

Shia Strength: Iraqi Militants Adapt to the US Drawdown

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

Oct 4, 2011

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.



Articles & Testimony

Whether U.S. forces in Iraq withdraw or not, Iran is expected to continue backing its proxies there in order to influence the political situation and retain an ability to strike Western assets.

The US military suffered its heaviest monthly casualties in Iraq in three years in June, when 14 of its soldiers were killed in action. At least 12 of them were killed by Iranian-backed 'special groups', prompting fresh complaints from the US that Iran was encouraging its Iraqi allies to step up their attacks as the scheduled withdrawal of all US forces from Iraq looms.

The surge in attacks highlighted the threat posed by Shia militants, especially if the US and Iraqi governments sign an agreement allowing US forces to stay beyond the 31 December withdrawal deadline. Even if the US leaves as previously agreed, Iran is expected to continue to back Iraqi proxies in order to influence the political situation and retain an ability to strike Western assets in the country and possibly elsewhere...

Michael Knights is a Lafer fellow with The Washington Institute, specializing in the military and security affairs of Iraq, Iran, Yemen, and the Gulf Arab states. As a consultant to the private-security industry, he worked closely with the Iraqi Security Forces in a number of provinces in 2011 and continues to collate security metrics directly from the Iraqi government following the U.S. withdrawal. He is the author of [The Iraqi Security Forces: Local Context and U.S. Assistance \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=344\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=344).



Jane's Intelligence Review

RECOMMENDED



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Tracking Anti-U.S. Strikes in Iraq and Syria During the Gaza Crisis](#)

May 4, 2024



Michael Knights,
Amir al-Kaabi,
Hamdi Malik

[\(/policy-analysis/tracking-anti-us-strikes-iraq-and-syria-during-gaza-crisis\)](#)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Is Kataib Hezbollah Behind the Saraya al-Ashtar Claimed Attack on Israel?](#)

May 4, 2024



Michael Knights,
Amir al-Kaabi,
Hamdi Malik

[\(/policy-analysis/kataib-hezbollah-behind-saraya-al-ashtar-claimed-attack-israel\)](#)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Nuclear Agency Chief Visits Iran: Expectations and Next Steps](#)

May 3, 2024



Simon Henderson

[\(/policy-analysis/nuclear-agency-chief-visits-iran-expectations-and-next-steps\)](#)

TOPICS

[Military & Security \(/policy-analysis/military-security\)](/policy-analysis/military-security)

[U.S. Policy \(/policy-analysis/us-policy\)](/policy-analysis/us-policy)

REGIONS & COUNTRIES

[Iran \(/policy-analysis/iran\)](/policy-analysis/iran)

[Iraq \(/policy-analysis/iraq\)](/policy-analysis/iraq)