

"Iran's Shadow Army: The PMF's Growing Influence in Iraq"

CSAG

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Key Points

- The Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) has evolved into a powerful, destabilizing entity in political and security affairs in Iraq.
- The PMF's continued growth is destabilizing because of the risk of the PMF overshadowing other Iraqi security institutions and the risk of even greater Iranian influence.
- Although Iran has suffered significant setbacks due to Israeli actions against its "Axis of Resistance," Iran still exerts significant influence over its "PMF proxy."

Introduction

The Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) is an Iraqi state security service that Iran has infiltrated and uses to exert significant influence in Iraq. Iran's influence on the PMF enables Tehran to pursue its objectives in Iraq while obfuscating its actual involvement in Iraqi internal affairs. Understanding how Iranian leaders wield direct and indirect influence over this significant component of the Iraqi security sector is crucial for the United States when considering how to deter Iranian-backed Iraqi militias from attacking U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria, but also for the broader understanding of the security dynamics in the region.

The PMF originated as part of the effort to stop and reverse the advances of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) from Syria into Iraq but have largely become a front for militias connected to Iran. Former Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, formed the PMF in June 2014 by "institutionalizing" preexisting, predominantly Shia militias that were engaged in the fight against ISIS. At the time, it was too difficult to manage these groups under the umbrella of the Iraqi Armed Forces, which is why the PMF remained a distinct entity. When ISIS captured Mosul in July 2014, it prompted the prominent Iraqi Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani to issue a fatwa (a ruling) calling for Iraqi citizens "able to take up arms and fight terrorists to volunteer and join the security forces to achieve this holy purpose" against ISIS.^{[1](#)}

The intent of this paper is to examine the current organization of the PMF, assess the ambitions of their leadership, and provide a more in-depth understanding of their influence on the security dynamics in Iraq and the region.

Command and Control and Organization

The organization of the PMF is shown in the chart below. The PMF is led by a chairman, who is appointed by the Iraqi government, and a deputy chairman, who plays a crucial role in shaping the organization's strategy and direction. Despite this formal structure, the PMF operates in a highly decentralized manner. Many of its constituent factions have longstanding ties to Iran.

