

Iraqi Militias Unveil SAD Aircraft Carrier

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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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Saraya Awliya al-Dam launched a Shahed drone from a small boat in an apparent effort to draw attention by demonstrating a rudimentary new capability.

On November 19, while claiming an attack on Eilat, Israel, the Iran-backed militia [Saraya Awliya al-Dam \(/node/16626\)](/node/16626) (SAD) showed a Shahed-101 X-tail drone being launched in the afternoon from a fifteen-foot motorboat on an unidentified waterway—the first time Iraqi groups have been known to use this tactic. The launch appeared to send the



Figure 1: Drone launch from boat, November 19, 2024.

tried to provide the most interesting and diverse video footage of Iraqi militia launches. While the video format used by [the Islamic Resistance in Iraq](#)

drone westward over a quite large body of water, judging by the imagery (Figure 1). The only inland waterways in Iraq that fit this profile are lakes such as

Tharthar or Hamrin; alternatively, the imagery could have been taken outside Iraq, perhaps in partnership with Yemeni Houthi forces on the Red Sea.

To record the Shahed launch, the launch cell used a quadcopter (Figure 2) to take overhead images and a recorder in the boat to film from behind. They were exposed to strong exhaust smoke and heat in the process, but the boat seemed to avoid major damage.

When posting the footage, the group blurred out serial numbers on the wings of the Shahed, whose configuration was a quad-puck GPS mounted behind the wing and toward the engine. The obscured numbers and black rear-mounted quad-GPS are familiar features of other SAD claims.

For some time now, SAD has



Figure 2: Quadcopter recorded by launch crew as it hovered above the scene taking video of the drone launch from above.

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-islamic-resistance-iraq> (IRI) has become very stale of late, SAD has shown its launch groups using a variety of methods and attired in different uniform patterns, sometimes including body armor and tactical helmets. The November 19 claim is the thirteenth the group has issued this month, eight of them on November 4 alone (which may have been a set of four claims duplicated by accident or intentionally).

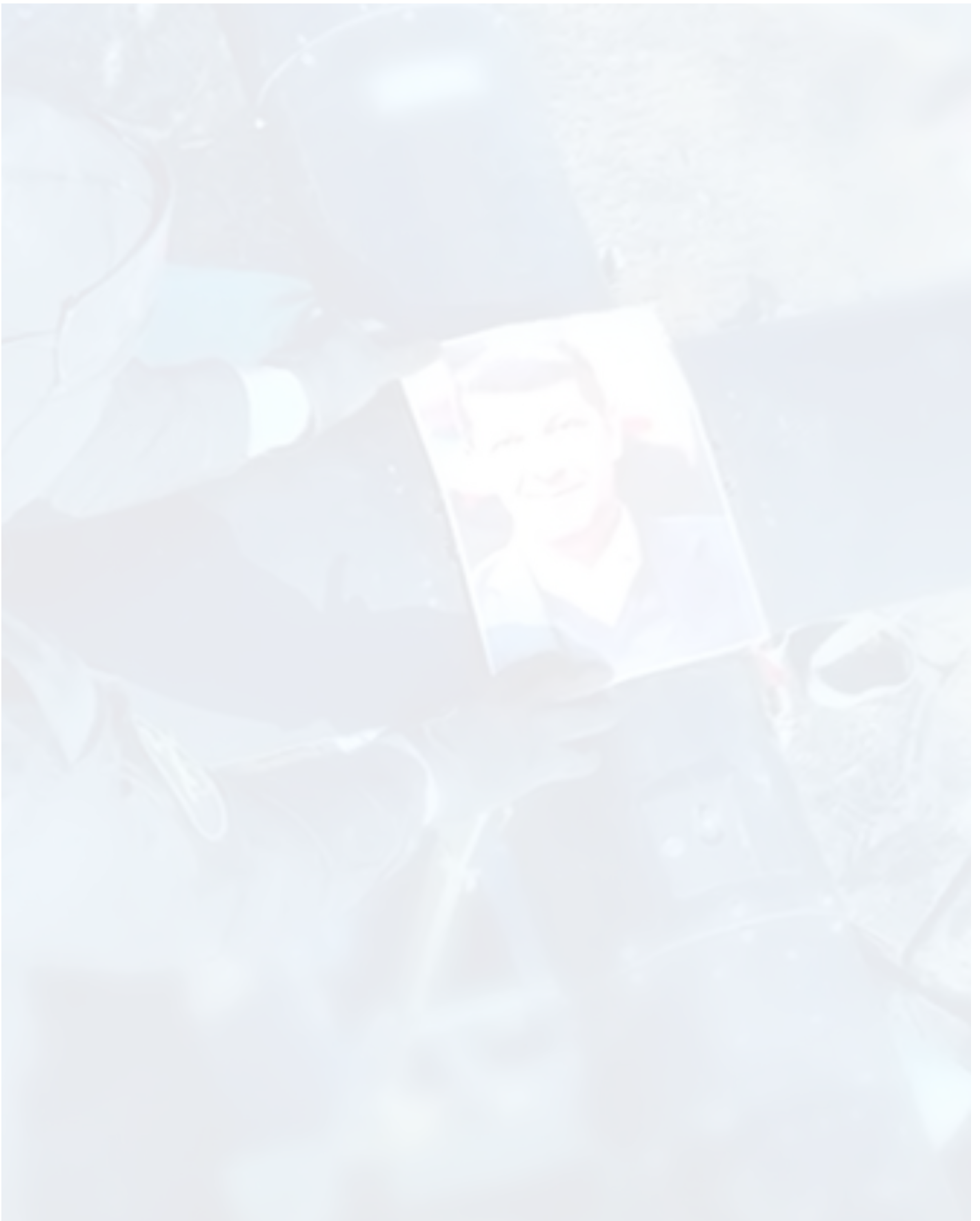


Figure 3: Mohammed Afif, a Lebanese Hezbollah spokesman killed by Israel on November 17, 2024.

There is strong reason to doubt that SAD launch videos are shot on the actual dates when claims are made; they are probably

shot slightly earlier. In this case, extrapolating from available data and the "martyrdom photo" of Mohammed Afif, the Lebanese Hezbollah spokesman killed by Israel this week (the presumptive trigger for the Iraqi launch), November 17 is the earliest date the video might have been filmed. More likely, it was made on the afternoon of November 18 and posted with a November 19 claim date on the launch video. In theory, the drone would have made an eight-hour journey throughout the night of November 18-19, so it might reasonably be claimed as a November 19 attack. ❖

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