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HONORED, NOT CONTAINED

THE FUTURE OF IRAQ'S
POPULAR MOBILIZATION FORCES

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AND AYMENN JAWAD AL-TAMIMI



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PREFACE

Key Findings

“Al-Hashd al-Shabi must be honored and contained.”

—Senior Iraqi government figure, interview with one of the authors,
summer 2019, Baghdad

Whereas many studies have sought to explain the phenomenon of al-Hashd al-Shabi (hereafter the Hashd, or Popular Mobilization Forces, PMF), this report fills a fundamental gap by looking in great depth at the Hashd as a military institution.¹ This is not an exhaustive group-by-group gazetteer of Hashd subunits, even though a great deal of unit-specific data is threaded throughout the study, and a special annex includes an annotated snapshot of numbered Hashd brigades.² Instead, this study is intended to function as a primer for any international or Iraqi agency that is contemplating security-sector reform (SSR) or disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs involving the Hashd. The first step in developing effective SSR or DDR programs for the Hashd is gaining a clear-sighted view of the institution and the concerns surrounding it. Reforming the Hashd requires a granular mechanical understanding of the Hashd as an institution. In 2019, one of the authors was told by a top-level Iraqi politician that the Hashd needs to be “honored and contained.” This study concludes with ideas concerning what can and should be done to preserve the positive aspects of the Hashd while minimizing the negative facets.

The study was completed across an extended period that saw Hashd power greatly consolidated in the hands of its vice chair, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, who was killed by a U.S. airstrike on January 3, 2020, alongside his Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) sponsor,

Qasem Soleimani. The study was fully updated to reflect the deaths of Muhandis and Soleimani, including the high potential that Muhandis's power base will be cannibalized by the main power bases in the Badr Organization—Hadi al-Ameri, Abu Ali al-Basri, Abu Muntadher al-Husseini, Mohammed Salem al-Ghabban, and Qasim al-Araji—and also by Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, Saraya al-Salam, and smaller Hashd factions. The “Muhandis core,” in essence, was a powerful center of gravity composed of a reliable and effective man (Muhandis), backed by the most dynamic player in Iran's system (Soleimani). Rebuilding this kind of center of gravity at the heart of the Hashd will not be easy or quick, and those who resented Muhandis's power will move rapidly to scavenge his base. Such factions could in time be driven back toward cohesion by the emergence of a new leader, or by the threat of Hashd demobilization, budget cuts, or regulation. The study seeks to provide a valuable and timely basis for understanding how the Hashd will evolve in the absence of both Muhandis and Soleimani.

PART I SUMMARY: LEGAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL BASIS OF THE HASHD

The first part of the study looks at the nominal legal basis and structure of the Hashd. This approach means identifying the basis of the Hashd in Iraq's constitution, laws, executive orders, and cabinet decrees. (The annexes of this study include English translations of all key official texts and many important statements also.) Next, the study provides a detailed analysis of the organizational structure of the Hashd, pointing out areas in which the nominal structure differs from the actual on-the-ground organization.

As the report notes, a reasonably thin regulatory framework now underpins the Hashd, amounting to well under twenty pages of Hashd-specific laws, publicly announced executive orders, and cabinet decrees in total. This view changes if Iraq applies existing legislation such as the Military Service and Retirement Law No. 3 of 2010 or the Military Penal Code Law No. 19 of 2007.

A comprehensive Hashd organizational structure exists on paper,

although many elements of it are threadbare and lightly resourced in reality. The Hashd's most sensitive and important functions—finance, intelligence, internal affairs, religious indoctrination, and some heavy weapons—became overcentralized under Hashd's late kingpin Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. The Hashd's operational forces, meanwhile, have remained parceled out in militia-like local principalities and fiefdoms. In 2019, Executive Order 331 became the first effort to create a Hashd hierarchical structure of any complexity, and this effort is only at its inception. It is far from clear whether Executive Order 331 will ever be fully implemented.

The Hashd is a young, dynamic, and partly formed organization, including both its civilian commission in the prime minister's office (the Popular Mobilization Commission) and its fielded armed forces (the Popular Mobilization Forces). It is heterogeneous in its factional makeup, yet one can also say that it has become rather overcentralized in leaders from one IRGC-backed faction—Kataib Hezbollah—and its close allies. One platitude regarding the Hashd is that it is heterogeneous and nonunitary, and this is true to some extent, but it can conceal the fact that the Hashd Commission structure has provided a mechanism by which Muhandis and his allies did strongly consolidate their power by late 2019. The Muhandis camp, at the time of his death, also dominated the combat power of the Hashd's numbered combat brigades.

PART II SUMMARY: RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF HASHD MEMBERS

The second part of the study looks at the rights and duties of the Hashd as members of the Iraqi security forces. Advocates of the Hashd as a separate security institution reject the idea that the Hashd is a militia or a collection of militias (which are prohibited under the constitution), instead noting that a succession of executive orders, cabinet decrees, and the Hashd law define the Hashd as an official part of the security forces. Adopting this viewpoint and noting that the Hashd is legally covered by the same implementing legislation as are all other Iraqi security forces, the study asks whether Hashd members currently receive their rights, and whether they likewise currently meet their obligations as

members of the security forces.