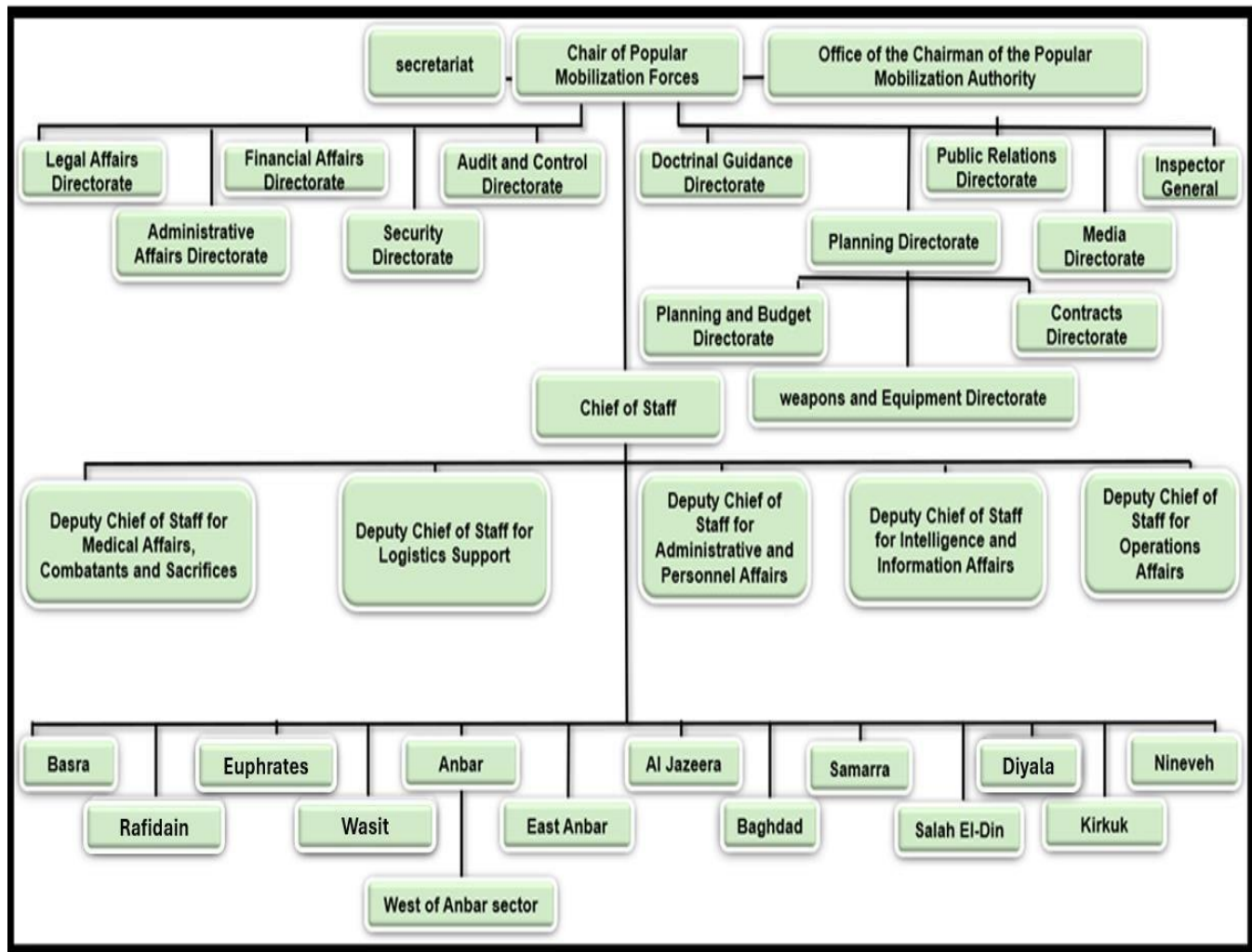


Figure (1) PMF Organization Structure, modified by the author. Source: Buratha News.²

The PMF consists of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), and functions as an Iraqi state-sponsored paramilitary network consisting of approximately 67 armed factions. The organization has mainly formed and structured itself with a foundation of different Shiite militias. Recently however, there has been a greater inclusion of other ethnic/religious components such as Sunni, Christian, Yazidi, and Turkmen groups to increase their manpower, up from 60,000 fighters in 2014 to approximately 160,000- 170,000 in 2021. Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani claimed that the primary aim was to put about 25,000-35,000 unregistered fighters on the official payroll in 2023. Whether expanded to 204,000 as the PMF chairman claims or more likely to 238,000 as the draft budget from 2023-2025 shows, the PMF is now growing well beyond their earlier ambitions.³ As the budget cycle is officially reported three years at a time, it is difficult to determine if any adaptations to size and structures have been made since publication.

The various militias that make up the PMF, such as Kataib Hezbollah (KH), Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, and the Badr Organization, often have their own leadership structures and chains of command, which can sometimes act independently, leading to conflicting interests within the PMF organization. Despite these internal challenges they have played a significant role in shaping Iraq's contemporary security landscape, particularly in the fight against the Islamic State.

In addition, the PMF has grown into a powerful political force in Iraq as members of the umbrella group hold the most seats in Iraqi parliament.⁴ Instead of honoring the official PMF hierarchy, the majority of PMF leaders are loyal to the influential militias.

Main Leadership



Faleh al-Fayyadh (Chairman)

Faleh Al-Fayyadh is the head of the PMF body created by Iraqi legislation to bring the different militias under central government control. Al-Fayyadh was a member of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force (IRGC-QF) supported crisis cell with previously sanctioned militia leaders Qais al-Khazali, Hussein Falah al-Lami, the now-deceased IRGC-QF commander Qasem Soleimani, and PMF deputy leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. Until July 2020, Al-Fayyadh was also the Iraqi Prime Minister's National Security Advisor.⁵



Abu Fadak Al-Mohammedawi (Chief of Staff).

Abu Fadak Al-Mohammedawi is the chief of staff of the PMF headquarters. Prior to his appointment, Mohammedawi served as the secretary-general of Iran-backed Kataib Hezbollah. The KH Brigades, the Badr Organization, and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) are understood to control the most important positions in the PMF. Therefore, it can be said that Abu Fadak is the center of gravity at the operational level of the PMF, due to his military experience and relations

with the current and previous leaders of the IRGC. His influence has been extending from the previous chief of staff, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, who was assassinated at Baghdad Airport in 2020.⁶

