Qais al-Khazali Doubles Down on His Muqawama Membership

by Hamdi Malik (/experts/hamdi-malik), Michael Knights (/experts/michael-knights), Crispin Smith (/experts/crispin-smith)

Jun 7, 2021
Also available in

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Hamdi Malik (/experts/hamdi-malik)

Hamdi Malik is an Associate Fellow with The Washington Institute, specializing in Shia militaries. 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 co-author of the Institute’s 2020 study “Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces.”

Michael Knights (/experts/michael-knights)

Michael Knights is the Jill and Jay Bernstein Fellow of The Washington Institute, specializing in the military and security affairs of Iran, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf states. 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.

Crispin Smith (/experts/crispin-smith)

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.

Focus on Drones

By Hamdi Malik

In a Militia Spotlight noted (/policy-analysis/kataib-bezbollah-leads-drone-warfare-inside-iraq) on May 14, some militias are increasingly using drones to carry out sophisticated attacks against the coalition. In his June 1 interview, Khazali emphasized this decision to increase drone operations: “[The drone] exists, it’s been launched...[Drones] targeted al-Asad Air Base, but this was not the only target, and the hit was so accurate it amazed the American side for two reasons. One because of the intel that this specific target was hit, which was a radar related to the Patriot [missile defense system]...Inside the fortified base, there was more fortification for this radar or technical piece...How this happened...[Drones] targeted al-Asad, Air Base, but this was not the only target, and the hit was so accurate it amazed the American side for two reasons. One because of the intel that this specific target was hit, which was a radar related to the Patriot [missile defense system]...Inside the fortified base, there was more fortification for this radar or technical piece...How this happened...

Other Findings from Khazali’s Interviews

Kataib Hezbollah leader Qais al-Khazali...
The iNEWS interview also provides numerous intriguing insights into how Khazali portrays the resistance effort:

- His words are studded with soft attacks on Hadi al-Ameri, a rival to his leadership of the muqawama.
- He purports to avoid attacks against the U.S. embassy and, interestingly, Balad Air Base. On the first count, this suggests he has modified his late-2020 support for embassy attacks. On the second count, he may be providing confirmatory indicators that Kataib Hezbollah undertook the most recent rocket strike on Balad, which was previously an AAH attack location but may now be off-limits to the group—a self-limitation that Khazali is hinting at.
- He claims that a U.S. Patriot system was struck at al-Asad Air Base, a further indicator that U.S. surveillance systems are being systematically targeted in nonlethal but costly strikes. Indeed, he mentions the very concept of raising the cost of the U.S. presence in Iraq.
- He seems keen to suggest that AAH owns advanced drones, but there is no evidence of this. AAH has largely been limited to inaccurate rocket strikes, so it would appear to be even less well-supplied with drones than Kataib Hezbollah, which itself has demonstrated fewer drone capabilities than other recipients of Iranian weapons (e.g., Lebanese Hezbollah, Yemen’s Houthis, Hamas). Either Khazali’s insecurity about drones was on show in the interview, or he has been favored very recently with assistance in developing drone strike capabilities.
Podcast: Breaking Hezbollah's Golden Rule

Feb 9, 2022
Matthew Levitt
(/policy-analysis/podcast-breaking-hezbollahs-golden-rule)

TOPICS
- Military & Security (/policy-analysis/military-security)
- Proliferation (/policy-analysis/proliferation)
- Terrorism (/policy-analysis/terrorism)

REGIONS & COUNTRIES
- Iran (/policy-analysis/iran)
- Iraq (/policy-analysis/iraq)