The report's coverage of the rights and privileges of Hashd members first notes the historic difficulty of working out exactly who is serving in the Hashd at any given moment. Until the membership of the Hashd is well defined, fixed, and transparent, any audit of the behavior of its members will be difficult. If and when comprehensive audits are undertaken, they must be undertaken by an independent body, not the Hashd itself. The section on military service and retirement rights notes that Hashd members have enjoyed some advantages over the regular security forces due to a lack of regulation and discipline, but those members have also experienced lower pay, more rudimentary training and equipment, and very limited logistical and life support. The Hashd is in desperate need of professionalization and its rank-and-file are among the most underserved forces in the Iraqi defense structure.

On the other side of the scale, the Hashd does not meet many of the requirements for membership in the Iraqi security forces. Hashd forces have been excused since their establishment from most of the responsibilities, duties, or obligations of other soldiers, counterterrorism forces, and police officers. The Hashd has a different military culture from that of the Iraqi army, Counter Terrorism Service, or Federal Police. It looks and acts like a militia. Some elements of the Hashd have a history of blatantly violating the prohibition on political activities by members of the security forces. Most seriously, the Hashd has a poor record of military discipline and an already-long history of gross human rights violations against Iraqi civilians and of engaging in unauthorized foreign activities in Syria. Most recently, the Hashd has been prominently involved in lethal attacks on unarmed civilian protestors in predominantly Shia areas such as Baghdad and southern Iraq. As the Hashd has policed its own violations with no oversight, it has become a legal authority unto itself.

PART III SUMMARY: HASHD COMMAND, CONTROL, AND OPERATIONS

The third part of the study asks these basic questions: Who commands and controls the Hashd, and what roles and missions does the Hashd

currently carry out on the ground in Iraq? On the issue of command and control, it is clear that the Iraqi government—including the prime minister, who holds the title of commander-in-chief—has historically lacked a firm grip on Hashd forces. The Hashd leadership has a track record of operating a parallel command-and-control system that can refuse legal orders from the prime minister and that regularly, almost constantly, exceeds its authorities. The Hashd leadership acts like a parallel state: it runs a parallel judicial system and prisons, a parallel illicit economy, and a parallel war effort that undermines unity of command across the entire Iraqi security forces.

In terms of operational and tactical control and of local operations, the Hashd comprises three main types of units. The first is the local Hashd units that are recruited locally and serve only in their home districts. A second category is “transplanted” Hashd units, which are mostly recruited in southern Iraq but which have settled down and claimed certain operational locations in northern and western Iraq as their domain. A final type is the “floating” Hashd unit, often comprising the Iran-supported militias that existed before 2014. These floating units send detachments to almost all areas of Iraq (and Syria) as they please, and often perform special tasks or train and advise smaller Hashd brigades. Lacking an explicit purpose or any guidance about roles and missions, the Hashd commanders largely do as they please, underlining the need to establish defined roles and missions for the Hashd.

U.S. AND COALITION POLICY PRIORITIES REGARDING THE HASHD

The policy advice section at the end of this paper is intended to be useful to all Iraq’s international partners and does not adopt a specifically U.S. outlook. The aim is to identify consensus issues—inside and outside Iraq—that represent the low-hanging fruit for reform efforts, and to differentiate the thornier long-term issues that should be tackled later.

The policy section makes three basic points. First, the growth of the Hashd should be frozen. If not, there is a danger that negative aspects of the Hashd may develop too quickly to be reversed by a gradual SSR process. The negative actors inside the Hashd must not be allowed to

create new facts on the ground. At this point, the Hashd is limited in labor, budget, and institutional infrastructure, and the priority should be to freeze it at that level in order to maintain Iraq's options throughout a five- to ten-year SSR process.

Second, now is not the right time—not for U.S. or coalition interests, nor for Iraqi interests—to try to fully resolve the big issues surrounding the Hashd or to make key decisions. Due to U.S.-Iran and Israel-Iran tensions, and due to domestic Iraqi instability, more time needs to pass in order for the issues to become less sensitive and to encourage a logical debate about the Hashd's future. The reality is that there is no politically viable alternative to an evolutionary, patient, but determined approach. International policy on Iraq should be based on reality.

Third, it is important for a majority of the Iraqi and international players to reach consensus on the two key issues facing the Hashd. One is the longer-term issue of core competencies and functions and of roles and missions, from which the force can be normalized, professionalized, and rationalized. The second issue, equally important, is the power grab that has befallen the Hashd in 2014–19, led by Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, Kataib Hezbollah, and their Iranian backers. Muhandis's death has provided an opening. The overcentralization of power under a narrow clique of Hashd leaders is reversible if the Iraqi government, the *hawza* (Shia religious establishment), and international players work together to empower, protect, and resource a champion to lead the Hashd reform project.

