

**1** Apr 01: **U.S. Intelligence Indicates Iran May be Planning a “Serious Attack” on U.S. Troops in Iraq.** Anonymous U.S. officials told various news outlets that U.S. intelligence indicates Iran and its proxies are planning a “serious” attack on U.S. troops stationed in Iraq. An unnamed U.S. official told the Wall Street Journal that “we expect something soon” and linked the potential attack to Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps - Quds Force (IRGC-QF) Commander Esmail Ghaani’s March 30 visit to Baghdad.

**2** Apr 01: **Iranian Proxy-led Political Bloc Claims it will Seek Prosecution of Iraqi President Barham Salih for “Invalid” PM-Designation.** Mohammed al-Ghabban, the former Minister of Interior and current parliamentary head of the Iran-backed Conquest Alliance, tweeted the intentions of his party to prosecute Iraqi President Barham Salih within the next two days for the “invalid” selection of Adnan al-Zurfi as prime minister (PM)-designate. Ghabban said Salih should face legal and parliamentary accountability for unilaterally designating a PM without consulting parliamentary blocs first.

**3** Apr 01-07: **Kata’ib Hezbollah Continues to Demand Full U.S. Withdrawal from Iraq.** Kata’ib Hezbollah (KH), a U.S.-designated terror group and Iranian proxy militia, posted a statement to its official website on April 2 warning the U.S. against striking the group. KH likely intended the statement to be a response to U.S. President Donald Trump, who tweeted on April 1 that Iran or its proxies are planning a “sneak attack” and would pay a heavy price. KH sought to cast its warning as conditional, saying, “We will not kill you, if you leave Iraq.” KH issued another statement to its website on April 6 arguing it will never give up its weapons so long as foreign forces remain in Iraq. Abu Ali al-Askari, a KH security official and de facto spokesperson, issued a threatening tweet warning “USA The End.”

**4** Apr 02: **CENTCOM Confirms Iraqi Government Was Aware of the Installation of Patriot Defense Systems.** Captain Bill Urban, a spokesperson for U.S. Central Command, confirmed that the U.S. coordinated with its Iraqi counterparts regarding the deployment of Patriot defense systems to Iraq. Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had previously confirmed in January the U.S. was “working” with the Iraqi government but needed permission to move the systems into place. The systems started to arrive on March 30. Urban stressed that attacks in Iraq target both U.S. and Iraqi troops and violate Iraqi sovereignty.

**5** Apr 02: **Iranian Proxy Militia Usbat al-Thairen Releases Drone Footage of U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.** Usbat al-Thairen, a new Iranian proxy militia, released footage taken by a drone flying over the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. The group followed the video with a brief statement saying it could have launched rockets at the Embassy and the U.S. would have experienced their “strength and accuracy.” The group previously announced its existence by claiming responsibility for three attacks on U.S. forces, two at Camp Taji, 30 km north of Baghdad, on March 11 and 14 and one at Basmaya Base, 45 km south of Baghdad, on March 16. It is unclear when the group filmed the video, but the U.S. compound entered temporary lockdown due to an unidentified commercial drone in May 2019.

**6** Apr 02-03: **Iraq Media Regulator Suppresses Freedom of Press, Further Concealing COVID-19 Outbreak.** Multiple anonymous doctors, an anonymous senior health official, and an anonymous senior political official told Reuters on April 2 that Iraq has thousands more COVID-19 cases than the 772 cases announced by the Iraqi government. The sources estimated Iraq likely has 3,000-9,000 COVID-19 cases. Iraq’s Communication and Media Commission (CMC) responded to the publication by suspending Reuters’s media license and fining the outlet \$21,000. The CMC demanded an apology and called the report “fabricated.”

