

**1 Jul 1: Prime Minister Kadhimi and Iranian Proxy Militias Hold De-escalation Meeting following Standoff.** Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi held a meeting with multiple officials in the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), Iraq's umbrella organization of militia groups, and the Counterterrorism Service (CTS), an elite US-trained force subordinate to the prime minister. Mohanad Najim al-Uqabi, the director of the PMF's official news outlet War Media Team, confirmed that the meeting took place and argued the objective of the meeting was to resolve the animosity caused by a June 26 CTS raid on a Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) headquarters in southern Baghdad. KH is a US-designated terror group and Iranian proxy militia that is part of PMF leadership. Iraqi intelligence reported that the raid prevented a KH attack on an unspecified US facility in Baghdad, but ultimately created an open standoff in Baghdad where hundreds of militants forced the government to yield detention of the KH militants.

**2 Jul 1: Iraqi Finance Minister Pursues IMF Loan and Saudi Investment as Economic Output Fails to Recover over 2020.** Ali Allawi, Iraq's finance minister, told reporters that Iraq is engaged in negotiations to secure a maximum five-billion-dollar loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Allawi also claimed that Saudi Arabia is interested in investing in Iraq's gas fields, specifically Akkas gas field in Anbar Province, Mansouriya gas field in Diyala Province, and the Ratawi oil field in Basra Province. Allawi also told reporters that Iraq is facing a sharp decline in economic output in 2020 due to oil production cuts and COVID-19 with an expectation that the economy will shrink as much as 9 percent on the year. Saudi Arabia is simultaneously pressuring Iraq to adhere to OPEC oil production cut agreements negotiated early in 2020, while the US encourages Iraq to pursue energy supplies from its Gulf neighbors to reduce its reliance on Iran.

**3 Jul 2: New Political Bloc Supportive of Prime Minister Kadhimi is Growing but Struggling to Win Over Some Parliamentarians.** Jasim al-Bakhati, a member of parliament (MP) who recently joined Ammar al-Hakim's newly formed "Iraqis Alliance" bloc to support Prime Minister Kadhimi, issued a statement claiming more MPs are still joining the new bloc. Bakhati claimed that all the members of former PM Haider al-Abadi's Victory Alliance were close to joining the Iraqis Alliance and that Abadi and Hakim met on some unspecified date in the previous week to work on building more support for the new bloc. However, Huda Sajad, a current Victory Alliance MP, contradicted Bakhati and stated that Victory Alliance has no intention of joining any other bloc. The discrepancy suggests some members of Haider al-Abadi's bloc are divided on the decision to support the pro-Kadhimi Iraqis Alliance, which announced its existence on June 30.

**4 Jul 2: Iran Struggling to Pay its Iraqi Proxies Due to COVID-19 Imposed Financial Losses.** Three anonymous Iraqi militia commanders told Reuters that the COVID-19 outbreak in Iran is forcing the Iranian government to withhold financial support to its proxy militias inside Iraq. The commanders stated that Iran is also struggling to move resources into Iraq due to COVID-19 related border closures. Iran's mission to the United Nations claimed the reports were "rumors are designed to sow discord" between Iran and Iraq.

**5 Jul 2: US-led Coalition Announces Phase Change in Anti-ISIS Fight.** Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), the US-led anti-ISIS Coalition, announced that Task Force-Iraq, a one-star subordinate command, transitioned to a military advisor group (MAG), marking a "new phase in its advising mission to Iraqi Security Forces." The MAG will have a reduced and reorganized force structure and refocus on high level advising, planning, and mentoring, providing "expert specialized capabilities" to Iraqi security staff and leaders. CJTF-OIR stated the transition from Task Force-Iraq to an MAG is a product of the success of the Iraqi Security Forces against ISIS. The phase change deprioritizes tactical support to the ISF. Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi may benefit from this announcement because he can use the continued consolidation of the US military's counter-ISIS mission to placate domestic politicians who oppose a long-term US force presence in the country.