DETAILED SSR RECOMMENDATIONS

The previous sections suggest that the time is decidedly not right to pursue DDR approaches regarding the Hashd, while the time is instead ripe for SSR efforts. In the coming years, the resources and roles currently allocated to the Hashd may be rationalized and redistributed, but Iraq has to pass through a number of interim stages first. In time, the Hashd may be right-sized, may surrender some or all heavy weapons, and may redeploy from the Syrian border and other "hot" areas in predominantly Sunni Iraq, but these are five- to ten-year propositions, not imminent prospects.

Freeze the Hashd Expansion

In the interim, the top priority of the international community is to reinforce some of the more commendable instincts of the Iraqi government regarding the Hashd.

- First, the Iraqi government is right to freeze the Hashd Commission as a subministerial entity that is without dedicated cabinet representation or a permanent budget. Maintaining this status quo should be job number one for all Iraq's coalition partners so they can prevent further, near-irreversible steps from being taken.
- The formal authorized manpower of the Hashd should not exceed the current 135,000, and its budget should not exceed the current 2.58 trillion Iraqi dinars (\$2.16 billion). New expansion of Hashd manpower or missions should be resisted, as should diversion of government funding to support off-budget Hashd procurement spending. With the end of major combat operations against the Islamic State, the Hashd's military role is clearly not expanding, nor should its resources. As major donors of security assistance to Iraq, the coalition is well positioned to lobby for no further duplicative parallel development of security agencies in Iraq.
- Another sound instinct shown by the Iraqi government includes the July 1, 2019, directive to remove Hashd offices from the cities, which should be the leading edge of a removal of Hashd forces from all urban districts, where the Local Police Service should have primacy. Ongoing coalition support for the Ministry of Interior and its Local Police Service branches is the best means for international partners to help rein in criminal actions by Hashd elements inside cities.

Divide Responsibility Among Key Leaders

In an ideal world, the death of Muhandis would jump-start the Hashd reform process, signaling a new era and a more even factional distribution of the key roles within the Hashd Commission. But there will

be competition to replace him, and there could be overconcentration of power in one leader again. Iraq needs to distribute administrative responsibilities such as fighter registration, payroll, auditing, discipline, training, equipping, and basing. IRGC-backed leaders need to be balanced by a powerful reform champion who enjoys the backing and protection of the Shia religious establishment in Iraq.

Internationalize the SSR Process

Iraq's leaders are right that normalizing the Hashd will take five to ten years, during which time various of its elements will identify themselves as either capable of professionalizing and coming under the control of the state, or not. The Muhandis camp and Iran will seek to dominate and shape any SSR process in order to consolidate their power and to blunt any real efforts to loosen their grip on the Hashd. In 2019, the emerging Hashd reform process was guided under then prime minister Adil Abdulmahdi's chief of staff, Mohammed al-Hashimi (aka Abu Jihad), who was very close to Muhandis and the IRGC. This steering of the Hashd reform process by a neighbor and a rival of Iraq should not continue.

As a result, it is very important for the international community, including multinational actors such as NATO and the European Union to play a proactive role in driving the SSR process directly with the prime minister's office, the national security advisor's office, and the national defense universities. International players in the coalition need not only to offer their assistance directly to the Hashd reform process, but also to keep pushing forward other SSR processes in the conventional security forces. This effort is needed because as long as the permanent Iraqi security ministries are held to low standards of professionalism and probity, so too will the Hashd be. The better the Iraqi security forces become, the better the Hashd will have to be to avoid unfavorable comparisons. Peer pressure and insistent international nagging can have a significant effect in Iraq. Two former prime ministers, Haider al-Abadi and his successor, Abdulmahdi, were both sensitive to criticism and to having their limited control made too apparent by international partners, helping spur efforts to rein in the Hashd leaders.

Normalize the Hashd

The idea of incrementally normalizing the Hashd has significant traction across the Iraqi political elite. Even advocates of the Hashd—such as Hadi al-Ameri and Abu Jihad—venture that there must be limits on all Iraq’s armed forces. The Hashd law and the growing body of cabinet decrees and executive orders lay out this aspiration for equivalence to the rest of the Iraqi security forces in the rights and privileges and the duties and responsibilities of Hashd members. Implementation of the Hashd law, decrees, and executive orders has been demanded from the highest levels of the religious establishment. On September 13, 2019, a representative of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani named Hamid al-Khafaf issued a strong statement on the *hawza’s* behalf challenging the government to apply the law.

If rolled out as a complete package, an internationally backed SSR program will carry significant upsides for Hashd members, such as professional military education, improved living conditions and life support, improved survivability through life-saving medical support, better equipment, and improved training. As a quid pro quo, Hashd members will need to observe their obligations more closely, such as meeting the age and fitness conditions of service, as well as the rules and regulations regarding leave, uniforms and identification, weapons handling, and political and economic activity. Most important, the Hashd must submit to national commands issued by the prime minister, must not exceed its authorities, and must observe human rights and submit to the military code of discipline and justice, including investigation of the murders of unarmed demonstrators.