**7** Apr 03: **New Iranian Proxy Ashab al-Kahf Posts Photo from Inside U.S. Embassy Compound.** A previously unknown Shi’a militia group calling itself Ashab al-Kahf (AK) posted a photo on April 3 showing the inside and outside of the U.S. Embassy compound. A caption accompanying the photo read, “O fools, before you threaten us, look behind you.” AK also issued its first apparent statement, addressed to the Iraqi Security Forces, on March 21 claiming AK had information about the spread of COVID-19 among American soldiers, including the names of infected soldiers at Qayyarah Airbase, 60 km south of Mosul. The statement instructed Iraqis to stay away from and to quarantine the Americans. AK concluded the statement by claiming it would attack U.S. forces in Iraq if the Iraqi government did not take appropriate measures. AK is the second new Shi’a militia group to emerge in less than a month and is likely an Iranian proxy.

**8** Apr 03: **Iran-aligned Court President Attempts to Invalidate Selection of PM-Designate Zurfi.** Iraq’s High Judicial Council (HJC) issued a statement challenging the legitimacy of Adnan al-Zurfi as PM-designate. The HJC statement argues that the Supreme Federal Court’s (SFC) approval of President Barham Salih naming Adnan al-Zurfi as PM-designate on March 17 was illegitimate. The HJC argues that the SFC had no right to approve the designation because the SFC had a judge’s seat vacancy at the time and therefore did not meet quorum. The HJC has no authority to rule on constitutional issues or override the SFC. The HJC’s president is Faiq al-Zaidan, whom journalists describe as an ally of Iran.

**9** Apr 03: **Conquest Alliance Formally Asks President Salih to Withdraw PM-Designation of Adnan al-Zurfi.** Conquest Alliance, the parliamentary bloc led by Iranian proxy militia leader Hadi al-Ameri, sent an official letter to President Salih requesting that he rescind his designation of Adnan al-Zurfi as PM-designate. The letter referenced the April 3 High Judicial Council (HJC) statement that cited a technicality to claim that the Supreme Federal Court did not have the legal authority to approve Salih’s designation of Zurfi.

**10** Apr 03-04: **Security Forces Kill and Injure Seven, Assassinate Activist as Protests Swell in Nasiriyah.** An unspecified number of demonstrators in Nasiriyah, Dhi Qar Province, rejoined public protests on April 3 to decry living conditions and strict COVID-19 curfews. An anonymous security source told Iraqi news outlet Shafaq that security forces, likely backed by Iran, killed or wounded at least seven protesters in demonstrations in Nasiriyah. Unidentified armed men assassinated a leading female organizer known as Umm Abbas and wounded two of her sons in their Nasiriyah home before sunrise on April 4.

**11** Apr 04: **U.S. Troops Officially Transfer Habbaniya Air Base.** The Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) officially left a camp at the Taqaddum Air Base (commonly known as Habbaniyah Air Base), located between Fallujah and Ramadi cities in Anbar Province. U.S. forces transferred \$3.5 million worth of structures and equipment to the Iraqi Security Forces. Five hundred CJTF-OIR personnel departed the base. This transfer is the fifth consolidation of forces by CJTF-OIR since announcing pre-planned consolidations on March 15.

**12** Apr 04: **Nine Iranian Proxy Militias Issue Joint “Islamic Resistance in Iraq” Statement Declaring They Will Work Together to Expel U.S. Forces.** Nine Iranian proxy militias issued a joint statement under the name “the Islamic Resistance in Iraq” announcing that the proxy groups will merge capabilities to confront the U.S. until all American troops are withdrawn from Iraq. The proxies also called on PM-designate Zurfi to withdraw his PM candidacy, referring to Zurfi as the “American intelligence candidate.” Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shahuda, Harakat al-Awfiyah, Harakat Jund al-Imam, Harakat al-Nujaba, Ka’taib Imam Ali, Sarayah ‘Ashura, Harakat al-Jihad wal-Binah, and Sarayah al-Khorasani signed the statement. Some of the Iranian proxy militias that signed the statement previously referenced themselves as part of the Iraqi Resistance Front or a similar phrasing of that name. The official use of the name Islamic Resistance in Iraq by the groups may indicate a new phase of unification and cooperation by the groups. Prominent Iranian proxy militia KH did not sign the statement.