**6 Jul 3-6: Turkey Continues to Expand Physical Presence in Rural Northern Iraq to Support its Anti-PKK Operations.** The Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) are expanding their area of operations in an ongoing military campaign against the US-designated terrorist organization the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in northern Iraq. The TSK has established 13 new military positions inside rural Dohuk Province since June, increasing its total number of small temporary bases to 37, according to the Turkish communication directorate on July 6. The latest phases of Turkish ground operations have penetrated an area 15 km deep inside of Iraq and approximately 40 to 50 km wide. Turkey has also carried out air strikes deeper into Iraqi terrain in Sinjar, west of Mosul city, and Makhmour, near Kirkuk city. Delir Zebari, the commander of the first brigade of the Iraqi Border Guards, announced that Iraq erected two border posts along the Turkish-Iraqi border in Dohuk Province to deter further advancement by the TSK into Iraq on July 3.

**7 Jul 3-5: Hundreds Protest near the Saudi Embassy in Baghdad after Likely Iranian Proxies Claim a Saudi Cartoon Disrespected Grand Ayatollah Sistani.** Hundreds of demonstrators attempted to breach Baghdad's Green Zone to reach the Embassy of Saudi Arabia after the Saudi newspaper al-Sharq al-Awsat published a cartoon perceived as critical of Iraq's highest Shi'a religious authority Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. The paper quickly deleted the cartoon and published a clarification arguing that the cartoon depicted a generic cleric, not Sistani, and was intended to lampoon Iranian violations of Iraqi sovereignty. The cartoon was widely condemned by Iraqi political figures despite the published clarification. Key Iranian proxy leader Hadi al-Ameri called on the Iraqi Foreign Ministry to issue a condemnation of the cartoon and accused Saudi Arabia of "suspicious agendas."

**8 Jul 4: Prime Minister Kadhimi Dismisses Key Iranian Proxy from Security Posts but Selects Compromise Replacements.** Prime Minister Kadhimi appointed the former commander of the CTS, Abdul Ghani al-Asadi, as head of the Iraqi National Security Service and appointed prominent Badr Organization member and former Interior Minister Qasim al-Araji as national security advisor. Kadhimi dismissed Iranian proxy Faleh al-Fayyadh, who served simultaneously as National Security Service head, national security advisor, and chairman of the Popular Mobilization Commission (PMC - the body that oversees the PMF. Fayyadh remains chairman of the PMC. Several Sunni parliamentarians criticized the appointments, likely because Sunni politician and former Defense Minister Khalid al-Obaidi had been rumored to be the favorite candidate for National Security Advisor.

**9 Jul 4-5: US Tests C-RAM Air Defense System to Defend Embassy.** An anonymous senior Iraqi security source confirmed to AFP that the US Embassy in Baghdad tested a new counter-rocket, artillery, and mortar defense system (C-RAM) on July 4. The test caused "muted blast" sounds heard across Baghdad. US forces set up the C-RAM system at the Embassy "earlier this year," according to AFP, after a series of anti-US rocket and mortar attacks. Hassan al-Kaabi, Iraq's deputy parliamentary speaker and a senior member of nationalist Shi'a cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's Toward Reform bloc, described the test as "provocative" and a "violation of international law." He stated that testing a weapons system near a residential area of Baghdad is "unacceptable."

**10 Jul 5: Likely Iranian Proxies Fire One Rocket at the US Embassy in Baghdad, Injuring a Child.** Iraq's Security Media Cell (SMC), an official Iraqi military news body, reported that a Katyusha rocket landed in a residential home, resulting in mild head injuries to a child. Unidentified militants fired the rocket from Ali al-Saleh neighborhood, 4 km north of the Green Zone, and landed in a home near Beladi TV station, approximately 1 km south of the US Embassy. General Kenneth McKenzie, commander of US Central Command (CENTCOM), later confirmed that the US Embassy's C-RAM system successfully brought down the Katyusha rocket, causing it to break into shrapnel that likely struck the injured child's home. The SMC claimed an unspecified security force unit thwarted an additional rocket attack at the same time near Taji Airbase, 30 km north of Baghdad.