How to Begin SSR

These issues are touched upon in framework documents such as the Hashd law, Executive Order 85 of 2018, and Executive Order 237 of 2019, but only vaguely. The July 28, 2019, letter from Faleh al-Fayyad to the prime minister hints at a more detailed set of implementing annexes that are not public, thus making it impossible to monitor, guide, or support the detailed elements of the normalization effort. An internationally backed SSR program involving the Hashd would give the process

support but also impetus and transparency. Key focus areas would be as follows:

- **DON'T SURPRISE INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS.** At present, when a new Hashd reform document such as Executive Order 331 is released, the U.S.-led coalition first learns of its contents at the same time as news agencies such as Reuters and millions of other people do. Yet Iran's IRGC will have reviewed the draft days or weeks beforehand. As the most prolific providers of gratis security cooperation to Iraq, the international coalition, United Nations, and European Union have every right to expect that Iraq provide the coalition a draft of new Hashd legislation, executive orders, and cabinet decrees so that the coalition, like Iran, can signal any concerns that could affect security cooperation.
- **START WITH COSMETIC EFFORTS.** The first steps involve changing the external branding of the Hashd, though these are largely cosmetic steps such as the retirement of unit names and the consolidation and reduction of Hashd offices and properties to a defined and approved set of locations. This approach is the main thrust of Executive Order 237. An international process could help draw the details of the process into a more transparent setting.
- **EMPOWER A REFORM CHAMPION BACKED BY THE IRAQI PRIME MINISTER AND THE *HAWZA*.** This declaration and auditing phase could be aided by the appointment of an empowered second vice chairman of the Hashd whom the prime minister deputizes to execute the Hashd reform program. The person chosen for the job should be an "untouchable" based on his popularity, bravery, and perhaps connection to the religious establishment.
- **PROFESSIONALIZE HASHD TACTICAL UNITS.** The real work of SSR will include the design of a single pattern of organization for Hashd tactical units, the consolidation of large and small Hashd units into light infantry formations, and the consolidation of heavy weapons into enabler units that have dedicated and

secure storage depots. Because some Hashd units are required for frontline duties and because the SSR program will not have the capacity to professionalize numerous units simultaneously, the ideal process would be a test run with one or more trial units. Coalition experiences—positive and negative—from the effort to create integrated and defactionalized Peshmerga Regional Guard Brigades should be reviewed.

DEFINING ROLES AND MISSIONS

In informing a decades-long reform program, it will be important to establish the enduring roles and missions of the Hashd over the next two to five years. The broader Iraqi SSR process being undertaken by the EU, NATO, and the coalition needs to help Iraq reach conclusions about the future structure of its security sector and the corresponding role of the Hashd and its members. A focus on the Hashd's core competencies and functions and its roles and missions constitutes a less confrontational way to approach the issue of whether an independent Hashd Commission adds value to Iraq or merely duplicates the efforts of other agencies for no purpose.

A study should be made of the concept and implementation of a reserve forces model, with permanent and reservist cadres capable of boosting the manpower of the pre-2014 security services when mobilized during national emergencies. This option, politically unpalatable now, may be more acceptable in five to ten years. Alternately, if a good argument can be made for a shrine protection force or a parallel national force akin to Iran's Basij, either partially or fully mobilized at all times, it will still be a good idea in ten years. There is no need to rush to cement the structure now.

For those local Hashd forces that are willing to serve only in defense of their local areas, the options appear limited to integration into pre-2014 local forces (local police and emergency police) or a civil service corps or some form of provincial-level national guard akin to the Peshmerga Regional Guard Brigades. Some of the concepts from the draft National Guard Law and the "Defense" Hashd may be applicable. Up to 30,000 Hashd members in the predominantly Sunni liberated areas

could and should be rolled into Local Police Service branches, border forces, and the army.

One motive for keeping the Hashd as a separate parallel military is regime security. Yet while Iraqi Shia leaders may have some doubts about whether Iraq's army and Counter Terrorism Service are committed to the post-2003 Shia-led order, rather than simply to the government of the day, there is no shortage of security forces in Iraq to offset and deter each other during political crises. The international community needs to more explicitly reassure Iraqi leaders that they are protected, that no political action by conventional security forces will be tolerated, and that they do not require a new regime security corps akin to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The abuse of the Hashd to murder Shia protestors in 2019–20 should be a cautionary warning to Iraqi leaders about its employment as an Iranian-style domestic-suppression force.

Discussion of redeployment and the development of canton areas should flow from this debate about roles and missions, rather than preceding it; in any case, a redeployment from "hot" areas is unlikely in the next one to two or maybe even in the next three to five years. Disarmament initiatives, for instance requiring the permanent surrender of missile, artillery, and armor systems, should logically follow a definition of roles and missions. Localized command-and-control arrangements will also flow from definition by the lead (versus supporting) security agencies in each mission area and geography.

