Profile: Saraya Awliya al-Dam

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Brief Analysis

or see Part 1: How to Use Militia Spotlight: Profiles (https://policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight-profiles)

With probable links to Asaib Ahl al-Haq, this minor facade group is occasionally used to claim bombing attacks on U.S. supply convoys and rocket attacks on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

**Name:** Saraya Awliya al-Dam (SAD) (Companies of the Guardians of Blood).

**Type of movement:** Minor facade group. Kinetic military operations. Domestic counter-U.S. operations.

**History and objectives:**

- SAD first came to attention when it claimed an August 24, 2020, attack on a convoy of Iraqi trucks allegedly carrying U.S. goods. Dramatic video of the incident was posted to the group’s own channel. SAD claimed another convoy attack the following month, this time via a branded statement posted to Sabereen News (https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-sabereen-news) on September 8.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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By October 2020, the group appeared to be defunct, but on January 26, 2021, Sabereen posted claims that SAD had once again targeted U.S. convoys. Further claims were posted on February 2, this time accompanied by a branded statement.

In the early hours of February 16, 2021, Sabereen broke the news that SAD was claiming a rocket attack on coalition forces in Erbil. One minute later, the Sabereen account posted a statement purporting to be from SAD and formally claiming responsibility. An official, branded statement by SAD was posted later that day, again via Sabereen. Yet Kurdish intelligence later extracted confessions from accused perpetrators who claimed to belong to Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada(KSS). The U.S. government has stated that it believes KSS and Kataib Hezbollah (KH) carried out the Erbil attack.

Chain of command:

- The preponderance of the evidence shows links to Asaib Ahl al-Haq, based on analysis of media links between SAD and AAH-run channels.
- The preponderance of the evidence shows that SAD is linked to KSS and KH given each group's apparent involvement in the Erbil attack.

Affiliate relationships:

- Sabereen News.
- Asaib Ahl al-Haq. While Sabereen and other AAH-affiliated channels have mentioned SAD by name many times, prominent KH insider channels such as Unit 10,000, Kaf, Kyan KF, and others have not done so once, despite the group's high-profile claims following the February 2021 Erbil attack.

Subordinate elements:

- SAD has a media channel on Telegram that appears to be official. This channel is not influential, however, posting just four statements and one attack video between August 2020 and March 2021. The majority of the group's claims and statements are published by Sabereen, which has a vastly larger audience.

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