**11 Jul 5: Rocket Attack Targets Baghdad International Airport.** Unidentified militants fired one Katyusha rocket toward Baghdad International Airport (BIAP). However, Ahmed Khalaf, a local police captain, told reporters that no rocket exploded and there were no injuries or damages in the area. The Iraqi SMC incorrectly denied the report of an attack; US officials confirmed to Fox News that militants fired a rocket toward BIAP. BIAP hosts US, Iraqi and Coalition military personnel.

**12 Jul 6: Kata'ib Hezbollah Militiamen Likely Responsible for Assassination of International Security Analyst and Ally of Prime Minister Kadhimi.** Masked gunmen on motorcycles assassinated Iraqi security analyst Husham al-Hashimi outside his home in the upscale Ziyouna neighborhood of eastern Baghdad. Hashimi served in a variety of domestic and international roles, including as an advisor to the Iraqi government, particularly President Barham Salih and Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, as well as the Iraqi Advisory Council and as a fellow at the US-based Center for Global Policy. Hashimi told confidants weeks before his death that he feared Iran's proxy militias were targeting him because of his condemnation of their corruption and terrorism. An anonymous Iraqi journalist told al-Hurra that Abu Ali al-Askari, a KH official and its de facto spokesperson, personally threatened Hashimi over the phone in recent months, saying, "I will kill you in your house." The assassination is likely a direct message to Prime Minister Kadhimi from KH in retaliation for his campaign targeting militias.

**13 Jul 7: Assassination of Prominent Analyst Draws Large Scale Condemnations across Iraq's Political Landscape.** Domestic Iraqi and international figures condemned the assassination of Husham al-Hashimi and attempted to distance themselves from the masked gunmen who conducted the attack. Nearly all Iraqi politicians issued statements censuring the attack, including the leader of US-designated terrorist organization and Iranian proxy militia Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), US-designated terrorist Qais al-Khazali, as well as nationalist Shi'a cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, both of whom coordinated with Kata'ib Hezbollah in recent months against protesters and US forces in the country. The PMF, of which KH controls much of the leadership, issued a statement calling the attack terrorism. Protesters mourned Hashimi in the streets in the southern provincial capitals of Baghdad, Nasiriyah, and Karbala.

**14 Jul 7: CENTCOM Commander Anticipates Enduring US Presence in Iraq.** CENTCOM commander Gen. McKenzie met with Prime Minister Kadhimi in Baghdad for the first time. Gen. McKenzie told reporters after the meeting that he commended Kadhimi's ordering of the June 25 arrest raid against KH and expressed his support for Kadhimi. McKenzie also expressed confidence to reporters that the Iraqi government will ask US forces to remain in the country for the foreseeable future. McKenzie did not specifically reference the ongoing US-Iraq Strategic Dialogue, which is negotiating the future of the US force presence in Iraq.



- Iraqi Security Forces
- ISIS
- Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)
- Major Cities
- Anti-ISIS Coalition
- Iran
- Iraqi Council of Representatives
- Demonstration
- Iranian Proxy Militias
- Religious Figures
- Iraqi Prime Minister and Cabinet

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**Key Takeaway:** Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH), a key Iranian proxy militia and US-designated terrorist group, is retaliating against Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi for launching a coordinated campaign to retake segments of the Iraqi state from entrenched political and militia corruption. KH, more than any other militia, is sending a series of violent messages to Kadhimi to force him to abandon his campaign. Masked gunmen, likely KH members, assassinated a prominent Iraqi analyst and ally to both the Kadhimi government and the US-led Coalition. The brazen assassination is the latest in a series of steps by KH against Kadhimi, including storming the Green Zone to compel the release of detained KH militants on June 26 and likely conducting the latest spate of rocket attacks on US facilities in Baghdad. The United States deployed a counter-rocket artillery and mortar (C-RAM) system to defend the US Embassy in Baghdad against rocket attacks, but KH interpreted the deployment of the system as a provocation and extension of Kadhimi's campaign.

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