

# How Iran Employed Iraq's Muqawama in Its Post-Natanz Response

by [Hamdi Malik \(/experts/hamdi-malik\)](#), [Crispin Smith \(/experts/crispin-smith\)](#)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



### [Hamdi Malik \(/experts/hamdi-malik\)](#)

Hamdi Malik is an Associate Fellow with the Washington Institute, specializing in Shia militias. He earned his doctorate at the school of social, political and global studies, Keele University. He is a co-founder of the Militia Spotlight platform, which offers in-depth analysis of developments related to the Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria. He is the coauthor of the Institute's 2020 study "Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces."



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Crispin Smith is an associate at a Washington-based national security law group. His research focuses on Iraqi security, human rights, and law of armed conflict issues. He is a co-founder of the Militia Spotlight platform, which offers in-depth analysis of developments related to the Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria.



## Brief Analysis

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

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

## Militias falsely claimed attacks against Israeli and U.S. targets in retaliation for the nuclear incident, underlining how Tehran directs and coordinates each proxy's kinetic and information operations in a centralized manner.

On April 11, 2021, Iran [announced \(https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-natanz-idCAKBN2BY052\)](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-natanz-idCAKBN2BY052) that its Natanz nuclear site had been attacked. [Israeli media \(https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/israels-decades-long-battle-against-irans-centrifuges-at-natanz-664806\)](https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/israels-decades-long-battle-against-irans-centrifuges-at-natanz-664806) quickly attributed the attack to Israel, with Iranian media [soon following suit \(https://www.isna.ir/news/1400012514641/%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C%D9%84-%DA%86%D9%87-%D8%A8%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%A8%DA%A9%D9%86%DB%8C%D9%85\)](https://www.isna.ir/news/1400012514641/%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C%D9%84-%DA%86%D9%87-%D8%A8%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%A8%DA%A9%D9%86%DB%8C%D9%85). Israeli outlet Kan [specified \(https://apnews.com/article/world-news-israel-iran-62a7aa3182992ed0f97b5486d71280c2\)](https://apnews.com/article/world-news-israel-iran-62a7aa3182992ed0f97b5486d71280c2) that the Mossad intelligence agency was behind the incident. This was a humiliating blow to the Islamic Republic, especially because the same facility had previously been targeted in July 2020, causing [significant damage \(https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/05/world/middleeast/iran-Natanz-nuclear-damage.html\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/05/world/middleeast/iran-Natanz-nuclear-damage.html) to the country's main nuclear fuel enrichment site. Alireza Zakani, head of the Iranian parliamentary research center, reacted to the April explosion by describing Iran as ["heaven for spies \(https://www.radiofarda.com/a/iran-mp-says-bulk-of-nuclear-capability-destroyed-in-natanz-explosion/31201266.html\)".](https://www.radiofarda.com/a/iran-mp-says-bulk-of-nuclear-capability-destroyed-in-natanz-explosion/31201266.html)

To demonstrate its ability to retaliate against Israel, Tehran quickly mobilized its resources. On April 12, an Israeli-owned ship was attacked off the coast of the United Arab Emirates, and Israeli officials believe [Iran was behind the attack \(https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-owned-ship-said-attacked-off-uae-coast-amid-sky-high-tensions-with-iran/\)](https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-owned-ship-said-attacked-off-uae-coast-amid-sky-high-tensions-with-iran/). Meanwhile, Tehran announced that it would start enriching some uranium to 60 percent.



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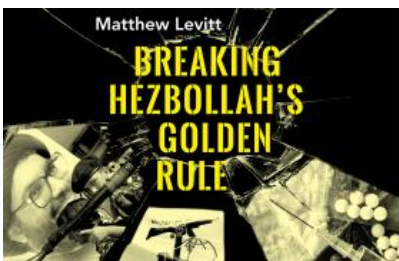
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