sup>38</sup> Leila Fadel, “Specter of Sectarian Strife Resurfaces in Iraq: Recent Violence Spurs Fears that Sunni-Shi'a Fighting will Erupt Again as U.S. Pulls Out,” *The Washington Post*, February 17, 2010.

<sup>39</sup> “Feared Shi'a Mahdi Army Militia Led by Hardline Cleric Reviving in post-Election Iraq,” *Associated Press*, May 4, 2010.

<sup>40</sup> “The Return of the Jaysh al-Mahdi to Iraq,” *Al-Rashid*. Translated from Arabic by m.h.

<sup>41</sup> “The Kingmaker,” *Newsweek*, May 15, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> “The Kingmaker,” *Newsweek*, May 15, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq March 2010*, DoD Report, 33

<sup>44</sup> “State of Law Coalition, al-Sadr Delegations Leave for Teheran,” *Al-Sahriyah TV*, Dubai, July 14, 2010. Translated from Arabic by BBC Monitoring Middle East, July 15, 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Group Profile: Kata’ib Hezbollah. International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, March 10, 2010.

<sup>46</sup> “TG-195: Treasury Designates Individuals, Entity Posing Threat to Stability in Iraq,” U.S. Treasury Department Press Release, July 2, 2009.

<sup>47</sup> Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, “Iranian Strategy in Iraq: Politics and ‘Other Means,’” *Occasional Paper Series*, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, October 13, 2008.

<sup>48</sup> “TG-195: Treasury Designates Individuals, Entity Posing Threat to Stability in Iraq,” U.S. Treasury Department Press Release, July 2, 2009.

<sup>49</sup> “Kata’ib Hezbollah’s Website Interviews a Field Commander in the Organization,” KH official website, June 2010.

<sup>50</sup> “TG-195: Treasury Designates Individuals, Entity Posing Threat to Stability in Iraq,” U.S. Treasury Department Press Release, July 2, 2009.

<sup>51</sup> “TG-195: Treasury Designates Individuals, Entity Posing Threat to Stability in Iraq,” U.S. Treasury Department Press Release, July 2, 2009.

<sup>52</sup> “Iraqi National Alliance MP Explains Absence from Parliament, Criticizes U.S.,” *Al-Sharqiyah TV*, Dubai, January 26, 2010. Translated from Arabic by BBC Monitoring Middle East, January 27, 2010.

<sup>53</sup> “Iraqi National Alliance MP Explains Absence from Parliament, Criticizes U.S.,” *Al-Sharqiyah TV*, Dubai, January 26, 2010. Translated from Arabic by BBC Monitoring Middle East, January 27, 2010.

<sup>54</sup> Bill Roggio, “Iraqi, U.S. Forces Kill 10 during Clash with Hezbollah Brigades near the Iranian Border,” *The Long War Journal*, February 12, 2010.

<sup>55</sup> *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq March 2010*, DoD Report.

<sup>56</sup> “ISF Arrest 2 Suspected Kata’ib Hezbollah Criminal Associates,” Press Release, United States Forces-Iraq, July 10, 2010.

<sup>57</sup> “Kata’ib Hezbollah’s Website Interviews a Field Commander in the Organization,” KH official website, June 2010.

<sup>58</sup> Leila Fadel, “U.S. Bases in Iraq Take Precautions Against Iran-Backed Militants,” *The Washington Post*, July 14, 2010; Ned Parker, “General Warns of Attacks on U.S. Troops Leaving Iraq,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 14, 2010; Bill Roggio, “Iranian-Backed Shi'a Terror Group Remains a Threat in Iraq: General Odierno,” *The Long War Journal*, July 13, 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Leila Fadel, “Amid Threat, U.S. Heightens Security at its Iraq Bases,” *The Washington Post*, July 13, 2010.

<sup>60</sup> Pictures and videos can be found on KH’s official

website at: <http://www.kataibhizbollah.org/>.

<sup>61</sup> “Kata’ib Hezbollah Threatens the Occupation: we will turn your Embassy and Bases into Rubble. You are Ignorant of our Power,” posted on KH’s website, July 14, 2010. Translated from Arabic by m.h.

<sup>62</sup> “Sadr Calls AAH to Abandon Khazali and Return to his Trend,” *Al-Akhbaar* June 30, 2010. Translated from Arabic by m.h.

<sup>63</sup> In addition to previously cited comments by the two leaders, an overview of their verbal clashes can be found in: “Iraqi Sources Report Rising Tensions Between al-Mahdi Army, Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq,” Elaph Website, London, July 24, 2010. Translated from Arabic by BBC Monitoring Middle East, August 4, 2010.

<sup>64</sup> *The Iraq Effect: The Middle East After the Iraq War*. RAND Corporation, 2010.