

Facade Group Linked to Iran Claims Five Attacks on Americans in Iraq and Syria

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Oct 20, 2023

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Brief Analysis

Part of a series: [Militia Spotlight \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight\)](#)

or see [Part 1: How to Use Militia Spotlight \(/policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight\)](#)

A new Telegram account claiming anti-U.S. attacks - the Islamic Resistance in Iraq - has shown itself to be linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps - Qods Force (IRGC-QF) as well as at least one U.S.-designated terrorist group, Nujaba.

Since the Gaza crisis escalated, attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria have been claimed by a collective brand called al-Muqawama al-Islamiyah fil al-Iraq (the Islamic Resistance in Iraq). Described by some news outlets as a “shadowy” group, this is simply an umbrella term that is currently used to describe all Iran-backed militias in Iraq (including attacks launched from Iraq into Syria).

Indeed, in their full statements, groups like [Kataib Hezbollah \(/node/17803\)](#) have often prefixed their specific group name with “al-Muqawama al-Islamiyah” (the Islamic Resistance). Thus the new use of just the prefix, but not the group names or logos of attacking forces, is a new stage in de-branding individual attacks.

Not everyone seemed to “get the memo” initially, with [Tashkil al-Waritheen \(/node/17621\)](#) individually [claiming the October 17 Harir drone attack \(/node/18403\)](#), after which the Islamic Resistance in Iraq War Media issued a superseding claim and the Tashkil al-Waritheen claim was taken down in deference.

Since then, all of the attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria have been issued by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq War Media (see Table 1) using a generic-looking form that has no logo and few other non-standard elements (Figure 1). In our view, this method serves two purposes:

Kinetic attack (Date / Location)	Claimed by	Weapon system	Result
Oct 17 / Al-Asad	Islamic Resistance in Iraq War Media	2x drones	One intercept, partial intercept, minor U.S. injuries
Oct 17 / Harir	Islamic Resistance in Iraq War Media, which superseded the Tashkil al-Waritheen claim	3x Qasf 2K drone	One intercept
Oct 19 / Al-Tanf	Islamic Resistance in Iraq War Media	2x drones (Islamic Resistance claims 3x)	One intercept, one partial intercept, minor U.S. injuries
Oct 19 / Conoco	Islamic Resistance in Iraq War Media	Unspecified rockets	Muqawama claims pipeline on fire
Oct 19 / Al-Asad	Islamic Resistance in Iraq War Media	12,000 rockets found unfired	Alarm only, but one U.S. contractor dies of heart attack
Oct 20 / Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center (BDSC)	No claim as of October 20, 2023 (U.S. Eastern Time)	1x 107mm rocket, 14 unfired	One partial intercept

Table 1: Attacks on US forces in Iraq and Syria Oct 17-20, 2023

First, the Iraqi militias backed by Iran want to show unity by folding their actions into one brand, for now. In this Gaza conflict and its regional broadening, the Iraqi militias are reporting for duty as one force. This is strongly suggestive of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Qods Force (IRGC-QF) corraling of the many factions, which otherwise tend to argue over leadership.

Second, the militias may see benefit in further obscuring which exact groups are attacking U.S. bases, which is already causing multiple “minor injuries” among U.S. troops according to the Pentagon (likely traumatic brain injuries) and one unnecessary death so far (a heart attack related to a rocket alert). Using a generic, no-logo umbrella is perhaps the ultimate extension of the “facade strategy” used since 2019 to avoid accountability for attacks on Americans in Iraq and Syria.

What the claims by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq so far do underline is the following:

1. There is a terrorist collective in Iraq that is trying to kill Americans and the Iraqi government is failing to protect U.S. citizens.
2. The attacks occurring in Syria (Al-Tanf, Conoco) are being claimed by Iraqi groups, again placing responsibility on Iraq to prevent these efforts to kill Americans.
3. Through a joint-branded attack on October 17, 2023, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq is directly linked to Tashkil al-Waritheen, a facade group that is affiliated with the militia [Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba \(/node/16716\)](#) and enjoys direct links with Iran's IRGC-QF.
4. Thus, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq's actions can, in part, be tied back to Nujaba and IRGC-QF, in matters of retaliation and legal responsibility.

Of interest, the newest rocket attack (on the BDSC complex at Baghdad International Airport, called "Victoria" by the militias, referring erroneously to the nearby but distinct former U.S. FOB Victory) was not claimed. This could be because only one of 15 rounds fired (and that round was intercepted by the U.S.) or more likely because the attack was a deliberate under-performance and because Baghdad airport is a sensitive civilian target and militias wanted to avoid blow-back. ❖

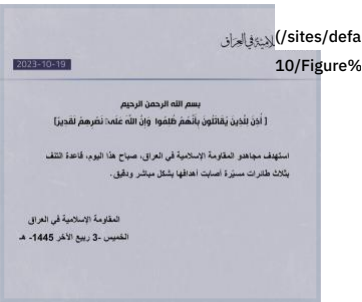


Figure 1. The generic new claim “form” used by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, in this case claiming the October 19 strike on Al-Tanf. It reads: “This morning, the fighters of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq targeted al-Tanf base with three drones that hit their targets with precision.”

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