
IS IRAN EMPLOYING A NEW TACTIC IN IRAQ?

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Ever since the US air strike that killed Iranian General Qasem Soleimani and Popular Mobilisation Units (PMU) deputy commander Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis in Baghdad in January, Iranian-backed Shia militias in Iraq have launched a series of attacks against America and its allies. Following Soleimanis killing, Iran has declared openly that its strategic goal is to drive the US out of Iraq and the Middle East.

Prior to the assassination, Iran carried out only one attack on US forces stationed in Iraq; afterwards, there were more than a dozen on Americans and US-led personnel launched by pro-Iranian groups which are part of the PMU. The Units were created in response to the rise of Daesh in 2014, and have been incorporated into the official Iraqi security forces, playing an ever-larger role across Iraqi society.

While the authorities in Baghdad have been struggling to establish full control over the PMU □ whose senior leaders maintain close links with Tehran □ it seems that in recent months Iran has changed its tactics by focusing on the establishment of new armed groups outside the PMU umbrella in order to conduct military operations against US interests and bases in Iraq. The rocket attack on the Taji military base north of Baghdad on 12 March that killed three members of the US-led international coalition suggests that this is the case, as the previously unknown group called Usbat Al-Thaireen (League of the Revolutionaries) claimed responsibility.

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