

Militias Signal De-Escalation with the U.S., Return to Cosmetic Israel Strikes

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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 \(/policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight\)](#)

The self-styled Iraqi "resistance" has hinted at a desire to end the tit-for-tat sequence of strikes with the United States and return to cost-free counter-Israel operations.

On August 12, the [Iraqi Resistance Coordination Committee \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/their-own-words-senior-leaders-admit-membership-tansiqiya\)](#) (al-Haya al-Tansiqiya lil-Muqawama al-Iraqiya, or Tansiqiya for short) issued a short statement that read: "The Iraqi Resistance Coordination is not bound by any restrictions if the American occupation forces get involved again in targeting our sons in Iraq or exploit its airspace to carry out attacks against the Islamic Republic of Iran. In that event our response will not be stopped by restrictions" (Figure 1). This message followed U.S. strikes the day before against militias belonging to the self-styled *muqawama* (resistance) (Figure 2). Despite the post's threatening tone, the Tansiqiya seems to be trying to draw a line under the tit-for-tat exchange of attacks and U.S. strikes that has unfolded since July 25.

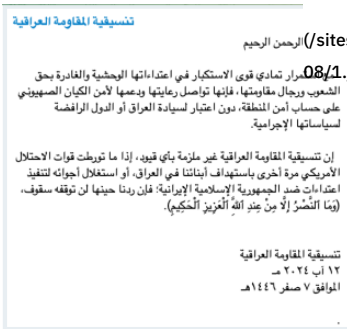


Figure 1: Tansiqiya statement, August 12, 2024.

De-escalation the Goal?

The militias seem to be signaling that if U.S. forces keep attacking their assets, they will no longer adhere to their agreement with the Iraqi government, which was reached in February after an attack on the Tower 22 facility in Jordan killed three U.S. personnel and spurred a round of U.S. attacks. By taking this tone, they may simply be trying to end the current (probably unintended) cycle of violence with the United States, refocus their attacks on Israel, and prepare for a potentially imminent escalation between the so-called "axis of resistance" and Israel. [The Islamic Resistance in Iraq \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-islamic-resistance-iraq\)](#) (IRI)—which had taken responsibility for numerous drone and cruise missile attacks against Israeli targets in past months—stopped making such claims after the present cycle of confrontation with the United States began in Iraq and Syria on July 24.

Both that pause and the new Tansiqiya warning might also be tied to a possible Iran-led retaliation against Israel for recent attacks on senior Hezbollah and Hamas figures in Beirut and Tehran. Iran blames Israel for [the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh \(https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/what-we-know-so-far-about-assassination-hamas-leader-2024-07-31/\)](#) and may soon respond with military attacks. The Tansiqiya seems to be warning the United States not to use Iraqi airspace to strike Iran if said attack

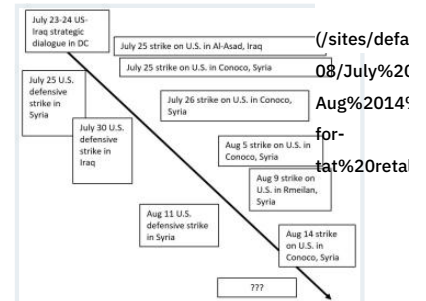


Figure 2: July 23-Aug 14, 2024 tit-for-tat retaliatory strikes in Iraq and Syria

unfolds.

Looking ahead

This apparent *muqawama* effort to deter U.S. action in Iraq (and to a lesser extent Syria) sits uncomfortably alongside a reported new August 14 rocket attack on the U.S. Conoco base in Syria. (See our [tracker \(/node/18428\)](#) of attacks in Iraq and Syria.) Yet the August 14 incident remains completely unclaimed and might have instead been aimed at Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) collocated with U.S. troops.

In our view, the Iraqi *muqawama*:

- became unintentionally embroiled in a tit-for-tat with the U.S. in July 24-July 31 that may have seen the U.S. retaliate against an anti-Israel drone strike in the making; and
- also had to consider the broader Axis of Resistance's "drawing breath" period ahead of a possible retaliation on Israel after July 31.

With the August 18 claimed IRI strike on Israel (a claimed drone strike on Golan, the first anti-Israel strike since July 24), the Iraqi *muqawama* may be flexing back into its previous pattern of largely cosmetic "resistance" strikes claimed against Israel, with little evidence of actual effects reaching Israeli soil.

For most Iraqi militia factions, all they really care about is preventing U.S. retaliation in Iraq itself and particularly against senior Iraq-based militia leaders. The Iraqi *muqawama*—increasingly money-focused militia oligarchs who like living an open and opulent lifestyle in Baghdad—do not want to be fearful of death by an American drone strike. The April 14 strike, if undertaken by Iran-backed Iraqis from Kataib Hezbollah or [Harakat al-Nujaba \(node/16716\)](#), could indicate there is a deviant view on this issue—which will cause greater discordance within the *muqawama* scene. ❖

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