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## **IRAQ MILITIA VOWS REVENGE FOR DEADLY SYRIA RAID**

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Elad Benari

A powerful Iraqi militia backed by Iran pledged on Thursday to get revenge for a deadly air raid on its fighters in Syria, blaming the United States or Israel for the attack.

Iraq's Hezbollah Brigades militia has said 22 of its fighters were killed in an air strike on Sunday on a military base in eastern Syria that reportedly killed more than 50 people.

Both Damascus and the Iraqi militia at first pointed the finger at the U.S.-led coalition fighting the Islamic State (ISIS) group in the area.

However, an unnamed U.S. official told CNN on Monday that the air strike was carried out by Israel and not by the U.S. or the international coalition fighting ISIS.

The IDF has not commented on the strike, as per its normal policy.

Hezbollah Brigades spokesman Jaafar al-Husseini said on Thursday it was still too early to say definitively whose forces carried out the strike, but insisted it "could only have been" the Americans or Israelis.

"When it becomes known who was responsible then there will be an appropriate response and the hand of the resistance will strike anywhere," he said during a memorial ceremony for the dead at a Baghdad mosque, according to AFP.

The Shiite Hezbollah Brigades are part of the Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary units that battled ISIS in Iraq under the command of the country's prime minister.

The group has also been fighting for Assad across the border in Syria independent of the authorities in Baghdad.

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Iraq declared victory over ISIS late last year but the jihadists still control pockets of territory in Syria, where they are facing both U.S.-supported forces and pro-regime troops.

Sunday's strike hit a site that sits on a key route linking the Syrian-Iraqi border, and Iran beyond that, all the way west to the frontier with Lebanon.

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