Areas of Operations Leaders

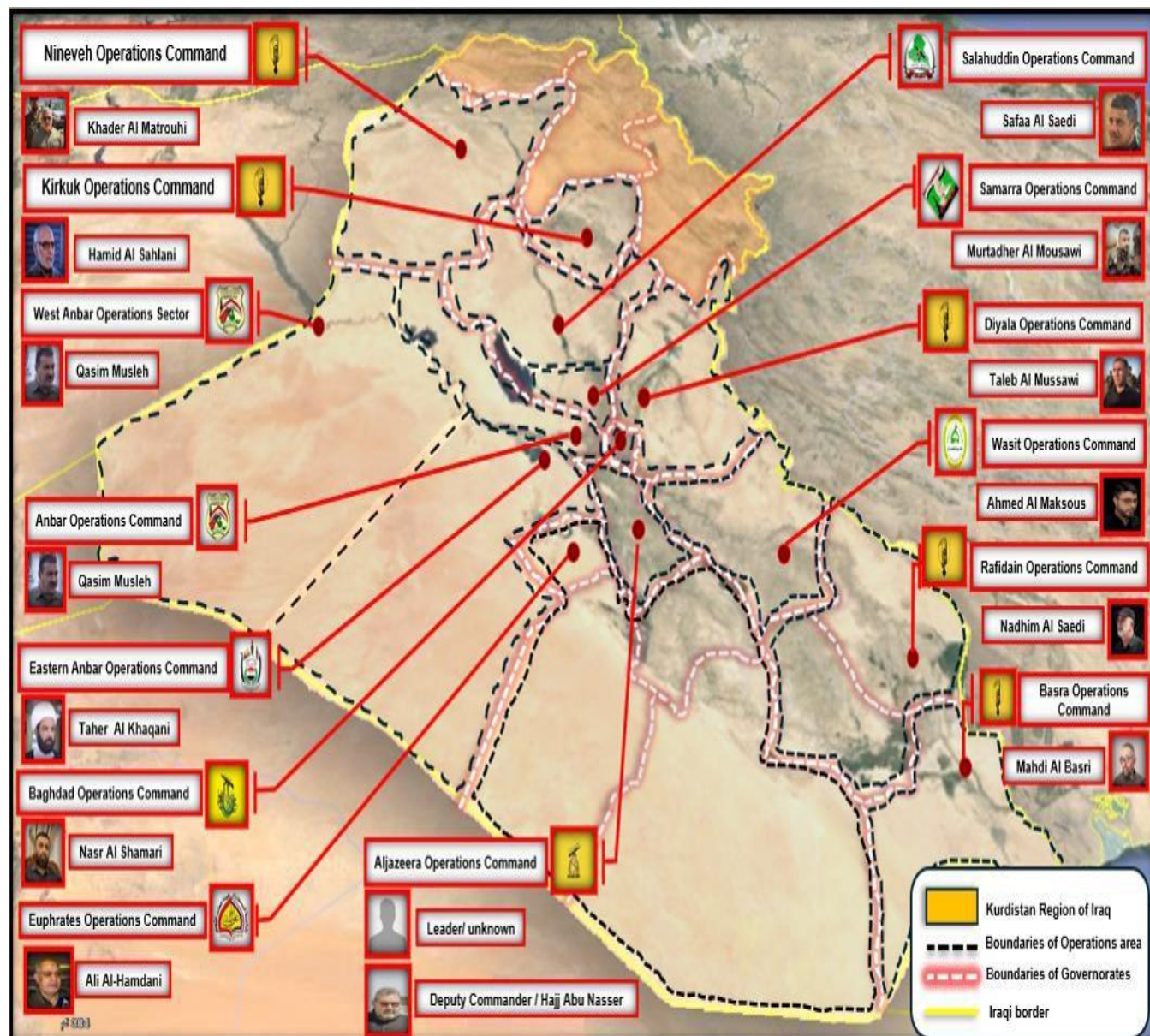


Figure (2) Area of Operations Leaders. Source: Created by author.

The map above shows the 13 operational commands of the PMF and their commanders. These operational commands originated through the different militias depending on their influence and capabilities, their relationship with influential militias inside Iraq, and the extent of connection with the IRGC.

The leaders of the main influential militias in Iraq (Badr Organization, Kata'ib Hezbollah, Asa'ib Ahal al- Haq, Saraya al-Salam, al-Nujaba, Sayyid al-Shuhada) have sought to include other militias under their formations. These factions also seek to train and provide financial support and salaries from various sources available to them inside Iraq, with

the aim of increasing their control over most of the territories inside Iraq. They also seek to gain the largest number of loyalists within the Iraqi Shiite components, to have legal legitimacy in the main Shiite component that controls the structure and organization of the PMF.⁷

The PMF has sought to form several fighting factions from various other ethnic groups inside Iraq. These factions are considered weak in terms of capabilities and financial support and are controlled by the main militias.

