

Profile: Liwa Thar Muhandis

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Also available in  
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Brief Analysis

Part of a series: Militia Spotlight: Profiles (https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight-profiles)  
or see Part 1: How to Use Militia Spotlight: Profiles (/policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight-profiles)

This older facade brand has been brought out of retirement during the summer surge of Iraqi militia attacks on U.S. targets.

**Name:** Liwa Thar Muhandis (LTM) (Revenge of Muhandis Brigade).  
**Type of movement:** Facade group. Domestic counter-U.S. operations.

History and objectives:

- A minor facade group, LTM first appeared on May 21, 2020 (https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/akram-kaabis-revealing-speech), posting a statement on a newly created Telegram channel. The statement included two claims: that the group had targeted U.S. forces at Baghdad airport with four Katyusha rockets on May 6 of that year, and that it had targeted American Chinook helicopters in Baghdad with two missiles on April 17.
- On May 23, 2020, LTM posted a video (Figure 2) purporting to show the Chinook attack. The video cuts between the firing of the missile and footage of the helicopter, ending before any impact is shown. Sabereen News (/node/16673) reposted the video within seconds.
- LTM’s first Telegram channel posted only nine times before falling into disuse after June 25, 2020. Posts by this account were frequently reposted and shared by accounts and channels linked to Asaib Ahl al-Haq (/node/16715) (AAH), while accounts affiliated with other major muqawama (resistance) groups largely ignored LTM’s posts and statements.
- LTM reappeared on July 7, 2021, using a new Telegram channel to post Ayat 179 of the Quran’s Surah al-Baqarah: “And there is life for you in retaliation, oh men of understanding, that you may become righteous.” Other muqawama media channels soon promoted the new channel, which proceeded to make additional threatening and cryptic posts.
- Later on July 7, the new LTM account posted, “It is the U.S. army that will pay the price for the martyrs.” This post came twenty minutes after twelve rockets were fired on al-Asad Air Base, making it one of the first militia acknowledgements that the attack had occurred. Then, fifty-six minutes after the attack, the LTM channel released a statement claiming responsibility for the strike and alleging it had fired thirty rockets, citing approximately the right time of firing. This claim was reposted by various accounts and channels linked to AAH and Harakat al-Nujaba (/node/16716).

Chain of command:

- The timing of LTM’s reemergence suggests it is part of a wider coordinated escalation sponsored by all the major muqawama in response to U.S. airstrikes on June 28. This may suggest direction from 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).

Affiliate relationships:

- LTM seems to draw on both AAH and Kataib Hezbollah (/node/16641) (KH) influences. It is most closely linked to Sabereen News and other AAH channels and media proxies (KH channels almost universally ignore activity claimed by LTM).
- LTM may receive support from current or former KH propagandists and information operations support elements. The new LTM channel makes use of digitally rendered graphics that appear to resemble idiosyncratic stylistic elements of KH media operations graphics. This style of image is computer generated and depicts a rocket covered with a flag of the respective organization. Only KH had used this style of image in the past, suggesting a common designer. Figures 3 and 4 were posted by LTM on July 7. Figure 5 is an example of the computer-generated image style posted by KH’s official media outlet, Kaf, from July 5.
- Ashab al-Kahf (https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-kataib-sarkhat-al-quds-formerly-known-ashab-al-kahf) (AK) has worked harmoniously alongside (https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/akram-kaabis-revealing-speech) LTM during the convoy campaign.

Subordinate elements:

- On the balance of probabilities, LTM is a media-only facade group that has no dedicated kinetic attack cells. It is used to claim attacks as



Figure 2: May 23, 2020, LTM video purporting to show the event in which a Chinook was targeted



Figure 3: Liwa Thar Muhandis logo

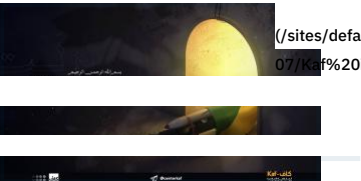


Figure 3: LTM graphic from July 7, 2021



Figure 4: Second LTM graphic from July 7, 2021

required.



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