NOTES

1. Some prior studies have been produced aimed at giving an in-depth overview of the Hashd forces. One example is Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's Hashd Brigade Numbers Index, the first attempt in English to list the most important Hashd factions on the registers of the Hashd Commission with assigned brigade numbers. Then came the Institute for the Study of War's (ISW's) Order of Battle study for the Iraqi security forces and the Hashd, published in December 2017. The study was the first effort to describe Hashd institutional directorates alongside the groups with assigned brigade numbers.

Although the ISW paper relied on open sources, more recent studies have exploited fieldwork as well. Three studies about the Hashd were published by the Clingendael Institute. They monitored the evolution of the Hashd in the period 2017–18 and focused in particular on seven groups: Asaib Ahl al-Haq, the al-Abbas Combat Division, tribal Hashd units, the Badr Organization, Saraya al-Salam, the Sinjar Resistance Units, and Kataib Hezbollah. For a recent example of the Clingendael work, see <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/hashd-dead-long-live-hashd>.

The Global Public Policy Institute project on local, hybrid, and substate security forces in Iraq includes a wealth of ground-sourced materials in its program “Iraq After ISIL: Local and Sub-State Forces in Iraq.” See the project page at <https://www.gppi.net/issue-area/peace-security/militias/local-and-sub-state-forces-in-iraq>. Zmkan Ali Saleem, Mac Skelton, and Christine M. van den Toorn have also undertaken fieldwork-based studies about the Hashd. Individual experts who have written widely and deeply about the Hashd will be referenced regularly in this study, including but not limited to Phillip Smyth, Renad Mansour, Faleh A. Jabar, Hisham al-Hashimi, Thanassis Cambanis, Fanar Haddad, Aymenn Al-Tamimi, Kirk Sowell, Hamdi Malik, and Michael Knights.

2. See Annex P of this study.

**PART I:
THE LEGAL AUTHORITIES
AND NOMINAL STRUCTURE
OF THE HASHD**

The first part of the study looks at the nominal legal basis and structure of the Hashd. This approach means identifying the foundations of the Hashd in Iraq's constitution, laws, executive orders, and cabinet decrees. (The annexes of this study include English translations of all key official texts and many important statements also.) Next, the study provides a detailed analysis of the organizational structure of the Hashd, pointing out areas in which the nominal structure differs from the actual on-the-ground organization.

The Hashd is a young, dynamic, and partly formed organization, including both its civilian commission in the prime minister's office (the Popular Mobilization Commission) and its fielded armed forces (the Popular Mobilization Forces). It is heterogeneous in its factional makeup, yet one can also say that it has become rather overcentralized in leaders from one IRGC-backed faction—Kataib Hezbollah.

Legal Basis of the Hashd

A common refrain from Iraqis—whenever the Hashd is criticized or referred to as a militia—is that its members are formally a part of the national defense forces and are regulated by laws. An equally common perception is that the Hashd was first raised in June 2014 by the fatwa of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most senior cleric in Iraq. Although both of these perceptions are partly correct, the setting for security sector reform or potential disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration activities is more complex than these sound bites suggest. Iraq’s Hashd forces are regulated by the same military laws as are other armed forces, as this chapter will document. (All the referenced laws and orders are translated into English in the annexes.) Yet Iraqi politicians continue to propose new parallel legislation to institute unique conditions of service and retirement for the Hashd,¹ indicating a desire for the Hashd to be “separate but equal” in some sense. The Hashd is not yet established as a ministry, as the Counter Terrorism Service was, so it is still in a unique position from a legal and constitutional perspective. This chapter will analytically review the laws, cabinet directives, and executive orders that have shaped the Hashd since its inception.

MALIKI'S POPULAR ARMY

Contrary to widely repeated lore, the Hashd was not formed by Sistani, but rather by then prime minister Nouri al-Maliki. In 2016, Maliki noted:

If you ask me who created the al-Hashd al-Shabi, I would say I did. I thought about the idea in 2012, especially toward the end of the year...I did believe that Iraq [would] face a fierce onslaught, through the cells in the Western part of the country and the arms supply that they [would] receive from Syria. At the time, I said the Iraqi army [would] collapse [in the face of such attack], because of the sectarian mobilization and the fact that the army is part of the people [and the sectarian environment]. And indeed, the army withdrew from Mosul. Even one Sunni soldier in the army didn't fight. The Kurdish section of the army also withdrew.²

Although his characterization of the June 2014 collapse is self-serving, Maliki is correct that he had laid the groundwork for the Hashd as far back as 2013. In that year, he began to draw on paramilitary support from government-backed militias gathered under the so-called Sons of Iraq framework, which differed from the Sunni units of the same name raised during the earlier *sahwa* movement in 2006–11. As reporting by Ned Parker³ and later Aymenn Al-Tamimi⁴ revealed, these Sons of Iraq included both new recruits and what Prime Minister Maliki called “mujahedin”⁵—members of existing nonstate armed factions (*fasail* in Arabic) such as Asaib Ahl al-Haq and Kataib Hezbollah, Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, Kataib al-Imam Ali, and Kataib Jund al-Imam.⁶ Those forces initially worked as unpaid auxiliaries, operating in units of under a hundred fighters, in Baghdad's rural suburbs and adjacent districts of neighboring provinces, and they were later deployed to the Syrian border.

