



Israel: Iran's Military Entrenchment in Iraq Poses Threat

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying passages discuss Israeli perspectives on the growing Iranian presence in Iraq, which they assess is increasingly becoming a base of operations for Iran-backed efforts against Israel. They also provide Israeli assessments about Iran's regional goals.

The first passage from Israeli daily *Haaretz* points out that Iran started bolstering its presence in Iraq after Israel stepped up attacks on Iranian targets in Syria. According to the passage, Israel had been thwarting Iran's attempts to bring "sophisticated weaponry and air and naval forces" into Syria. Thus, Iran reverted to its old method of "relying on local militias," which the passage notes is harder for Israel to counter.

The passage discusses Israel's assessment that Iran is trying to "create regional hegemony for itself via alliances spreading from Iran through Iraq and Syria to Lebanon." Nevertheless, the assessment continues that "Iran has been forced to recalculate the way it tries to realize its regional vision. This recalculation led Iran to realize that the domestic and international situation in Iraq created better opportunities for it to prepare its regional plans." According to Israeli defense officials, Iran has now shifted the bulk of its deployment of missile systems to Iraq, which makes it harder for Israel to attack, compared to Syria.



Raising flag of Iraq and Popular Mobilization Forces.

Source: Tasnim News Agency via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raising_flag_of_Iraq_and_Popular_Mobilization_Forces_after_defeating_DAEH.jpg, CC BY 4.0

The second passage also points out that Israeli officials have identified Iraq as a likely growing base of operations for Iran-backed efforts against the country. However, it notes that Israeli officials have so far neither confirmed nor denied responsibility for recent strikes against Iranian-backed forces in Iraq, despite reports of several such strikes by Israel. The final passage lists each of these five attacks, starting with one on 19 July at Amerli base, north of Baghdad, that struck a shipment of guided missiles bound for Syria. The passage notes that, if indeed carried out by Israel, "it would be the first such attack in Iraq since Israel's 1981 bombing of a nuclear reactor that was being built by then-president Saddam Hussein's government." **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

“Iran has been forced to recalculate the way it tries to realize its regional vision. This recalculation led Iran to realize that the domestic and international situation in Iraq created better opportunities for it to prepare its regional plans.”

Source: Yaniv Kubovich, “With Missiles More Accurate Than Hezbollah’s, Iran Entrenchment in Iraq Threatens Israel,” *Haaretz*, 1 August 2019. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-iran-missiles-hezbollah-in-iraq-threaten-israel-1.7606916>

Iran's military entrenchment in Iraq poses a threat to Israel, defense officials say.

Iran began bolstering its presence in Iraq after Israel stepped up attacks on Iranian targets in Syria and Syrian President Bashar Assad regained control over most of his country. Israel's efforts to thwart Iran's attempts to bring sophisticated weaponry and air and naval forces into Syria led Tehran to revert to its old method of relying on local militias, which is harder for Israel to counter.

Israel's intelligence assessment for 2019 states that despite Iran's difficulties in entrenching itself militarily in Syria, it hasn't given up on its ambition “to create regional hegemony for itself via alliances spreading from Iran through Iraq and Syria to Lebanon.” Nevertheless, the assessment continued: “Iran has been forced to recalculate the way it tries to realize its regional vision. This recalculation led Iran to realize that the domestic and international situation in Iraq created better opportunities for it to prepare its regional plans.”

Israeli defense officials say Iran has shifted the bulk of its deployment of missile systems outside the country to Iraq, which is harder for Israel to attack than Syria was. The latest airstrikes on Iraq, which the London-based paper Asharq Al-Awsat attributed to Israel on Tuesday, were aimed at such missile systems.

Two weeks ago, the media reported a drone strike in Iraq that killed members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Hezbollah. Foreign media reports said the target that time was a base where missiles destined for Iranian-backed militias in Iraq were being stored.



Continued: Israel: Iran's Military Entrenchment in Iraq Poses Threat

Source: Raphael Ahren, "Netanyahu hints Israel behind strikes on Iraq, says Iran not immune anywhere," *Times of Israel*, 20 August 2019. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-hints-israel-behind-strikes-on-iraq-says-iran-not-immune-anywhere/>

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday hinted that Israel was behind recent airstrikes on Iranian targets in Iraq, stressing that the Jewish state will continue to act militarily whenever and wherever there is a need to do so.

"Iran has no immunity, anywhere," he told reporters during a briefing in his Kyiv hotel, responding to a question about various recent attacks on military installations in Iraq, which are attributed to Israel.

....According to foreign reports, Israel has been increasingly active in carrying out airstrikes against Iran-backed militias in Iraq, shifting its focus after years of reported raids aimed at keeping Tehran from gaining a foothold in Syria.

Israeli officials have identified Iraq as a likely growing base of operations for Iran-backed efforts against the Jewish state. But Israeli officials have so far neither confirmed nor denied responsibility for the strikes.

Source: Jacob Magid, "Alleged Israeli strikes in Iraq unlikely to threaten US presence, experts say," *Times of Israel*, 31 August 2019. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/alleged-israeli-strikes-in-iraq-unlikely-to-threaten-us-presence-experts-say/>

Against this backdrop, the first of at least five attacks against the Shiite militias took place, striking a PMF weapons storage facility on July 19 at the Amerli base north of Baghdad and killing at least two commanders, according to various reports.

If indeed carried out by Jerusalem — which appeared to indicate on Friday that it is in fact acting in Iraq — it would be the first such attack in Iraq since Israel's 1981 bombing of a nuclear reactor that was being built by then-president Saddam Hussein's government.

Subsequent strikes targeting PMF officials and weapons depots took place at Camp Ashraf northeast of Baghdad on July 28; the Saqr military base in Baghdad on August 12; the Balad air base in the Salah ad Din Governate north of Baghdad on August 20; and the western Iraqi city of Qaim on August 25.

Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity

By Matthew Stein

Since Central Asian states gained independence in 1991, new regional military and security alliances have been created (some of which are Russian-led), new military partnerships with non-NATO countries have been established, a number of joint military exercises have been conducted, over a dozen high-profile incidents of violence and civil unrest have taken place, and military installations have been used by foreign militaries. While this activity gained attention, it has not been collectively compiled. A compilation of this activity can serve as a guide for current and future military and security involvement in Central Asia.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/194880>

