

Ashab al-Kahf Claims Six-Year-Old Unsolved Murder of U.S. Soldier

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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 group stopped hinting and actually took credit for the 2017 murder of U.S. soldier Alexander Missildine, who was then supporting Iraqi combat operations to liberate territory from the Islamic State.

On May 18, the Iraqi facade group [Ashab al-Kahf \(/node/16638\)](/node/16638) (AK) issued a series of Telegram messages that explicitly claimed the October 1, 2017, death of U.S. Army private first class Alexander Missildine, who was killed by a roadside bomb near Tikrit, on the highway between Camp Speicher and Baiji.



Figure 1. AK sets the scene for a "shocking" message, May 18, 2023.

In the first of two messages, AK wrote: "The Pentagon will surely be shocked from what we will take responsibility for. We killed you occupiers. The devil must understand what the people of Iraq can do to the occupiers" (see

Figure 1). Given the female noun used in the original Arabic, the "devil" in question is presumably current U.S. ambassador Alina Romanowski, the target of a constant stream of vitriol from Iran-backed militias in Iraq. In a subsequent message, AK asked the ambassador, "Who is Alex Missildine?" (see Figure 2).

The details of the new claim are then given in a third Telegram post, which states: "We take responsibility for targeting the forces of the American occupation army on 10/1/2017, when an armored vehicle carrying only American soldiers...was destroyed in the dear Salah al-Din governorate, which led to the death of at least one soldier and the wounding of two. For the first time, we take responsibility for this operation, as the enemy previously thought that the terrorist organization [the Islamic] State...was responsible for the attack. On that day, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis cried with joy" (see Figure 3).

AK is here referring to the unlawful killing of Missildine, whose death was

confirmed (https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/lethal-roadside-bomb-that-killed-scores-of-us-troops-reappears-in-iraq/2017/10/11/87c5a57c-aeb7-11e7-9b93-b97043e57a22_story.html) at

the time—the period between the July 2017 liberation of Mosul and the clearance of the last Islamic State-held lands in Kirkuk—to have been caused by an explosively formed penetrator (EFP), a [signature weapon](#)

(<https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/10/efp.php>) used only by Iran-backed militias, including Lebanese Hezbollah, Iraq’s [Kataib Hezbollah \(/node/16641\)](#) and [Asaib Ahl al-Haq \(/node/16715\)](#), Yemen’s Houthi movement, and certain militants in Afghanistan, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia. In 2017, the possibility of an Iran-backed Shia militia attack on an American was deemed disruptive to the counter-Islamic State campaign and U.S.-Iraq relations, and the case was attributed (in U.S. government circles) to an unknown Shia “rogue group.”

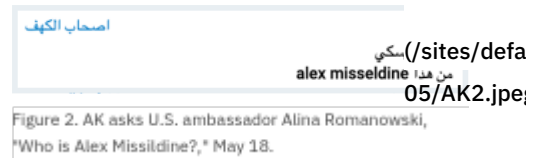


Figure 3. AK takes responsibility for the killing of U.S. Army PFC Alexander Missildine, May 18.

AK is now proudly claiming to have been that group. The May 18 claim follows an earlier hint in the same vein. In an [April 2023 interview](#)

(<https://aymennaltamimi.substack.com/p/targeting-us-forces-in-iraq-interview>), a self-described AK member suggests the group may have been

attacking Americans since 2017, noting: “The date of the launching of the first nucleus was in 2017, and at the time the operations were being conducted without claiming them because of the political situation...and also the sympathy of many parties with the Americans, especially as most of the politicians were turning toward the Americans in the time of Daesh [as the Islamic State is also known].” Indeed, the AK member noted that the group chose its name precisely because it was undertaking attacks on Americans of which other militias did not

yet approve, adding: “As for the name, we have seen a good omen in Ashab al-Kahf and their famous story; as their number was few, no one knew of their activity, and they were working on the basis of the heavenly visions that most were opposed to.”

Ashab al-Kahf is clearly in attention-seeking mode. Between its [threats to U.S. aviation \(/node/18076\)](#) and its offer of [interviews \(https://aymennaltamimi.substack.com/p/targeting-us-forces-in-iraq-interview\)](#), and now its claim to have killed an American, the group seems to be trying to draw notice, although for what purpose is not clear. ❖

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