After Fallujah fell to the Islamic State at the end of December 2013, Maliki accelerated his planning to raise Popular Defense Brigades (*Saraya al-Difa al-Shabi*), seemingly mirroring the activation of similar forces in Syria. The Popular Defense Brigades initiative was likely also driven by Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and Kataib Hezbollah in order to secure

government payment for their upscaling of recruitment for operations in Iraq and Syria.⁷ Sons of Iraq forces initially continued to be partnered with conventional Iraqi units such as the Emergency Response Division, in that case earning the sobriquet the “Emergency Response’s Hashd.”⁸ On April 7, 2014, Maliki cleared the idea with the pan-Shia National Alliance of formally establishing Popular Defense Brigades, and on April 23, 2014, Maliki directed the Office of the Commander-in-Chief to begin preparing plans to raise a popular army, beginning with the aforementioned nonstate militias already serving alongside the armed forces.⁹

POPULAR MOBILIZATION IN JUNE 2014

In the aftermath of the Mosul disaster and with six Iraqi divisions in ruins, the Iraqi cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Maliki, issued Cabinet Decree 301 of June 11, 2014. It gave the prime minister the power to “organise the volunteers and to provide them with necessary logistic and financial support.” The measures taken by Maliki upon the fall of Mosul grew out of the preexisting Sons of Iraq and, less so, Popular Defense Brigades concepts.

Two days later, on June 13, 2014, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the highest Shia authority in Iraq, issued a fatwa (religious edict), the *Wajib al-Kifai/al-Jihad al-Kifai* (collective obligation)—calling for able-bodied male citizens to take up arms and fight the Islamic State. Abdul Mahdi al-Karbalaï, one of Sistani’s trustees, read the fatwa in the Friday prayers in Karbala, quoting Sistani as saying:

The nature of the dangers that are facing Iraq and its people demands the defense of the country, its people, the honor of its citizens, and its sacred places...therefore, all citizens who are able to bear arms and fight the terrorists, defending their country and their people and their holy places, should volunteer and join the security forces to achieve this holy goal [defeating IS].¹⁰

As is clear from his decree, Sistani did not call for the creation of a new military organization, but for volunteers to join the existing security

forces (i.e., the army, police). Indeed, Sistani has never used the phrase al-Hashd al-Shabi and has always referred to its personnel as volunteers (*mutataween* in Arabic).

The “Defense” Hashd

It is important to note that another type of Hashd emerged in the 2014 period separate from al-Hashd al-Shabi: the Defense Hashd, which consisted of multiple minor groups deploying primarily in the Baghdad belt areas and nominally affiliated with the Ministry of Defense.¹¹ Although some of those groups use monikers like “Islamic Resistance” that tend to be associated with Iran-backed factions, they deny receiving support from Iran.¹² They appear to number around 2,000 billets in the Defense Ministry budget, though none has received a salary to date due to unresolved bureaucratic hurdles and around 15,000 persons have rotated through the unit, a high rate of turnover caused by lack of payment.¹³

Some supporters of al-Hashd al-Shabi disparage the Defense Hashd groups as criminal gangs, but they do appear to have played an underappreciated part in Baghdad’s defense. They provide fifty-six platoon-size checkpoint units¹⁴ under the operational control of the Defense Ministry–run Baghdad Operations Command, while receiving training support from the ministry’s Baghdad Fighting School at Taji.¹⁵ Thus, the Defense Hashd was never a major force and never a real alternative to the Hashd Commission; rather, it was a small Defense Ministry–backed experiment in local forces development in Baghdad. The chronic lack of payroll may have been the factor that prevented Sistani-led shrine militias from joining the Defense Hashd, causing them instead to fall under the Hashd Commission. (Indeed, Abu Ali al-Basri, the assistant to the vice chairman of the Hashd, said in January 2020 that government failures of payment had led the Hashd Commission to adopt these volunteers in the areas of medical care and martyrdom payments.¹⁶) This model is worth mentioning because it offers an alternative to the Hashd Commission model of resourcing local units.

