

1 Mar 24-27: **Iraqi Joint Operations Command Deploys Troops to Enforce COVID-19 Curfew.** Brigadier General Aqeel al-Saadi, the commander of the 11th Iraqi Army Infantry Division, confirmed that Baghdad Operations Command dispatched at least 40 military vehicles to Baghdad's Sadr City neighborhood to set up roadblocks and enforce the COVID-19 curfew on March 25. Journalists circulated videos on Twitter showing the streets of Sadr City packed with vehicles in the evening of March 24. The Joint Operations Command (JOC) later announced on March 27 that it will send further unspecified military reinforcements to Sadr City, east Baghdad, and "other governates" to intensify preventative COVID-19 curfews on the orders of caretaker Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mehdi.

2 Mar 25-31: **European Members of Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) Begin Withdrawing Troops from Iraq Due to COVID-19.** Several European members of the U.S.-led anti-ISIS Coalition announced military withdrawals from Iraq due to COVID-19. France, the Czech Republic, and Portugal announced complete withdrawals, while the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, and Germany announced partial troop withdrawals. The British Ministry of Defence committed to retaining "key military personnel" in Iraq. The Netherlands will withdraw 35 of its 40 soldiers. Spain will withdraw a majority of its 550 soldiers. Italy will withdraw 200 of its 800 soldiers. CJTF-OIR has temporarily suspended training Iraqi forces since March 19 to limit the spread of COVID-19.

3 Mar 25: **Halbousi's Sunni Alliance of Iraqi Forces Will Commit to Any Prime Minister Candidate with Consensus Shi'a Support.** The Alliance of Iraqi Forces, the largest Sunni bloc led by Iraqi Parliamentary Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi, called on Shi'a blocs in Parliament to reach an agreement on a prime minister as soon as possible for the sake of the public health and economic crises in the country. Zaitoun al-Dulaimi, a party member and parliamentarian, said that the Alliance of Iraqi Forces will support any person that "Shi'a agree upon."

4 Mar 25: **U.S. Department of State Orders Departure of U.S. Government Employees Due to COVID-19 Travel Restrictions.** The U.S. State Department ordered all designated U.S. government employees to evacuate from the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center, and the U.S. Consulate General in Arbil due to poor security conditions and restricted travel options as a result of COVID-19. The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and the U.S. Consulate in Arbil personnel had already reduced essential staff since an ordered departure in May 2019.

5 Mar 25: **Kata'ib Hezbollah Accuses U.S. of Planning Attacks Against Proxy Militias, ISF, PMF.** Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH), a U.S.-designated terror group and key Iranian proxy militia, posted a statement to its official website claiming that it is monitoring "suspicious" U.S. troop movements. KH asserted that the U.S. is planning attacks on the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), and the "Islamic Resistance" – the network of Iran-backed Iraqi militia groups. KH also accused Iraq's military and security apparatus of assisting the U.S. in this so-called "scheme." KH called on its followers to prepare to confront the U.S. with "full force."

6 Mar 26: **Two Rockets Fall in Green Zone, Baghdad.** Unidentified militants fired two Katyusha rockets from the al-Nahda neighborhood in eastern Baghdad, striking sites belonging to the Baghdad Operations Command and Joint Operations Command in Baghdad's Green Zone. An anonymous Iraqi security official told AFP that the target appeared to be the U.S. Embassy, 1.5 km to the east. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.

7 Mar 26: **U.S. Forces Officially Withdraw from Qayyarah West Air Base near Mosul.** Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) officially transferred full command of the Qayyarah West Air Base south of Mosul to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Brigadier General Vincent Barker reiterated that the U.S. mission remains the same despite Coalition consolidations. The move leaves approximately \$1.7 million of equipment to Iraqi security forces and relocates 800 U.S. personnel. Qayyarah West marks the second of a series of three planned U.S. base withdrawals announced on March 15.

8 Mar 26: **U.S. Treasury Designates Several Iran- and Iraq-based Companies and Individuals as Supporters of Terrorist Organizations.** The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated 20 Iran- and Iraq-based companies and individuals as financiers of terrorist organizations. These companies and individuals specifically supported the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps - Quds Force (IRGC-QF) or transferred aid to Iranian-backed U.S.-designated terrorist groups such as KH or Asa'ib Ahl al Haq (AAH).

9 March 26: **U.S. Extends Iranian Electricity Sanctions Waiver for Iraq.** The U.S. State Department again extended a waiver allowing Iraq to import Iranian electricity and natural gas despite U.S. sanctions against Iran. The extension is for 30 days, the shortest extension ever provided to Iraq. Extensions usually range from 45 -120 days. This is the seventh waiver the U.S. has given Iraq since the U.S. intensified sanctions on Iran energy exports in November 2018.

