Claiming Without Claiming: Iraqi Militia Responses to Turkish Attacks

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After Turkish artillery killed nine Iraqi civilians and wounded nearly thirty in the Kurdistan Region province of Duhok on July 20, retaliation by the Iranian-backed Iraqi muqawama (resistance) was sure to follow. Later that night, muqawama militias launched two attacks: a drone attack against a Turkish artillery firebase at Bamerni in northern Duhok, and a rocket strike on the Turkish base at Zilkan in Nineveh province. As Militia Spotlight warned (/node/17244) in May, the potential for conflict between Turkey and the militias has been escalating as the self-styled “resistance” searches for an occupation it can credibly claim to be resisting.

The trend here is a murky kind of claim process whereby an attack is foreshadowed with a poem or Quranic verse, publicized by Sabereen, and then attributed by Sabereen to a facade group. These incidents are also notable as only the second known strikes is revealing. The July 20 Bamerni drone attack (which appears to have been followed with a multi-drone attack against the base in the early hours of July 22) saw the following sequence:

- **22:15 hours Iraq local time:** The Telegram account for the facade group Ashab al-Kahf (/node/16638) (AK) quoted a Middle Ages Arab poet stating, “Anyone who wants to achieve great victories, he needs to use a sword.”
- **22:21:** Sabereen attributes the attack to AK, stating, “The air force of the Islamic Resistance, Ashab al-Kahf, targeted military points belonging to the Turkish occupation army in Duhok governorate, in the vicinity of the Bamerni base in Amediyah town, with squadrons of explosive fixed-wing drones.”
- **22:31:** An AK post declares, “Killing for killing, drone for drone, rocket for cannon...Bamerni is burning by fixed-wing drones...No air defense can prevent planes from reaching their targets.”
- **22:25:** Sabereen attributes the Zilkan attack to LTM: “The rocket launchers of the Islamic Resistance Thar al-Muhandis brigade launched a rocket strike against a Turkish artillery firebase at Zilkan in Nineveh province.”

A similarly revealing claim sequence characterized the July 20 rocket strike on Zilkan, the Turkish site most regularly targeted by the militias:

- **19:42:** A Telegram account for Kataib Hezbollah (/node/16641), persona Abu Ali al-Askari quotes a Quranic verse: “When the inevitable occurs, of its occurrence, there is no denial.”
- **22:23:** The facade group Liwa Thar Muhandis (/node/16879) (LTM) quotes the same verse.
- **22:25:** Sabereen attributes the Zilkan attack to LTM: “The rocket launchers of the Islamic Resistance Thar al-Muhandis brigade targeted the bases of the Turkish occupation.”

The trend here is a murky kind of claim process whereby an attack is foreshadowed with a poem or Quranic verse, publicized by Sabereen, and then attributed by Sabereen to a facade group. These incidents are also notable as only the second known association of AK with anti-Turkish attacks, and the first for LTM. This may indicate that additional real-world kinetic cells associated with the militias Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq (/node/16715), and Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (/node/16716), are being drawn north to get in on the anti-Turkish-themed attacks.
Also of interest, a July 22 Sabereen post foreshadowed a longer-range drone strike on Istanbul. Using the phrase moa'lemi (teacher), which typically denotes a communiqué passed by a senior Iranian or militia/terrorist leader, Sabereen noted: "My moa'lemi told me that our drones will reach Istanbul, and whoever knocked the door will hear the response." Such a strike is not unthinkable considering the recent record of Iran-backed militias launching drone attacks from Iraq against targets in Riyadh, Gulf oil installations, and Abu Dhabi.

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