

# Iraq: US Airstrikes Kill 22 Hashd al-Shaabi Fighters

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*Featured image: Hashd al-Shaabi logo*

*Iraq's Hashd al-Shaabi military force said Monday that 22 of its members had been killed in airstrikes carried out by U.S.-led coalition warplanes near Iraq's border with Syria.*

Incorporated into the Iraqi Armed Forces in late 2016, the Hashd al-Shaabi, who are also known as Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and as the People's Mobilization Committee and the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU).

In a statement, the group said that U.S. warplanes had struck one of its encampments near the Syrian border, leaving 22 of its fighters dead.

"At 22:00 on Sunday 17th of June 2018, an US plane struck a permanent base belonging to the 45th and 46th brigades responsible for protecting the borders between Syria and Iraq with two missiles that led to the martyrdom of 22 PMU fighters and injuring 12 others," said the statement.

The PMF have been present at the border since the start of liberation operations in the area, and with the knowledge of Iraqi Joint Operations.

The PMF explained the reason for their presence near the Syrian/Iraqi border:

"Due to the geographical and desert type nature of the area, while at the same time the necessity for military presence, the Iraqi forces had to establish their bases north of the Syrian town of Albu Kamal, which is only 700 meters away from the border and has an infrastructure that is close to the defence line, which is exploited by terrorists who continuously seek infiltration and attempt entry into Iraqi territory. This presence and base is with the knowledge of Syrian government and Iraqi joint operations.

"The terror groups present in these areas tried to infiltrate into Iraqi territories and the PMF foiled this on many occasions," and said that the US strikes "came to enable the enemy control over the borders after security forces, including army, border police and PMF sacrificed to liberate, clear and protect the border."

The statement went on to demand a "formal explanation" from the U.S. regarding the deadly incident.

First established in 2014 with the express purpose of fighting the Daesh terrorist group, the Hashd al-Shaabi is believed to include more than 150,000 Shia, Sunni, Christian and Yazidi

fighters.

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