

Who Is Behind Blowing Up Ammunition Warehouses in Iraq? Iran Is the Target

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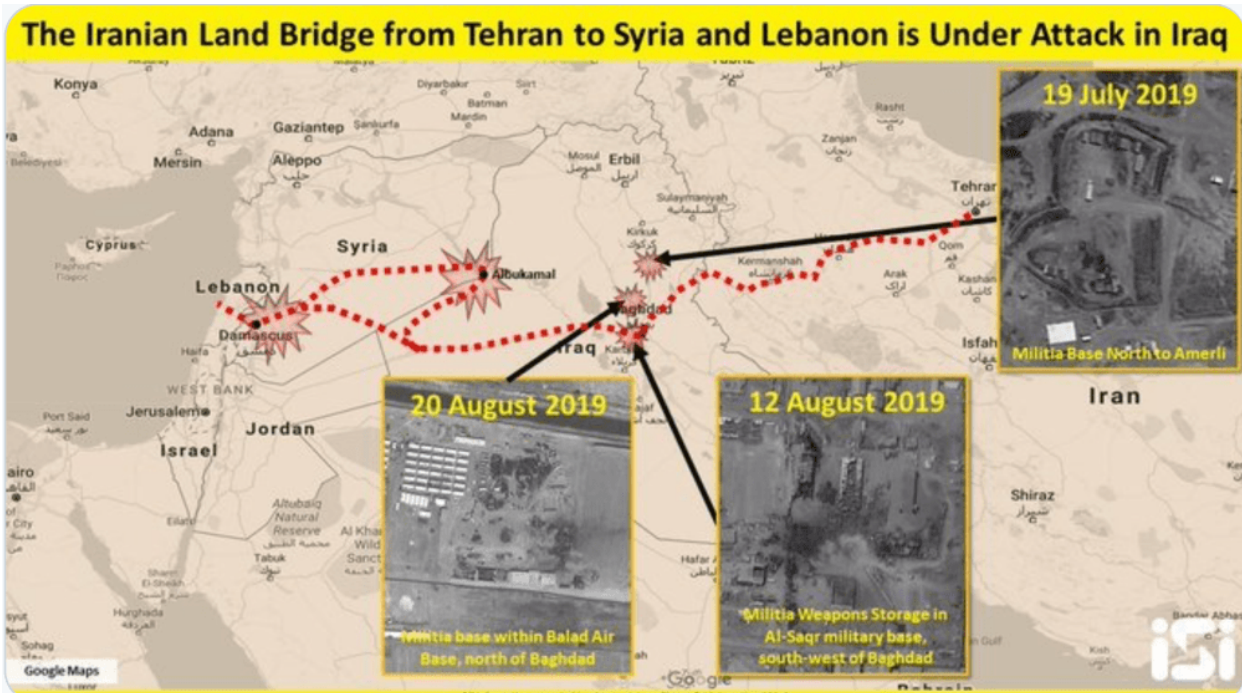
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An explosion occurred Tuesday at an [ammunition](#) storage warehouse used by Iraqi security forces operating under the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) close to the US air and military base in Balad, Salahuddin province, 64 km north of Baghdad. Over a week before, a [warehouse](#) at Camp-Sakr used by the Federal Police and PMF in Baghdad city blew up, causing casualties.

The vice commander of the PMF Abu Mahdi al-Muhandes [accused](#) Israel of being behind the explosions, claiming “four Israeli drones were stationed at the US military base in Iraq, responsible for both explosions”. Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hinted at the responsibility of Israel for the attacks saying “Iran has no immunity anywhere... In Iran itself, in Lebanon, in Syria, in [Iraq](#), in Yemen.” Why is Iran the target and what could be the consequences?

There is no doubt that the war between the “Axis of the Resistance” (i.e. Iraqi PMF, Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen and Palestinians in Gaza) and the “US-Israel Axis” and their Middle Eastern allies (Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain) is at a new peak- since 2006 and the “[large and serious failure](#)” of Israel’s third war on Lebanon. Moreover, in 2003, when the US declared itself an occupation force in Iraq, Secretary of State Colin Powell [visited](#) Syria and delivered President Bashar al-Assad a warning to stop supporting Hezbollah and the Palestinian Hamas, paving the road for a “New Middle East”. Assad had the choice to join the “Axis of Resistance” or join the “US new World Order”. When Assad’s [decision](#) was made, the war started in Syria in earnest in 2011, to cut off the link with the “Axis of Resistance” and stop the flow of weapons to Lebanon (one of many reasons for the war in Syria). But again, the war failed to achieve its objectives and Damascus cemented its partnership with the “Axis of Resistance”.