PMU Order of Battle and Ethical Distribution

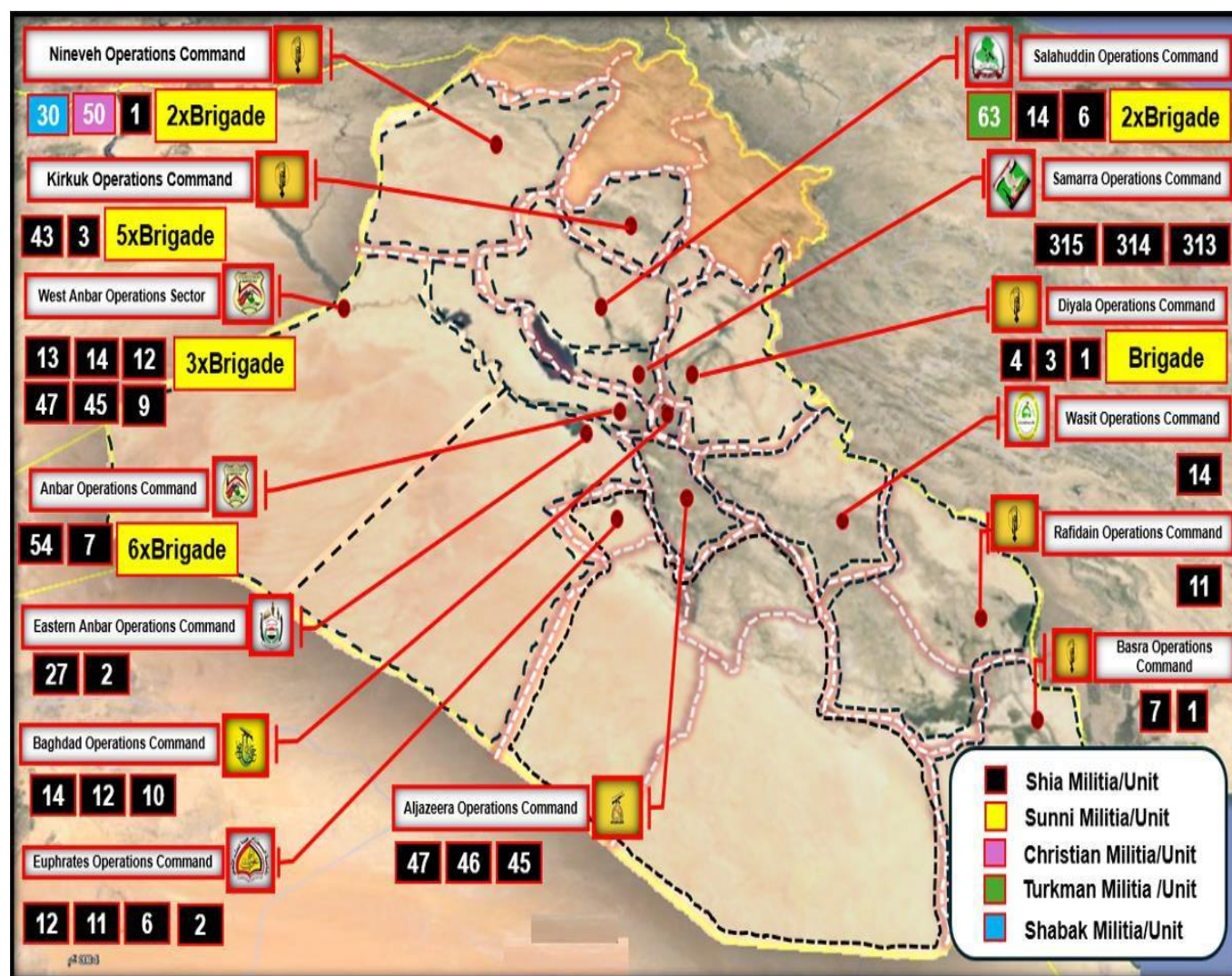


Figure (3), PMU Order of Battle and Ethical Distribution. Source: Created by author, see also Annex - 1 which shows the PMU units number and militia affiliation.

Military Unit Distribution

Figure (3) shows the control of the most prominent Shiite militias within the PMF's area of operations. In contrast to the bigger Shiite militias, the smaller fighting factions from other ethnic groups use their units to act in support of the more prominent groups. Thereby, securing their own areas and cities.

Although, the KH Brigades, Nujaba, and Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada militias have their own area of operations, they also have influence over the region west of Anbar, and by extension control of the Iraqi-Syrian border.

PMF Funding and Support

The PMF's financing and support sources are varied and complex. Like the IRGC, they are resourced through both legal and illegal means, translating those resources into increased power and influence.

Iraqi Government Funding

The Iraqi Prime Minister, Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, formed the Muhandis General Company in 2022 to support PMF leaders who are affiliated with armed groups linked to Iran. The company has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with China's CMEC, indicating its intention to engage in construction, engineering, and mechanical projects. The company's establishment is seen as a move toward the economic autonomy of the PMF. At the same time, the PMF officially receives a substantial budget allocation from the Iraqi government. In the 2023-2025 approved budget, the PMF's funding is set to increase to \$2.6 billion, a 23% increase from its 2021 budget of \$2.16 billion. ⁸

According to the Iraqi parliament's Finance Committee, the number of PMF personnel increased by 95% in the 2023 budget, from 122,000 to 238,000. While the chairman of PMF, Faleh al-Fayyad, claims a more modest increase from 170,000 to 204,000 soldiers, it's clear manpower is growing rapidly.⁹ While the rationale for the formation of the PMF was military, with the decline of ISIS, the rationale is now political and financial for those who stand to benefit.

