Profile: Liwa Khaibar

by Hamdi Malik, Crispin Smith, Michael Knights

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About the Authors

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.”

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.

Michael Knights

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

Brief Analysis

With probable links to Kataib Hezbollah, this minor facade group claimed a major rocket attack on Al-Asad Airbase, but mainly claims bombing attacks on U.S. supply convoys.

Name: Liwa Khaibar (LK) (Khaibar brigade). The name is a reference to a Jewish citadel in Hijaz which was conquered by Muslim warriors led by Prophet Mohammed. Based on Islamic texts, Imam Ali, the first Shia Imam, played a crucial role in the victory of Muslims in the battle of Khaibar.

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

History and objectives:

- LK first appeared on March 17, 2021. The facade group published a video which purportedly showed two operations, one of which was
claimed to be of a rocket attack
against U.S. troops based in Al-
Asad Air Base in Anbar
Governorate, which happened on

- LK claimed responsibility for a
  purported drone attack on Iraqi
  facilities at Balad, north of Baghdad
  on April 28, 2021.

- LK has claimed a few attacks
  against U.S. logistic convoys: a
  convoy attack near Yusufiya,
  Baghdad province, on February 8,
  2021 (The claim was made after
  the group announced its existence
  in March 2021), Anbar province
  on April 29, 2021 (exact location is
  unknown), Diwaniyah province, on
  December 16, 2021, the Basra-
  Diwaniyah highway on December
  21, 2021, Yusufiya, Baghdad
  province, on January 9, 2022.

- On May 13, 2021, in the midst of
  the conflict between Hamas and
  Israel, LK posted a graphic portraying al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The image also shows three rockets seemingly directed at the
city. The graphic’s caption reads “You will hear their sound, in support of Quds”.

Chain of command:
The preponderance of the evidence shows links to Kataib Hezbollah (https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-
analysis/profile-kataib-hezbollah) (KH), for example, the activities of KH affiliated media platforms suggests that the group was
behind the March 3, 2021 rocket attack against Al-Asad Airbase. The operation was subsequently claimed by LK.

Affiliate relationships:
No known affiliate relationships at present. As noted below, Sabereen News (/node/16673) reposts LK claims.

Subordinate elements:
LK ran a Telegram channel for around four months. The account’s last message was posted on July 3, 2021 and was then
disbanded. The subsequent LK claims of attacks were posted by the wider muqawama social media network, especially Sabereen
News.
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