

Israeli Strike Kills Head of Security for Iraqi Militia KSS

by [Michael Knights \(/experts/michael-knights\)](/experts/michael-knights), [Hamdi Malik \(/experts/hamdi-malik\)](/experts/hamdi-malik)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Michael Knights \(/experts/michael-knights\)](/experts/michael-knights)

Michael Knights is the Jill and Jay Bernstein Senior Fellow at The Washington Institute and cofounder of the Militia Spotlight platform, which offers in-depth analysis of developments related to Iran-backed militias.



[Hamdi Malik \(/experts/hamdi-malik\)](/experts/hamdi-malik)

Hamdi Malik is an associate fellow with The Washington Institute and cofounder of its Militia Spotlight platform.



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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Haider al-Musawi may have been (unsuccessfully) securing the move of a senior Lebanese Hezbollah operative through Iraq into Iran.

On June 21, an apparent Israeli airstrike killed three militiamen after they crossed from Iraq into Iran. The best known of the three was Lebanese terrorist Abu Ali al-Khalil, a former bodyguard to slain Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. He died alongside his son, Mahdi al-Khalil. The third man was an Iraqi terrorist named Haider al-Musawi, whom the U.S.-designated, Iran-backed group [Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada \(/node/16731\)](/node/16731) (KSS) identified as their head of security at the time of his death (Figure 1).

Islamic Resistance In Iraq
Katayib Sayid Alshuhada



للمقاومة الإسلامية في العراق
كتائب سيّد الشهداء

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

﴿ وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أحيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ ﴾
صدق الله العلي العظيم

بقلوب مؤمنة بقضاء الله وقدره. وبنفوس تملؤها العزّة والثبات على طريق الحق. تنعى الأمانة العامة للمقاومة الإسلامية في العراق - كتائب سيد الشهداء الشهيد المجاهد القائد السيد حيدر الموسوي مسؤول الوحدة الأمنية. الذي ارتقى إلى جوار ربه شهيداً على الشريط الحدودي العراقي - الإيراني. إثر استهداف صهيوني غادر. برفقة الشهيد أبو علي الخليل مرافق السيد الشهيد حسن نصر الله. وجملة الشهيد مهدي الخليل.

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Figure 1: KSS statement identifying Musawi as their head of security, June 21, 2025.

The subsequent commemoration of Musawi by the self-styled *muqawama* (resistance) produced some noteworthy moments that speak to his status—and also to the desperation of Iraqi groups to claim some share of involvement

and sacrifice in the recent Iran-Israel war, though the reality is that they mostly sat out the conflict.



Figure 2: The Iranian Supreme Leader's representative praying over Musawi's coffin in Najaf, June 27, 2025.

His funeral started on June 22 in front of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Media Directorate on Palestine Street, Baghdad, and was stretched out until he was buried in Najaf (as is the custom with *muqawama* fighters) on June 27.



Figure 3: Abu Ala al-Walai was one of the pallbearers of Musawi's coffin, June 22, 2025.

Ayatollah Mojtaba al-Hosseini, the Iranian Supreme Leader's representative in Iraq, prayed over his coffin in Najaf (Figure 2), while KSS leader Abu Ala al-Walai (aka Hashim Bunyan al-Siraji) was one of the pallbearers (Figure 3). The commemoration was attended by Mohammad Kazem al-Sadeq, the Iranian ambassador to Iraq and a member of

the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (Figure 4). The Russian ambassador to Iraq, Elbrus Kutrashev, also attended the funeral (Figure 5).



Figure 4: Iran's ambassador to Iraq attended the commemoration, June 25, 2025.

Underlining the longstanding KSS links to Syria, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP)—a group with close ties to both the former Assad regime and Lebanese Hezbollah—issued a statement on July 2 lauding the important role that Musawi played in past military operations there (Figure 6). As Militia Spotlight has previously noted

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/uli-al-baas-part-1-new-islamic-resistance-front-syria>).

SSNP has been calling for the formation of “a front to liberate southern Syria” since as early as December 2024.



Figure 5: Russia's ambassador to Iraq attended the commemoration, June 25, 2025.

Such connections and displays of solidarity support the view that KSS deserves close watching as a potentially significant armed proxy of Iran. If the Qods Force has decided to **rejuvenate militant cells inside Syria**

(<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/uli-al-baas-part-2-key-analytic-findings>) in order to target Israel and the new Syrian government, then KSS would be on the short list of “go-to” options for assistance.

KSS might also assist with reestablishing land and air transportation

(<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/dont-assume-irans-supply-lines-hezbollah-are-cut>) to route people, materiel, and resources between Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. This may have been the case with Abu Ali al-Khalil.

Finally, past investigations by Militia Spotlight indicate that KSS may have special territorial responsibilities for Iran-facilitated drone and rocket operations in areas north of Baghdad and east of the Tigris River. This role could become more important if new drone and rocket attacks are unleashed on U.S. bases in Iraq or on U.S. partners such as the Iraqi Kurds. ❖

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