

Kataib Hezbollah in the Caucasus: One to Watch

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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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Unconfirmed but detailed reporting on potential Iraqi terrorist cells in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan should be a wake-up call to monitor Kataib Hezbollah's external operations more closely.

On August 7, Terror Alarm, a news aggregator account on Twitter/X that claims to scrape social media using artificial intelligence, reported that groups and figures affiliated with the Iran-backed Iraqi militia [Kataib Hezbollah \(/node/16641\)](/node/16641) (KH) had carried out terrorist attacks in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The English-language [post \(https://x.com/terror_alarm/status/1821087441794597349?s=46&t=9gXAAYr10PFhQgZzv-MCQ\)](https://x.com/terror_alarm/status/1821087441794597349?s=46&t=9gXAAYr10PFhQgZzv-MCQ) read:

"The organization responsible for terror activity in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan is the Iraqi militia Kata'ib Hezbollah. Our data shows that the individual responsible for pursuing the terror attacks is Tajik operative Muhammad Ali Burhanov, also known by his alias, Sayed Hamid al-Tajiki. Burhanov studied at Al-Mustafa University in Iran, a known spotting pool used by terror groups looking to recruit operatives. Burhanov and his operatives receive special support from Quds Force's Department 400 [referring to a branch of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps], with the personal involvement of Housein Rahmani and senior Department 400 official Hossein Rahban, who recruit young militiamen. He collaborates also with Jihadists, ISIS, and the Taliban. The operations spearheaded by Burhanov for Kata'ib Hezbollah have included the failed attempt to mount a gunfire attack on the Jewish Agency offices in Almaty, an attempt to set fire to the Ohr Avner Jewish Center in Almaty using a Molotov cocktail, and arson attacks on a farm belonging to Saxovat Broyler Co. in Tashkent and a warehouse belonging to Neostream Co. in Almaty."

On August 26, the London-based Iran International TV [amplified \(https://www.iranintl.com/en/202408259419\)](https://www.iranintl.com/en/202408259419) the information posted by Terror Alarm.

Evidence of Pro-KH Networks in the Caucasus



Figure 1: The Islamic Resistance in Tajikistan statement, May 1, 2022.

(/sites/default/files/2024-09/1.jpeg) Although Militia Spotlight cannot verify these reports, KH has been verifiably working to expand its reach and influence beyond Iraq and Syria in recent years. For example, the group's 2022 reelection of Ahmad Mohsen Faraj al-Hamidawi (aka Abu Hussein) as its secretary-general offered a glimpse into the various foreign militant groups that are in KH's orbit.

On May 1, 2022, a group named "The Islamic Resistance in Tajikistan" issued a statement congratulating "the faithful Ummah of Iraq on the reelection of the Mujahid Haj Abu Hussein al-Hamidawi as the Secretary-General of KH" (Figure 1). Similarly, the "Kashmiri Mujahedin" released a short statement declaring that "your Kashmiri brothers consider the reelection of Haj Abu Hussein al-Hamidawi as the Secretary-General of this sacred organization as a sign of trust and security for this Ummah and as a significant blow to the enemy" (Figure 2).

Past KH Statements About the Caucasus

On January 9, 2024, al-Mayadeen TV interviewed KH military spokesman Jafar al-Husseini, who has been sanctioned

(<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/node/18488>) by the U.S. government for "coordinating with KH fighters planning attacks against U.S. military commanders in Iraq." In the interview, he noted (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/kataib-hezbollah-reveals-plans-expanded-regional-attacks>). "What we see is that in the coming years or a decade, the geography of this Axis [of Resistance] will expand to reach East Asia and Caucasian countries."

Husseini's comments, coupled with the above indications of KH involvement in the Caucasus, suggest that the group's operations further afield are worth watching closely—a point that was further driven home by recent revelations about its involvement in training Bahraini terrorists

(<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/kataib-hezbollah-behind-saraya-al-ashtars-claimed-attack-israel>). Although KH drone and missile strikes on Israel tend to be easily blocked, the group could pose a more effective threat to Israelis and Jews living in or visiting the Caucasus.



Figure 2: Kashmiri Mujahedin statement, May 1, 2022.

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