Iranian Support

Iran provides significant support to the several militia groups that comprise the PMF. The nature of that support includes money, training, equipment, weapons, and strategic guidance from the IRGC.

Other sources of funding.

The PMF have been involved in various financial activities that have raised concerns about corruption, particularly in relation to banking and financial institutions.

Oil Smuggling operations.

Pro-PMF entities have seized and control many oil fields in areas like Salaheddine province (North of Bagdad province). This allows them to smuggle approximately 40,000 barrels of oil daily, much of which finds its way to Iran.¹⁰

Assessment

1. The future of the PMF in Iraq depends on various factors, including internal support from different sources as well as economic and commercial projects. The PMF is likely to remain a significant player in Iraq's security landscape. Its future will depend on its ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Iranian-backed militias will expand their influence under the PMF umbrella to develop their military capabilities and increase their control over Iraq. Their focus is on the various levels of political, economic, and military activities integrated with the Iranian agenda, especially in Sunni and Kurdish majority provinces and districts.

2. The Iraqi government supports the militias for self-preservation and is especially supportive of the Shiite component. This explains the government's focus on increasing the PMF budget, which means the PMF is likely to continue growing and gaining influence in comparison to other Iraqi security forces. As a result, it will be more challenging for other government components in Iraq to solidify their influence in the security sector.
3. Since the Chief of Staff of the PMF, Abu Fadak, can be considered the center of gravity at the operational level of the PMF, it will be important to continuously assess his future actions and directions for the organization. He has set a clear path of growing the PMF in numbers and increasing its influence in Iraq. Given this increase and on-going Iranian influence, U.S. influence will be challenged in Iraq.
4. The leaders of the Hezbollah Brigades and Asaib Ahl Al-Haq are interested in more vital areas (oil fields), compared to Saraya Al-Salam and Ali Al-Akber brigade militias, who are securing the holy shrine and associated services that will bring them financial revenue.
5. If U.S. coalition forces transfer their headquarters and military presence to the Kurdistan Region during 2025–2026, it is likely that Iran's influence in Iraq will increase as the U.S. footprint shrinks from central Iraq. The phased withdrawal plan, which moves U.S. forces out of Baghdad and other bases and concentrates them in the Kurdistan Region, creates a security vacuum, that Iran, via their PMF proxies, are well-positioned to fill.

Summary/Conclusion

The PMF have rapidly expanded their influence, with their budget increasing and their numbers reaching nearly half that of the Iraqi army. This brings fears that the PMF could eclipse Iraq's regular security forces, reminiscent of the IRGC's dominance in Iran. The PMF's power extends beyond military matters: it engages in both legal and illegal economic activities, consolidating its position as one of Iraq's largest political and institutional forces.

Although officially part of the Iraqi armed forces, their leaders often operate independently of state control, with some factions openly pledging allegiance to Iran's Supreme Leader. This autonomy and Iranian influence raise serious concerns about the PMF's impact on Iraq's sovereignty and democratic governance. The PMF therefore represents a significant potential threat to the stability of Iraq and is an instrument of power in the implementation of Iranian strategy in the region.

Although Iran has suffered significant setbacks due to Israeli actions against its "Axis of Resistance," Iran still exerts significant influence over its "PMF proxy." Iran's capacity for action, although temporarily weakened, remains a tangible threat to U.S. interests in the near and medium term.

1. The militias (PMU) are closely aligned and coordinated with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. Iran also financially supports these groups through a complex network of local actors. This organizational complexity requires a more holistic and integrated approach from U.S. government agencies to better understand the strategic problem posed by these factions. This could be important, particularly if we ultimately want to develop measures to contain their expansion and, if necessary, cut off their financial flows as part of more coercive actions.
2. Although groups such as KH and AAH are already on the U.S. State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations, the U.S. should consider designating other elements of the PMF as terrorist groups. However, applying this measure to all PMF groups is inadvisable, as it could ultimately pose difficulties for the Iraqi military given their role in the formal security structures of Iraq. Given regional dynamics, a more detailed

reassessment of each subgroup should be considered to identify and reduce the room for maneuver in the implementation of Iranian policy in Iraq and, by extension, strategy in the region.