NATIONAL GUARD LAW

In the first six months of the Hashd's formalized (but not yet regulated) existence, attention was focused on a draft National Guard Law, which was submitted to the cabinet on January 27, 2015; approved by the cabinet as a legislative project on February 3, 2015; and read in parliament for the first time on March 2, 2015.¹⁷ (A translation of the draft law can be found in Annex B.) The National Guard Law was not passed, but it is worth discussing because it underlines some ideas under consideration for the Hashd, which might be recycled in the future. The law included the following elements:¹⁸

- **PROVINCIAL-LEVEL RECRUITMENT.** Article 2 and Article 13 note that military units would be formed “in the provinces, and from their residents.” No statement indicates that each province was mandated to have a unit. Article 15 is ambiguous about how provincial-level commanders of the National Guard would be appointed, but it includes language that appears to mirror the selection process for provincial police chiefs—namely, “The commander of a province’s unit is to be chosen from among three candidates recommended by the prime minister, with one of them chosen by the provincial council.”¹⁹ The local flavor of the National Guard’s membership and leadership was an important factor.

- **PLACEMENT OUTSIDE A SECURITY MINISTRY.** The National Guard was conceived from the outset as sitting outside the preexisting security ministries. Article 4 called for a National Guard Command answering to the prime minister and “with an independent budget.”²⁰ Thus, like the Hashd Commission, the National Guard draft law also envisaged a new military institution being raised, as opposed to rolling the Hashd within an existing force.

- **FULL SET OF STAFF DIRECTORATES.** Article 5 notes that the National Guard Command would include directorates such as “administration, logistics, operations, intelligence, training, and inspection” under the “the Chief of Staff of the National Guard.”²¹ Again, the development of an independent security agency with a full set of staff directives is reminiscent of the Counter Terrorism Service, which at that time, in early 2015, was not yet a ministry-level entity.
- **TWO-TIER SYSTEM OF FULL-TIME AND RESERVIST PERSONNEL.** Article 10 notes that the National Guard would offer two types of service: reserve (with five-year contracts) and permanent (presumably with a thirty-year term, mirroring that of regular military personnel).²²
- **CAPABILITIES LESS THAN AN ARMY INFANTRY BRIGADE.** Article 12 notes that “National Guard units are to be organized as a light infantry brigade, with the same structure and organization and ranks, with weaponry heavier than that of the police but less than that of the army.”²³

Ultimately, the draft National Guard Law never reached a second reading in Parliament. After months of political debate marked by deep disagreements, the law was sent back to the government to be amended.²⁴ But it never resurfaced from parliamentary committee for another reading. Command and control of the National Guard was the main point on which the main Sunni and Shia groups differed. Most Sunni groups wanted command to be under the provincial governments, while Shia political parties wanted it to be under the commander-in-chief (i.e., the prime minister).²⁵ The Shia parties viewed the law as a prelude to the country’s disintegration, in the manner that the Kurdistan Regional Government’s Peshmerga aided the Kurdistan Region in becoming semiautonomous.²⁶

EXECUTIVE ORDER 91 AND THE NOVEMBER 2016 HASHD LAW

As the National Guard draft law died, the Hashd was left without a legal or constitutional basis. Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi felt pressure to formalize his connection to the Hashd, to show that it was under prime ministerial command, and to blunt the critique that it was composed of illegal militias.²⁷ He also had to satisfy the requirement posed by Article 9 of the constitution that prohibits militias that are not part of the Iraqi armed forces. Abadi's first effort to regulate and administratively define the Hashd was Executive Order 91 of 2016, which was issued by Abadi on February 24, 2016. (See Annex D for a translation of Executive Order 91.) Executive Order 91 described its function as follows: "to restructure and reorganize the Popular Mobilization Commission and the forces subordinate to it." Its key features included the following:

- **INDEPENDENT COMMAND WITHIN THE IRAQI ARMED FORCES.** Article 1 establishes that the Hashd is "an independent military formation and an element of the Iraqi armed forces." Article 2 explicitly states that the Hashd will "operate on a model similar to that of the Counter Terrorism Service as far as its organization and its place in the chain-of-command."²⁸ As previously noted, at the time of the order's issuance, the CTS was not under any ministry and answered directly to the prime minister.
- **UNDER MILITARY REGULATIONS.** Article 4 noted: "The formation and its personnel shall be subject to all existing military regulations." Likewise, Article 5 confirmed: "The personnel, officials, and commanders of this formation shall be provided with all ranks, pay, financial allowances, rights, and obligations in accordance with the standard military practice and procedure."²⁹ This is the first government document that calls for placing the Hashd under any form of regulation or discipline; it came 616 days after the Hashd was raised in June 2014.

