Profile: Name: Liwa Thar Muhandis

by Crispin Smith
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Brief Analysis
Part of a series: Militia Spotlight: Profiles
or see Part 1: How to Use Militia Spotlight: Profiles

Liwa Thar Muhandis is an older facade brand that has been brought back out of retirement during the summer 2021 surge of anti-U.S. kinetic actions.

Name: Liwa Thar Muhandis (LTM) (Revenge of Muhandis Brigade).

Type of movement: Facade group. Kinetic military operations. Domestic counter-U.S. operations.

History and objectives:

- A minor facade group, LTM first appeared in May 2020.
- On May 21, 2020, LTM posted its first statement on a newly created Telegram channel. LTM claimed to have targeted U.S. forces at Baghdad airport with four Katyusha rockets on May 6, 2020. In the same statement, LTM claimed to have targeted American Chinook helicopters with two missiles in Baghdad on April 17, 2020.
- On May 23, 2020, LTM posted a video (Figure 2) purporting to show the event in which a Chinook was targeted (the video cuts between the firing of the missile and the footage of the helicopter attack).
– and ends before any impact is shown. Sabereen News also posted the video within seconds.

- LTM’s first Telegram channel posted only nine times before falling into disuse after June 25, 2020. Posts by this original account were frequently reposted and shared by accounts and channels linked to Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) by clear and convincing evidence, but LTM’s statements and posts largely went ignored by accounts affiliated with other major fasail.

- LTM reappeared on July 7, 2021 using a new Telegram channel, posting Ayat 179 of the Quran’s Surat al-Baqarah (“and there is life for you in retaliation, oh men of understanding, that you may become righteous”). The newly active account was promoted by other muqawama media channels. The account then made a number of threatening and cryptic posts.

- Later on July 7, the new LTM account posted that “it is the U.S. army that will pay the price for the martyrs...”. This post came 20 minutes after a major rocket attack on Al-Asad Air Base (comprising 12 rockets), and was one of the first militia acknowledgements of awareness of the attack. Then, 56 minutes after the attack, the LTM channel released a statement claiming responsibility for the attack, and alleging it had fired 30 rockets at approximately the right time of firing. This claim was reposted by various accounts and channels linked to AAH and Harakat al-Nujaba.

**Chain of command:**

- The timing of LTM’s reemergence suggests it is part of a wider coordinated escalation, sponsored by all the major fasail in response to U.S. airstrikes on June 28, 2021. This may suggest direction from the Iraqi Resistance Coordination Committee (al-Haya al-Tansiqiya lil-Muqawama al-Iraqiya, or Tansiqiya for short).

**Affiliate relationships:**

- LTM seems to draw on both AAH and KH influences.

- Most closely linked to Sabereen News and other AAH channels and media proxies. (KH channels almost universally ignore activity claimed by 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 Kataib Hezbollah (KH) media operations graphics. This style of image is computer generated, and in both cases depicts a rocket covered with a flag (of the respective organization). Only KH had used this style of image to date, suggesting a common designer, despite KH-linked media channel’s unwillingness to repost LTM’s actions. Figure 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.

**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 required.
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