

Facade Group Linked to Iran Claims Five Attacks on Americans in Iraq and Syria

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Brief Analysis

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

or see Part 1: [How to Use Militia Spotlight \(/policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight\)](/policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight)

A new Telegram account claiming anti-U.S. attacks is linked to Iran's Qods Force and other designated terrorist organizations.

Since the Gaza crisis escalated, a collective brand called al-Muqawama al-Islamiyah fil Iraq (the Islamic Resistance in Iraq) has been claiming attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria. Described by some news outlets as a “shadowy” group, this is simply an umbrella term used to describe the operations of all Iran-backed militias in Iraq, including strikes into Syria. Past statements from groups like [Kataib Hezbollah \(/node/17803\)](#) have often prefixed their names with “al-Muqawama al-Islamiyah.” The new use of this prefix by itself, without individual group names or logos, represents a new stage in “resistance” branding of anti-American attacks, but with the same old players at the table.

Not everyone seemed to get the memo at first, with the facade group [Tashkil al-Waritheen \(/node/17621\)](#) individually [claiming the October 17 drone attack \(/node/18403\)](#) on Harir Air Base. Afterward, the “Islamic Resistance” brand issued a superseding claim, and the Waritheen claim was taken down in deference.

Since then, all attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria have been claimed by the brand’s apparent PR arm, “Islamic Resistance in Iraq War Media” (see Table 1) using a generic-looking form that has no logo and mostly standardized elements (Figure 1). This method likely serves two purposes.

Kinetic attack (Date / Location)	Claimed by	Weapon system	Result
Oct 17 / Al Asad	Islamic Resistance in Iraq War Media	2x drones	One partial intercept, minor U.S. injuries
Oct 17 / Harir	Islamic Resistance in Iraq War Media, which superseded the Tashkil al Waritheen claim	1x Qasaf-2K drone	One intercept
Oct 19 / Al Tanf	Islamic Resistance in Iraq War Media	2x drones (Islamic Resistance claims 3x)	One intercept, one partial intercept, minor U.S. injuries
Oct 19 / Conoco	Islamic Resistance in Iraq War Media	Unspecified rockets	Muqawama claims pipeline on fire
Oct 19 / Al Asad	Islamic Resistance in Iraq War Media	122mm rockets	Alarm only, but one U.S. contractor dies of heart attack
Oct 20 / Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center (BOSC)	No claim as of October 20, 2000 U.S. Eastern Time	1x 107mm rocket, 14 un-fired	One partial intercept

Table 1: Attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria, Oct 17-20, 2023

First, given the unfolding Gaza crisis and the potential for regional broadening of the war, Iran-backed militias want to show unity by folding their actions into one brand, essentially “reporting for duty” as one force (at least for now). This strongly suggests that Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) is corraling its many Iraqi “resistance” proxies, which otherwise tend to argue over local leadership.

Second, the militias may see benefit in obscuring which exact groups are attacking U.S. bases, especially now that the strikes have caused multiple injuries among U.S. troops (likely traumatic brain injuries) and one death (a heart attack spurred by a rocket alert). Using a generic, no-logo umbrella brand is perhaps the ultimate extension of the “facade strategy” that Iran and its proxies have used since 2019 to avoid accountability for attacks on Americans.

Given what we know about the

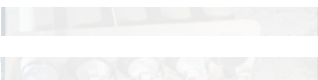
“Islamic Resistance” claims so far, Washington and its partners can conclude the following:

1. There is a terrorist collective in Iraq that is trying to kill Americans, and the Iraqi government is failing to protect them.
2. The attacks in Syria (specifically against al-Tanf base and Conoco natural gas infrastructure) are being claimed by Iraqi groups, again placing responsibility on Baghdad to prevent these efforts to kill Americans.
3. The joint-branded October 17 attack directly connects the “Islamic Resistance in Iraq” with Tashkil al-Waritheen, a facade group that is affiliated with the militia [Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba \(/node/16716\)](#) and enjoys direct links with Iran’s IRGC-QF.
4. Any strikes claimed by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq can therefore be tied back to Nujaba and the IRGC-QF (at least to a certain degree) in terms of military responses and legal responsibility.



Figure 1. The generic new claim “form” used by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, in this case claiming the October 19 strike on al-Tanf in Syria. It reads, “This morning, the fighters of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq targeted al-Tanf base with three drones that hit their targets with precision.”

Interestingly, the latest Iraqi rocket attack—an October 20 strike on the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center (BDSC) complex at the international airport—has not been claimed. (The militias call this complex "Victoria," erroneously referring to the former U.S. Victory Base Complex.) This could stem from the limited nature of the incident—only one of fifteen rounds in the attacking rocket battery was fired, and it was intercepted by U.S. forces. In fact, the attack was likely a deliberate under-performance near an especially sensitive civilian target (the airport), and the militias wanted to avoid blowback. ❖



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"Hamas's practice of storing and using rockets among civilians and in humanitarian facilities will increase the exposure of civilians to risk," al-Omari told Post reporters.

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