10 Mar 26: **Kata'ib Hezbollah Completes Training Operation "Hunting Crows" in Jurf al-Sukhar to Prepare for U.S. Attacks.** Jafaar al-Husseini, a KH spokesman, announced that "thousands" participated in a large, live-fire training exercise "to prepare for U.S. air landing assaults" on KH positions. He claimed that the operation included urban and forested combat areas in Jurf al-Sukhar, 60 km southwest of Baghdad. Husseini said that the tactical exercise is a warning against the consequences of taking aggressive action.

11 Mar 27-30: **U.S. Considering More Aggressive Strike Options against Iranian Proxy Kata'ib Hezbollah.** A New York Times exclusive published March 27 revealed that the U.S. Department of Defense ordered CENTCOM military planners to develop a strategy to dismantle KH. The exclusive reported that Lieutenant General Robert P. White responded to the directive with a classified memo wherein he stated that a new military campaign would require thousands more U.S. forces in Iraq and may be counterproductive to the current anti-ISIS mission of CJTF-OIR. Iraqi Caretaker Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mehdi released a statement on March 30 condemning "acts of war" within Iraq in response to the article.

12 Mar 29-30: **U.S. Forces Officially Leave K1 Airbase in Kirkuk.** CJTF-OIR officially withdrew all 300 U.S. personnel and transferred full command of Kirkuk (K1) Airbase to the ISF. KH killed an American contractor and wounded multiple American soldiers in a rocket attack on K1 on December 27. U.S. forces also transferred \$1.1 million of equipment to the Iraqis, including generators and above-ground water tanks. The consolidation away from K1 is the third and final pre-planned U.S. consolidation away from smaller Iraqi military bases announced on March 15. CJTF-OIR also vacated a U.S. camp that served as an advisory cell in the Iraqi Army's Ninewa Operations Command (NOC) in Mosul, Ninewa Province, on March 30.

13 Mar 30: **U.S. Deploys Patriot Missile Batteries to Two Bases.** Anonymous U.S. and Iraqi officials told AFP that the U.S. deployed Patriot missile batteries in March to bases targeted by Iranian missile strikes in January. The batteries arrived at Ain al-Assad Air Base in western Anbar Province and Harir Air Base in Arbil Province in northern Iraq. The U.S. will deploy two more batteries to unspecified locations. The two additional batteries are still in Kuwait. It is unclear whether the U.S. government received approval from the Iraqi Government for these missiles.

14 Mar 30: **Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Announce Operations to Clear ISIS following Prison Breakout Attempt in Syria.** The PMF launched clearing operations targeting ISIS militants in the Ninewa and Salah ad-Din Provinces desert in northern Iraq. The PMF 44th Brigade (Liwa Ansar al-Marjayyah) and 51st Brigade (Liwa Salah Ad-Din) participated in the operation. Unspecified units of the Iraqi Army Air Force, a local tactical regiment, a SWAT regiment, and two Iraqi Army regiments supported the operation, according to the PMF. The PMF titled the operation "Spring of Great Victories."

15 Mar 30-31: **IRGC-QF Commander Ghaani Intervenes in Iraqi Government Formation.** Ismail Ghaani, the commander of the IRGC-QF, arrived at Baghdad International Airport on March 30. Ghaani met with the leaders of the most important Shi'a blocs, including Hadi al-Ameri, the leader of the Conquest Alliance bloc; Nouri al-Maliki, the former PM and head of the State of Law bloc; Amar al-Hakim, the head of the National Wisdom Trend bloc; as well as President Barham Salih on March 31. Iranian media reported that Ghaani may have also met with nationalist Shi'a cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, the leader of the Toward Reform bloc. This trip represents Ghaani's first visit to Iraq since the U.S. killed his predecessor, Qassem Soleimani, in a strike on January 3. Ghaani likely lobbied those he met to reject PM-designate Zurfi.



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

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Key Takeaway: Iran advanced multiple lines of effort in Iraq to compel the U.S. withdrawal from the country. Iran successfully organized political opposition from the most powerful Iraqi Shi'a blocs to deny parliamentary backers to Prime Minister-designate Adnan al-Zurfi. Zurfi, who enjoyed tacit U.S. and international support, is now unlikely to win a vote of confidence. The U.S. completed pre-planned consolidations from three major Iraqi bases and several smaller camps, while several European nations either completely or partially withdrew their forces from Iraq over COVID-19 concerns. Meanwhile, the U.S. deployed Patriot missile defense systems to two large bases where U.S. troops are present in Iraq. The Patriot deployment is necessary force protection for Coalition forces but signals that the Iraqi government will not take meaningful action to hold proxy militias accountable for killing U.S. and Coalition personnel.

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