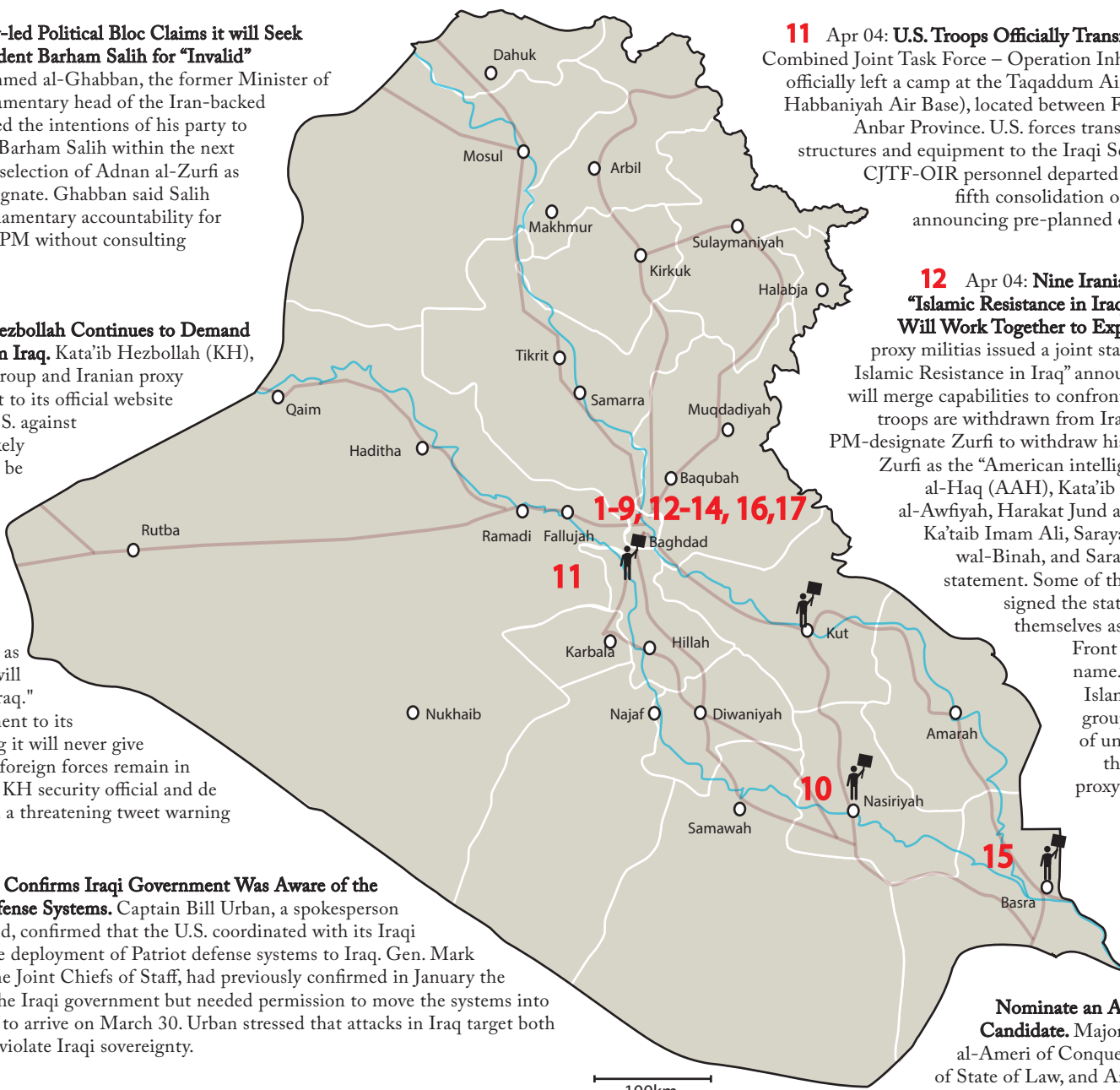
**13** Apr 05-06: **Powerful Shi’a Blocs Conquest Alliance, State of Law, and Wisdom Trend Reportedly Agree to Nominate an Alternative Prime Ministerial Candidate.** Major Shi’a political leaders Hadi al-Ameri of Conquest Alliance, Nouri al-Maliki of State of Law, and Ammar al-Hakim of Wisdom Trend reportedly reached an agreement to nominate an alternative prime ministerial candidate. Anonymous sources claimed that the three Shi’a political leaders selected Mustafa al-Kadhimi, the Director of the National Intelligence Service whom Iranian proxies previously vetoed, as their preferred candidate. The representatives held three meetings, two in Baghdad and one in a Toward Reform office of nationalist Shi’a cleric Moqtada al-Sadr in Najaf, according to an anonymous source in Conquest Alliance. Sadr reportedly agreed to support Kadhimi. A Wisdom Trend representative then delivered a letter to President Salih informing Salih of the consensus surrounding Kadhimi on April 6.