3. The U.S. has a strong presence in northern Iraq and supports Kurdish forces. The Badr organization, which maintains close ties with the IRGC, has responsibility for the PMF for northern Iraq and the Kurdish region. Upcoming regional developments in 2025-2026 (e.g., the relocation of U.S. and coalition headquarters to the north) could bring Badr into direct confrontation with the U.S. In anticipation, USCENTCOM and the coalition should refocus or strengthen monitoring this faction and, if appropriate, consider designating Badr as a terrorist group.
4. The PMF's mid-level militia leaders represent the next generation of influential figures, the majority of whom are aligned with Iranian interests. These emerging leaders are expected to shape the future direction of the PMF. Recent events in the region have demonstrated the importance of having a clear map of the network and the military, social, and financial organizational architecture. Given its complexity, this effort can only be achieved through collective action between partners and allies of the U.S., with USCENTCOM as the central unifying force and actor. This collective effort will determine the overall ability of the U.S. to reduce the PMF's influence and, if necessary, neutralize its actions.
5. Given their status, the degree to which they can influence politics, economics and security of the Iraqi state, the PMF, and by extension Iran, can exert its influence on the whole of Iraqi territory. This is a key lever for Iran should it be subjected to unwanted international pressures or pushed to trigger peripheral fronts to free itself from actions that it would consider too coercive. To this end, the coalition, led by USCENTCOM, must continue and increase the sharing of intelligence information with trusted partners/allies and accordingly propose strategic, operational, and tactical planning options to undermine PMF influence in the Iraqi state.
6. Implementing the U.S. deterrence strategy against Iran and its proxies has always been a difficult and delicate task. It requires teamwork, with the U.S. as a "quarterback."

Annexes:

1. Annex 1 – PMU Militias/Units
2. Annex 2 – Shiite Militias

¹ Johanna Moore and Annika Ganzeveld, "The Leadership and Purpose of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces," March 19, 2024, *The Institute For The Study Of War*, <https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/The%20Leadership%20and%20Purpose%20of%20Iraq%E2%80%99s%20Popular%20Mobilization%20Forces.pdf> (accessed June 11, 2024).

² Burathana news, "Popular Mobilization Organization Release," June 20, 2024, <https://mail.burathanews.com/arabic/news/356660> (accessed September 6, 2019).

³ Amir al-Kaabi, Michael Knights, "Extraordinary Popular Mobilization Force Expansion, by the Numbers," *Washington Institute*, June 3, 2023, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/extraordinary-popular-mobilization-force-expansion-numbers> (accessed July 1, 2024).

⁴ Extremist Leaders, Counter Extremism Project, July 3, 2024, <https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/abu-fadak-al-mohammedawi-aka-abd-al-aziz-malluh-mirjirash-al-muhammadawi> (accessed July 3, 2024).

⁵ U.S. Department of the Treasury, Treasury Sanctions Iraqi Militia Leader Connected to Serious Human Rights Abuse, January 8, 2021, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm1231> (accessed July 1, 2024).

⁶ The Counter Extremism Project (CEP), “Abu Fadak Al-Mohammedawi a.k.a. Abd al-Aziz Malluh Mirjirash al-Muhammadawi,” [Abu Fadak Al-Mohammedawi a.k.a. Abd al-Aziz Malluh Mirjirash al-Muhammadawi | Counter Extremism Project](#) (accessed April 5, 2024).

⁷ Johanna Moore and Annika Ganzeveld, “The Leadership and Purpose of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces.”

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Staff Writer, Al Arabiya English, “Militia smuggle 40,000 barrels of oil to Iran daily,” 20 May 2020, <https://english.alarabiya.net/perspective/features/2016/11/18/Militias-smuggle-40-000-barrels-of-oil-to-Iran-daily>, (accessed Feb 24, 2025).

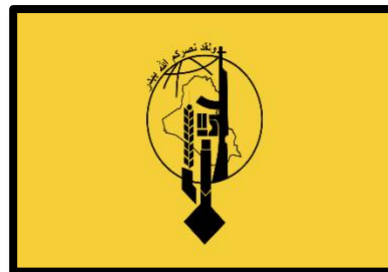
Annex 1

Militias/Units.