Iraq was next on the list of wars: the US [watched](#) ISIS, the “Islamic State” terror group, transferring its jihadists from Iraq into Syria and observed – without interfering for two months – how ISIS was occupying a third of Iraq in 2014. It was judged suitable for the US-Israel Axis and their Middle Eastern allies to watch idly the partition of Iraq, obviously in the hope it might disrupt the “Axis of Resistance”. A sectarian war would have lasted decades in the Middle East, keeping all the countries concerned “very busy”.

In Palestine, resistance groups imposed a new rule of engagement on Israel following their acquisition of [new](#) missiles capable of reaching Tel Aviv and hunting down Israeli vehicles with [laser-guided](#) technology. Iran [supplied](#) the Palestinians with military technology and military expertise. Gaza has become very difficult for Israel to “chew and squash”.

In the Yemen, four years of war against the poorest country in the Middle East managed to increase the poverty of the Yemenites, but failed to break their will. Indeed, the Iranian supply of weapons imposed a new rule of engagement in turn on Saudi Arabia, allowing the Yemenites to [down](#) US drones, hit far-flung [airports](#) and target [energy](#) resources.



Following these failures on all fronts (Iraqi, Syrian, Palestinian, Yemenite and Lebanese) the US-Israeli Axis seems to be changing its objectives. Instead of hitting Iran's allies, the target-objective is focused on Iran itself. The US administration, [influenced](#) by Prime Minister Netanyahu, revoked the "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action" (JCPOA), known as the "nuclear deal", and imposed what it calls "[maximum pressure](#)" on Iran.

President [Hassan Rouhani](#) said

"one of the EU leaders I met in New York last year told me that Trump advised him to stop dealing with Iran because there will be no more Islamic Republic in three months".

But Iran proves to be holding its ground firmly, ready for war if imposed, or if prevented from exporting its oil. It has downed a US drone and was [close](#) to an all-out war situation, hitting tankers and confiscating a British-flagged tanker when one of its supertankers was captured. However, despite these measured responses by Iran to provocation, particularly its wish to avoid downing a US spy plane with 38 crew onboard, tensions between the US and Iran are far from decreasing.

What we are observing in Iraq today is a change in the US-Israeli Axis's policy, [hitting](#) the "Axis of the Resistance," its capabilities and friends wherever possible. A decision-maker within this "Axis" said:

"(US Secretary of State Mike) Pompeo and his ministry's effort seems to be to chase and surround the Axis of the Resistance, and in particular the Lebanese Hezbollah. In Africa, Latin America, Europe, anywhere in the world, the US is focused on hitting Hezbollah's sympathisers and the societies that support it and to dry up its resources. This is because Israel failed to defeat it face-to-face on the battlefield- and because Hezbollah is one of the most dangerous and effective allies of Iran."

It is indeed true that Israel hit hundreds of targets in Syria in the first years of the war without claiming responsibility. Only in the last two years did Israel announce its responsibility overtly. Most of Israel's hits - according to well-informed sources - were selective targets based on intelligence information. Israel hit strategic weapons in Syria or on their way to Lebanon but always before they reached the Lebanese-Syrian borders, in Syrian territory.

"There is a consensus between the US and Israel to hit Iran and its allies. Nevertheless, the confrontational style differs between the two. In Iraq, objectives were hit and personalities assassinated but not revealed to public. What is happening today in Iraq (warehouses blown-up) is similar to the Israeli style of hitting targets in Syria", said the source.

In Baghdad, sources within the decision-making authority said "Israel targeted the PMF in [June 2018](#) and killed a few dozen PMF. Last month, the PMF revealed the CIA connections of Iraqi Brigadier General Mahmoud al-Fallahi, commander of Anbar, who was caught [delivering](#) to a CIA agent in Iraq all coordinates of the location of PMF and their ammunition warehouses. The audio release stated that Israel was planning to hit PMF positions. Therefore, Israeli involvement is not excluded because the destruction of the

capability of Iran's allies is the objective".