**14** Apr 05: **PM-designate Zurfi Announces Plan for U.S.-led Coalition Withdrawal from Iraq in First Televised Interview.** PM-designate Adnan al-Zurfi gave his first televised interview on al-Iraqiyah wherein he claimed to have discussed foreign troop withdrawals from Iraq with U.S. and CJTF-OIR officials. Zurfi claimed half of U.S.-led troops will withdraw from Iraq by the end of 2020 and the second half will leave on a yet to be determined schedule in 2021. Zurfi also claimed he will submit his cabinet to the Iraqi Parliament ahead of a special session to hold a vote of confidence in his government. The Iraqi outlet al-Mada also reported on April 5 that Zurfi finished selecting his ministers.

**15** Apr 06: **Likely Iranian Proxies Fire Rockets at U.S. Company in Basra.** Unidentified militants fired three Katyusha rockets at the Zubair oil field in the al-Burjasiya area of Basra Province, where the American oil company Halliburton and Italian oil company Eni operate. Two rockets landed in a district that houses the employees of foreign oil companies and one landed near the perimeter of Zubair oil field. Unidentified Iraqi Security Forces found the launch pad on the nearby Zubair-Shuaiba road with 11 unfired rockets, which they diffused and dismantled. The Iraqi Ministry of Oil confirmed that the rockets caused no casualties or material damage. Conquest Alliance, which is led by an Iranian proxy, condemned the attack, calling it a “dangerous escalation.”

**16** Apr 06: **Harakat al-Nujaba Releases New Propaganda with Usbat al-Thairen’s Drone Footage as Background.** Iranian proxy Shi’a militia group Harakat al-Nujaba released a new propaganda poster with the Arabic caption, “Our eyes are watching your positions from above.” The background of the photo is the drone footage of the U.S. Embassy released on April 2 by new Shi’a militia group Usbat al-Thairen. The shared threat and use of the images indicates close cooperation between the groups.

**17** Apr 07: **U.S. and Iraq to Negotiate Troop Presence and Strategic Framework Agreement in June.** U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced during a press briefing that the U.S. will participate in a “Strategic Dialogue” with the Government of Iraq in June 2020. Undersecretary for Political Affairs David Hale will lead the negotiations. Pompeo confirmed all strategic issues will be on the agenda, including the future of U.S. forces in the country. Pompeo also stated he is hopeful the Iraqi people will ultimately decide their next leader rather than KH, AAH, or “terrorists.”



- Major Cities
- Iranian Proxy Militias
- Iraqi Security Forces
- Demonstration
- ✈ Possible Israeli Airstrikes
- Religious Figures
- ISIS
- Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)
- Iraqi Council of Representatives
- Iraqi Prime Minister and Cabinet

Graphic by Brandon Wallace and Katherine Lawlor

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**Key Takeaway:** Iran’s Iraqi proxy groups continue to press forward with their campaign to pressure the U.S. to leave Iraq. The proxies organized a coalition to replace Adnan al-Zurfi as Prime Minister (PM)-designate and are coordinating an aggressive messaging campaign threatening U.S. forces in Iraq. Iraq’s political elite reached agreement on an alternative PM, Iraqi National Intelligence Service Director Mustafa al-Kadhimi, who again may face opposition from Iran-backed groups as he navigates a difficult government formation process within a 30-day constitutional deadline. Meanwhile, the U.S. is engaging in a high-level response to Iranian progress on multiple lines of effort inside of Iraq. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced a dialogue with Iraq on a Strategic Framework Agreement, scheduled to start in June, amid ongoing U.S. force consolidations.

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