	Name of Militia	Affiliated Brigades
1	Bader Organization	Brigades (55 - 53 - 27 - 24 - 23 - 22 - 21 - 10 - 9 - 4 - 3 - 1)
2	Imam Ali Division	Brigade 2
3	Jund Al-Imam	Brigade 6
5	Al-Muntadhar Brigade	Brigade 7
6	Saraya Ashura	Brigade 8
7	Ali Al-Akbar Brigade	Brigade 11
8	Nujba Movement	Brigade 12
9	Tafoof Brigade	Brigade 13
10	Sayed Alshuhada'a	Brigade 14
11	Al-Fatah Al-Mubeen Brigades	Brigades 15
12	Turkmen Force	Brigade 16 (Affiliated Bader Org.)
13	Saray Al-Jihad	Brigade 17
14	Saraya Khorsani	Brigade 18
15	Ansar Allah Alawfiya'a	Brigade 19
16	Al-Tuf Brigade	Brigade 20
17	Al-Shuheed Al-Sader Forces	Brigade 25
18	Al-Abbas Division	Brigade 26
19	Abu Al-Muntadher Forces	Brigade 27
20	Ansar Al-Aqedah	Brigades (28 - 66)
21	Ansar Al-Huja	Brigade 29
22	Shabak Forces	Brigade 30
23	Al-Resalyon	Brigade 31
24	Wa'aad Allah	Brigade 33
25	Al-Shuheed Alsader	Brigade 35
26	Layesh Yazidi Forces	Brigade 36
27	Al-Abdal Movement	Brigade 39
28	Imam Ali Brigades	Brigade 40
29	Asab Ahi Al-Haq	Brigades (43 - 41- 42)
30	Kata'be Hezbollah	Brigade (46 - 47 - 45)
31	Babylon	Brigades 50
32	Salah Al-Din Mobilization	Brigade 51
33	Amerli Forces	Brigade 52
34	Malik Al-Ashur	Brigade 55
35	Shuhada'a Kirkuk	Brigade 56
36	Ansar Al-Aqedah	Brigade 66
37	Ahrar Al-Iraq	Brigade 86
38	Al-Alam Mobilization	Brigade 88
39	Fursan Al-Jubor	Brigade 90
40	Al-Luzari Mobilization	Brigade 92
41	Al-Mo'amal Army	Brigades 99
42	Ninevah Guards	Brigade 201
43	Saraya Al-Salam	Brigades (313-314-315-316)
44	Al-Bayareq Forces	Unnumbered
45	Al-Qasam Al-Hussaini Brigades	Unnumbered
46	Al-Mukhtar Army	Unnumbered
47	Al-Nukhbah And Al-Ghaith Al-Haidari Brigades	Unnumbered
48	Asad Al-Allah Al-Gha'eb Brigades	Unnumbered
49	Al-Wa'ad Al-Sadeq Corps	Unnumbered
50	Qamar Al-Deen Brigades	Unnumbered
51	Hazeb Allah Hazeb Al-Thaeron	Unnumbered
52	Emad Mughniyah Brigades	Unnumbered
53	Qasem Al-Jabareen Brigades	Unnumbered
54	Al-Emam Al-Qaem Brigades	Unnumbered
55	A'emat Al-Bae'a Brigades	Unnumbered
56	Al-Qasas Brigades	Unnumbered
57	Ashbal Al-Sader Brigades	Unnumbered
58	Thaer Alhassan Brigades	Unnumbered
59	Malik Al-Ashtar Brigades	Unnumbered
60	Dema'a Al-Zakiya	Unnumbered
61	Thu Al-Faqar	Unnumbered

(Annex 2) Shiite Militia Influence in the PMF**Badr Organization**

Leader of Badr Militia- Hadi al-Amiri



Official flag of Badr Militia

Background

The Badr Organization has its roots in the 1980s, originally formed as the military wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). It was established to oppose Saddam Hussein's regime and has since evolved into a significant political and military force in Iraq, currently led by Hadi al-Amiri.

Operational Areas

The Badr Organization has obtained control over several operational commands in Iraq, specifically in regions such as Basra, Diyala, Kirkuk, and Nineveh. It is particularly influential in southern Iraq and along the Iraq-Iran border, as shown in Figure (2) and Figure (3) on the maps.

Leadership

The organization is led by influential figures who have sought to expand their control and influence over various areas in Iraq. They aim to train and provide financial support to their members, thereby increasing their operational capabilities and political legitimacy, as also shown in Figure (2) and Figure (3).

- (Mahdi Al Basri), leader of Basra Operations Command.
- (Nadhim Al Saedi), leader of Rafidain Operations Command.
- (Taleb Al Mussawi), leader of Diyala Operations Command.
- (Hamid Al Sahlani), leader of Kirkuk Operations Command.
- (Khader Al Matrouhi), leader of Nineveh Operations Command

Al-Nujaba

Leader of Al-Nujaba- Akram Al-kaabi



Official Flag of Al-Nujaba Militia

Background

Al-Nujaba was formed in 2013 as a splinter group from the broader Shiite militia movement in Iraq and led by Alkaabi. It is known for its strong ideological ties to Iran and its commitment to the Shiite cause.

Operational Areas

Al-Nujaba has been assigned the command of Baghdad operations led by (Nasr Al Shamari), which is strategically important as it is the political capital of Iraq.

Leadership

The militia is led by Akram al-Kaabi, who has been instrumental in establishing its operational framework and political objectives within Iraq.

Asaib Ahl Al-Haq (AAH)

Leader of AAH- Qais al-Khazali



Official Flag of Asaib Ahl Al-Haq (AAH) Militia

Background

Asaib Ahl Al-Haq was established in 2006 as a splinter group from the Mahdi Army, which was led by the influential cleric (Muqtada al-Sadr). The group emerged during the Iraq War and have since then developed into a significant military and political force.

Operational Areas

The AAH militia controls north of Salah Aldin Governate (Safaa Al Saedi) and leads the Salah Aldin area of command, as shown in Figure (2) and Figure (3). The group has been involved in various military campaigns, particularly during the fight against ISIS, where it played a significant role in reclaiming territory from the extremist group.

