

# Kataib Hezbollah and Kaf Celebrate Attacks on Americans

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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## Brief Analysis

Part of a series: [Militia Spotlight \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight)

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## The militia's media channel has been praising past Iranian-aided terrorist acts that killed and wounded U.S. military personnel in Iraq—and linking them to current activities.

Last month, the [Kataib Hezbollah \(/node/16641\)](#) (KH) militia media channel Kaf issued a series of posts that celebrated the fielding of the Ashtar improvised rocket-assisted munition (IRAM), a short-range multiple mortar launcher that was used to bombard U.S. military bases in Iraq prior to the withdrawal of American forces in December 2011. On November 15, Kaf announced a November 18 event in Baghdad to commemorate the first use of the Ashtar more than a decade ago. The invite read: "To celebrate the fifteen-year anniversary of Ashtar from Iraq, which contributed to defeating the American occupation and [the Islamic State], KH invite you to attend the Ashtar Festival for art and media" (Figure 1). The celebration was held in a building belonging to the Iraqi state-funded Hashd al-Shabi (Popular Mobilization Forces, or PMF) media directorate in the KH stronghold of Palestine Street, Baghdad.

Also on November 15, Kaf posted an image of a more modern Ashtar IRAM with a caption that read: "Ashtar is a weapon designed and produced by the engineering department of KH, which enjoys flexibility in its production [phase] and the operation [phase]. The Islamic Resistance [first] launched Ashtar on November 18, 2007, in a special operation targeting the two bases of the occupying American [army] in Shaab and Rustamiyah in Baghdad" (Figure 2).

During the 2007 attacks in question, [31 Ashtars were fired](#)



Figure 1: KH's invitation to attend the Ashtar Festival, November 15, 2022.

(<https://digitalcommons.usmalibrary.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=books>) at ranges of under 200 meters, wounding twelve Americans. On other occasions, **IRAMs were even more deadly**

(<https://digitalcommons.usmalibrary.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=books>): in two incidents in June 2011, they killed ten Americans and wounded thirty-seven. Over time, KH increasingly concealed Ashtar IRAMs inside dump trucks, each firing up to eighteen gas cylinders filled with C-4 explosive and propelled at a high angle of fire with rocket propellant packs produced by Iran.

The name Ashtar—a companion of Imam Ali—is a recurrent motif in the Iran-backed **Badr Organization** ([/node/17003](https://www.dailymail.com/news/world-news/article-3811111/iran-backed-badr-organization-iraqi-terrorists-iran-iraq-war)) and later PMF military units. Badr's main artillery brigade, which fought against Iraq on the Iranian side of the Iran-Iraq War, was the Malik al-Ashtar rocket

artillery support brigade. After the official withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Iraq, the PMF used new variants of the Ashtar (240 mm Falaq-1 and 333 mm Falaq-2) to fight the Islamic State. As recently as March 13, 2020, the U.S. government indicated that KH was **continuing to field IRAMs**

(<https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/32574/heres-everything-we-know-about-america-airstrikes-on-iranian-related-targets-in-iraq>) for terrorist use at an IRAM "storage site" in Jurf al-Sakhar. The site was destroyed by U.S. aircraft after a KH attack killed two Americans and one Briton at Taji on March 11, 2020.

Kaf's messaging—which is controlled by KH, shows KH iconography, and applauds KH attacks—underlines the nexus between the U.S.-designated terrorist militia and the Iraqi state-funded PMF, whose media location (al-Shahid Haider al-Muhayy PMF Center for Public Affairs, Karim al-Nada Street, Baghdad) was advertised for use in commemorating the killing and wounding of Americans. Furthermore, KH, the PMF Media Directorate, and Kaf proposed to celebrate the use of Ashtar terrorist devices against Americans. KH is the same group that is now represented in Iraq's parliament by the six MPs of **Harakat Hoquq** ([/node/17048](https://www.dailymail.com/news/world-news/article-3811111/iran-backed-badr-organization-iraqi-terrorists-iran-iraq-war)). ❖



Figure 2: Kaf infographic about the launch of Ashtar in 2007 against two U.S. bases in Iraq, published November 15, 2022. The graphic shows a modern Ashtar multiple rocket launcher variant, not the 2007 version.

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