

Kataib Hezbollah Reveals Plans for Expanded Regional Attacks

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Jan 11, 2024

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Brief Analysis

Part of a series: [Militia Spotlight \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight)

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The militia's Abu Hussein wing continues to throw shade at other "resistance" groups and is now threatening U.S. bases in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and even Saudi Arabia.

On January 9, al-Mayadeen TV interviewed the military spokesman of [Kataib Hezbollah \(/node/16641\)](/node/16641) (KH), Jafar al-Husseini, [who was sanctioned](#)



Figure 1: Jafar al-Husseini on al-Mayadeen TV, January 9, 2024.

(<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/node/18488>) by the U.S. government on November 17 for “coordinating with KH fighters planning attacks against U.S. military commanders in Iraq.” The interview is important because it shows KH trying to outshine other *muqawama* (resistance) actors by making very aggressive threats against U.S. targets and the Gulf states. Here is what he said on various subjects, translated verbatim:

Boasting About Weapons Capabilities

“We have grown in capabilities. We have used those capabilities in Syria and Iraq to target U.S. bases with drones and short-range smart missiles. However, we used longer-range drones to target Eilat in Israel, the Dead Sea, and even the Mediterranean Sea. There are different types of weapons that are not right to speak about in the media. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq used for the first time short-range ballistic missiles that targeted al-Asad Air Base and [other sites]. Al-Asad Air Base is one of the bases the Islamic Resistance targeted with short-range ballistic missiles [i.e., al-Aqsa-1 missiles; for a comprehensive list of militia attacks and associated weapons systems, see Militia Spotlight's [strike tracker \(/node/18428\)](#)]. These operations are escalating, and these tactics are escalating as well. Using this kind of weapon and rockets...was specified for a certain phase, certain bases, and also for certain targets. However, the resistance entered a new phase, and now we are using advanced cruise missiles” [potentially referring to al-Arqab, a missile used against Israel on January 7].

Striking U.S. Targets Outside Iraq

“All the American bases are targets for the Islamic Resistance. We are talking about all the American existence in the West of Asia. The resistance is capable of reaching any point in West Asia where the Americans exist.”

Threatening the UAE

“There are hidden supporters of Israel from the Gulf Arabs, specifically the United Arab Emirates. The UAE has played a malicious role in this crisis. We are hearing that the UAE is working on opening a corridor passing Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and then Israel. If this happens, the resistance will have a different approach toward them. We will choose different options to face this kind of support. Those countries will take a portion of the resistance attacks if they take this step. We are not saying those countries don’t have a malicious role at this time because they do, but the coming days might include U.S. bases in the Gulf or other countries.”

Supporting Lebanon and Yemen

“The enemy can no longer fight one group at a time. Speaking of [invading] Lebanon, if the enemy thought of such foolishness, Iraqis would be present with men and equipment. We would defend Lebanon with the Lebanese. We can never let the resistance in Lebanon go. Yemen, this is going to be a completely different scenario. More options will be available to us in this battle. The Americans will see days they probably will not forget throughout history. There will be nightmares following them throughout history. With Yemen, there will be no

calculated limits. All calculated limits will be put aside, and all options will be available. The Iraqi *muqawama* will be present [alongside] the other groups.”

Expanding the "Axis of Resistance"

“We have Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. These countries are present and are facing the enemy. We also have the resistance in Bahrain and Hejaz [Saudi Arabia]. Even though their presence is not clear now, it will be more visible in the coming years and the coming confrontations. What we see is that in the coming years or a decade, the geography of this Axis will expand to reach East Asia and Caucasian countries. Resistance and free men always agree with each other and have a common goal. It is obvious that we don’t want to start attacking because we don’t have aggressive intentions. We want to defend the oppressed and defend our causes, and that is what gathers these countries.”

Plans After the Gaza War

“We don’t have any calculations except to stop the war and killing machines and lift the sanctions from Gaza. After that, we will reassess our options. As the resistance, we are proceeding to expel all the American troops from Iraq and some of the region, if not the whole region. The resumption of attacks on the U.S. was synchronized with [Hamas's October 7 al-Aqsa Flood operation]. Our operations against the U.S. will not stop if al-Aqsa Flood stops, but will continue. However, this topic can be talked about after Gaza. If the Americans leave Iraq and then attack one of the Axis countries, would the resistance stop and say, we had enough? No. The U.S. should leave the entire region to be safe from their evil. The American existence in any of those countries is evil and stretches to other countries. Expelling the U.S. from the region will make it stable, and that’s what we want.”

Analysis

The interview highlights a number of important strands in the thinking of the Iraqi *muqawama* and particularly KH:

- **KH speaks for the *muqawama*.** Whether through Jafar al-Husseini or KH secretary-general Ahmad Mohsen Faraj al-Hamidawi (aka Abu Hussein), the U.S.-designated terrorist group has been very prominent (/node/18472) in speaking for the *muqawama* and their "Islamic Resistance in Iraq" umbrella brand during the Gaza war. KH’s Abu Hussein wing (which Hussein was previously identified (/https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/node/16187) as belonging to) seems unwilling to let Akram Kaabi, the leader of Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (/node/16716), be the foremost public figure (/node/17179) for the *muqawama*. The wing has also publicly mocked (/node/18509) Asaib Ahl al-Haq.
- **Jealousy of the "real Hezbollah" in Lebanon and Yemen.** Hussein’s interview might also reflect KH’s jealousy toward Lebanese Hezbollah and the Houthis movement in Yemen, which has gradually become Iran’s de facto "Southern Hezbollah (/node/18524)." Both of these groups have been much more prominent than KH in the current crisis, yet Hussein made the risible claim that Iraqi groups could meaningfully help these more capable members of the "axis of resistance."
- **KH has a regional role.** Hussein explicitly threatened the UAE and warned of attacks on U.S. bases across the Middle East. He also threatened potential future action against Bahrain and even Saudi Arabia. This underlines KH’s probable role as Iran’s main southward-facing proxy in Iraq (/node/18424), with responsibility for operations against the Gulf states.
- **KH showing off its special weapons.** The interview strongly hinted that KH was responsible for firing cruise missiles toward Israel out of areas such as Babil, Karbala, and Anbar, the group’s strongholds. This includes the failed launch of a Quds-class cruise missile (/node/18561) in Babil on January 3. Hussein also boasted about KH using al-Aqsa 1 short-range ballistic missiles. These remarks are another indicator that top KH officials lack the operational security discipline to fully submerge themselves within the many facade brands established by the *muqawama*; eventually, they all resort to openly claiming attacks for egotistical and parochial reasons.



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