Leadership

The militia is led by Qais al-Khazali, who has been a key figure in shaping its military and political strategies. Al-Khazali is known for his close ties to Iran and has been involved in various military operations against U.S. forces and ISIS.

Saraya Alsalem



Leader of Saraya Alsalem- Muqtada al-Sadr



Official Flag of Saraya Alsalem Militia

Background

Saraya Alsalem was formed as part of the broader mobilization of Shiite militias in response to the rise of ISIS in Iraq. It is one of the many groups that emerged to combat the threat posed by the extremist organization.

Operational Areas

The militia is primarily active in the Samarra district and is known for its involvement in securing religious sites, particularly the shrines of Shiite imams. This focus on religious tourism and the protection of holy sites is a significant aspect of its operational mandate.

Leadership

Saraya Alsalem is currently led by Muqtada al-Sadr, who oversees its activities and operational strategies in the region. The leadership structure is designed to coordinate efforts with other militias within the PMF.

Al-Tafuf Brigade



Leader of Al-Tafuf Brigade- Qasim Musleh



Official Flag of Al-Tafuf Brigade Militia

Background

Al-Tafuf Brigade was established as part of the broader mobilization of Shiite militias in response to the threats posed by ISIS and other extremist groups. It is another one of the many factions that emerged during the fight against ISIS in Iraq.

Operational Areas

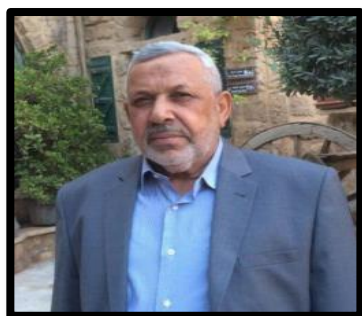
Al-Tafuf Brigade is primarily active in the north and west of the Anbar governorate, as shown in Figure (2) and Figure (3), where it plays a significant role in controlling the Iraq-

Syria border. This area is strategically important for preventing the movement of militants and securing the region against external threats.

Leadership

The militia is led by Qasim Musleh, who oversees its operations and strategic direction. Musleh has been involved in coordinating military efforts against ISIS and securing key areas in Iraq.

Kataib Hezbollah (KH)



Leader of Kataib Hezbollah- Ahmad al-Hamidawi



Official Flag of Kataib Hezbollah (KH)

Background

Kataib Hezbollah was established in 2007 as a Shiite militia group, initially formed to combat U.S. forces during the Iraq War. It has since evolved into a significant military and political force in Iraq, particularly known for its strong ties to Iran.

Operational Area

Kataib Hezbollah has been heavily involved in various military operations, particularly during the fight against ISIS. The group operates primarily in central and

southern Iraq, including Jazeera operation command areas such as Jurf al-Sakhr in Babil Governorate, as shown in Figure (2) and Figure (3), led by an unknown commander, with Hajj Abu Nasser serving as the deputy commander.

Leadership

The militia is led mainly by Ahmad Mohsen Faraj al-Hamidawi. The leadership structure is characterized by Abu Fadak, the P.M.F chief of staff. [i](#)

Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada



Leader of Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada-
Abu Alaa al-Walai



Official Flag of Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada Militia

Background

Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada was established in 2014, primarily in response to the rise of ISIS in Iraq. The group was formed to protect Shiite communities and holy sites, and it

has since become a significant player in the Iraqi security landscape.

Operational Area

The militia has been involved in securing the Iraqi Syrian border and supporting the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) by taking command in the Wasit governate led by Ahmed Al Maksous and controlling the Iraqi Iranian border, as shown in Figure (2) and Figure (3).

Leadership

The militia is led by Abu Alaa al-Walai, who has been instrumental in organizing its operations and strategies against ISIS and other threats. The leadership structure is designed to coordinate effectively with other factions within the P.M.F.

Ali Al-Akbar Brigade



Leader of Ali Al-Akbar Brigade- Ali Al-Hamdani



Official Flag of Ali Al-Akbar Brigade

Background

The Ali Al-Akbar Brigade was established as part of the broader mobilization of Shiite militias in response to the threats posed by ISIS. It is one of the many factions that

emerged during the fight against ISIS in Iraq, focusing on protecting Shiite communities and holy sites.

Leadership

The militia is led by Ali Al-Hamdani, who oversees its operations and strategic direction. The leadership structure is designed to coordinate effectively with other factions within the PMF and to support the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in their operations.

Operational Area

The Ali Al-Akbar Brigade is primarily active in securing religious shrines and key routes in the Najaf and Karbala governorates, which is under Euphrates Operations Command led by Ali Al-Hamdani.ⁱⁱ

ⁱ By Annika Ganzeveld and Johanna Moore, "The Leadership and Purpose of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces."

ⁱⁱ Ibid.