"If PMF warehouses holding strategic missiles that can hit Israel and destroy any US bases in Iraq with precision have been destroyed, it means that the principal US-Israeli objective has been reached. The PMF is the continuation of Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Palestinian groups in Gaza and Yemen. They are ready to stand by Iran and take part in any war against the Islamic Republic. Both the US and Israel know that very well", said the source.

In Iraq, it is not that difficult to have access to sensitive information. The news of the storage of precision missiles in PMF warehouses is in every mouth. During my presence in Iraq for over a decade (and I continue to travel to Iraq regularly), I realised that many Iraqis cannot keep secrets or sensitive information. For example, in 2004 I was informed the same day when the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Brigade Haj Qassem Soleimani arrived in Baghdad. He used to travel regularly to Lebanon for more than 20 years and no one within Hezbollah middle level of command knew about his presence. Yet every time Soleimani visited Iraq, the entire country knew about it the same day, including whom he visited.

Revealing the location of precision missiles and PMF warehouses is a normal exchange of information among Iraqis. It is therefore inevitable that the US and Israel were alerted and reacted by destroying these missiles, knowing that Iran would like to keep Iraq outside its battlefield with the US for many reasons. The US has agreed to allow Iraq to do commerce and buy electricity from Iran, giving waivers for another three months. This is resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars in Iranian pockets, in cash!

The Israelis, who are excellent at reading opportunities and probabilities in warfare and military strategy, understand when to hit their enemies- and also when to refrain when a harsh response might be triggered. They have attacked Syria hundreds of times, while keeping away from Lebanon for 13 years. Israel knows very well that Assad, for now, is not willing - despite the encouragement of its allies - to hit back and trigger a new front with Israel in retaliation for Netanyahu's continuous aggression against the Syrian state. In the

meantime, Israel is most likely aware that Hezbollah is just looking for an opportunity to hit Tel Aviv hard if attacked, and if any of its men are killed by Israeli raids or air attacks.

Iraq, in Israel's view, is not ready to attack Tel Aviv because it has not yet constructed its full strength. Therefore, it is a soft target for Israel and a potential objective for destroying Iranian missiles stocked in PMF warehouses, for example. But to [confirm](#) or not the use of "four Israeli drones working as part of the US fleet in Iraq to target PMF" would still be a very early, premature conclusion.

Brigadier Hassan Salame, the commander of the IRGC, stated correctly in Mash'had that "Iran is fighting invisible wars on many fronts". Indeed, Iraq is one of the multiple fronts on which Iran is engaging the US-Israel Axis. Actually, the Iran-US "war" has never ever really stopped since 1979, the declaration of the "Islamic Revolution".



Despite the Iranian desire to keep Iraq away from its military theatre with the US, Washington itself would be taking a great risk by allowing Israel to hit the Iraqi security forces if these warehouses were hit by Israeli jets. Indeed, no possible Israeli attack on the Iraqi forces can take place without US approval and knowledge. The US has many military airports and bases in the country, and enjoys the use of several airports in the occupied north-east of Syria (al-Hasaka and Deir-ezzour provinces).

The explosion and destruction of PMF warehouses are in fact only tactical attacks: they do not actually [affect](#) Iran and its allies. As in Syria, hundreds of targets were destroyed, but Iran was capable of [replacing](#) the destroyed missiles because its factories continue producing them! Israel acknowledges that Hezbollah, despite hundreds of attacks on Syria, managed to accumulate more than 150,000 missiles and rockets. The Palestinian groups still receive the latest warfare technology and so does the Yemen (the Houthis), despite the apparent blockade.

In Iraq, the US risks coming out as the biggest [loser](#). Not only Israeli strikes undermine the [relations](#) with Iraq but also because Iran has managed to build a second Hezbollah in Mesopotamia. Hashd al-Shaabi needed a robust ideology to stand by and defeat ISIS. This

ideology is durable: it will not dissolve, and it will persevere in opposition to US Middle East hegemony.

It is true that Iraq has US weapons and needs US intelligence support to stand on its own feet. But it should be kept in mind that Iraq 2019 is no longer Iraq 2003 (the US occupation), nor Iraq 2014 (occupation by ISIS). New allies and partners are ready to take over, like Russia (already offering intelligence through the common military operation room in Baghdad), China and Iran: they are indeed no longer at Iraq's gates, but inside its walls.

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