- **NOTIONALLY DEPOLITICIZED.** As with the regular armed forces, the Hashd was ordered to break ties with political parties. Article 6 notes: “Any connection between personnel of the Popular Mobilization Commission and any political, partisan, or social organization shall be severed, and no political activity shall be permitted within its ranks.”³⁰

The Executive Order was followed on November 26, 2016, by the Popular Mobilization Commission Law of 2016.³¹ (See Annex E for a translation of the law.) Signed by then president Fuad Masum on December 18, the law came into force on December 26—926 days after the Hashd was formally raised by the government in June 2014. This law was short, just three pages, and largely restated the key tenets of Executive Order 91, repeating almost verbatim its main seven articles. The law added the following new elements:

- **EXPECTATION OF REPRESENTATIVE RECRUITMENT.** The third section of the law stated that “the Popular Mobilization [Forces] will be made up of the components of the Iraqi people in a manner that conforms to article (9) of the constitution,” which states: “The Iraqi armed forces and security services will be composed of the components of the Iraqi people with due consideration given to their balance and representation without discrimination or exclusion.”³²
- **INTERPROVINCE DEPLOYMENTS UNDER SOLE CONTROL OF THE PRIME MINISTER.** The fourth section explicitly states: “The redeployment and redistribution of forces among the provinces shall be the sole prerogative of the commander-in-chief of the armed forces.”³³ This is the first legal measure intended to reinforce the prime minister’s command and control of the Hashd, though Prime Minister Abadi benefited little from the law, as the chapters in Part III of this study will note.
- **PARLIAMENTARY REQUIREMENT TO APPOINT DIVISIONAL COMMANDERS.** The fourth section notes that Hashd divisional

commanders require parliamentary approval, as with the regular armed forces. However, because the Hashd had not adopted formal divisional commands (at the time of this writing), the parliamentary approval requirement has never been implemented.

- **BACKDATED TO JUNE 2014.** The law's provisions were backdated to apply to all Hashd personnel serving since the passage of Cabinet Decree 301 of June 11, 2014, meaning that the Hashd personnel were serving under state authority from then onward, and further suggesting that the state was legally responsible for all their actions since that date.

INSTRUCTIONS ON HASHD FIGHTERS AFFAIRS, MARCH 2018

On March 8, 2018, in the lead-up to the May general elections, Prime Minister Abadi issued Executive Order 85 (see Annex G). The order was issued both to (again) underline Abadi's command of the Hashd at the expense of its military leaders—his electoral rivals—and to deflect justified criticism that Abadi had failed to equalize pay and conditions for the Hashd. The executive order was the most specific regulation issued to date regarding the Hashd, albeit still only three pages long. Importantly, the order specified the exact bodies of preexisting military law and regulations that govern the Hashd. Key articles of the order include the following:

- **DEFINITION OF UNIQUE RANK SYSTEM.** Article 1 defines a Hashd "fighter" as "a person who enjoys the employment benefits of a pay scale rank equivalent to that of officers of the rank of lieutenant and above," outlined in Cabinet Decree 177 of 2010 (on the organization of the armed services).³⁴ A "volunteer" is defined as "a person who enjoys the employment benefits of a pay scale rank equivalent to that of enlisted personnel of the rank of soldier or NCO."³⁵ The adoption of a unique rank system is important because it underlines the manner in which the

Hashd is viewed as part of the Iraqi security forces (ISF) and yet is culturally and organizationally distinct from either the military or police institutions.

■ **DEFINITION OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE HASHD.**

Article 2 lists: “A) The two deputy chairs of the Commission; B) commanders of regions; C) commanders of formations; D) commanders of fighting forces; E) commanders of combat groups; F) commanders of combat detachments; G) commanders of combat sub-groups; H) volunteers, civilian employees, and religious chaplains.”³⁶ Notably, none of those formations directly or explicitly equates to divisional-level command, thereby muddying the legal requirement for parliamentary approval of even senior Hashd commanders.

■ **UNIFORM AND INSIGNIA.** Article 2 specifies that “identifying [rank] insignia in distinctive colors shall be defined for the positions defined above in Article 2 of these regulations, and shall be worn on the right side of the chest. The shapes and colors of these insignia shall be determined by the Chairman of the Commission, with the approval of the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces [i.e., prime minister].”³⁷ The uniform provisions of the Hashd have never been strictly observed.

■ **CONDITIONS OF SERVICE.** Article 2 notes that Hashd members “A) Must be Iraqi; B) Must be between the ages of 18 and 25 for service in technical branches, or 18 and 30 for service in other branches; C) Must possess good character and sound reputation; D) Must meet the conditions of physical fitness and health; D) Must not be convicted of any felony, dishonorable misdemeanor, terrorism offense, or crime against the state’s domestic or foreign security; E) Must possess at least an elementary school education.”³⁸ Article 2, however, also allows the prime minister to “exempt from the relevant legal conditions those fighters who have participated in combat against Daesh for at

least one year.”³⁹ This exception is essential because many Hashd volunteers exceed the age limit and many more have never been audited for fitness, education, and criminal record requirements.

- **DEMOBILIZATION OF INELIGIBLE PERSONNEL.** Article 3 notes that persons who do not meet the already-noted criteria shall be absorbed as civilian employees of the Hashd Commission, and they shall be subject to the rules of public sector employment. This article sets up the expectation of a large civilian component to the Hashd Commission, most likely a civil works program. In reality, the lack of membership vetting has resulted in practically no demobilization on any grounds.
- **PROMOTION, PAY, AND ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION.** Article 4 notes that Hashd personnel are promoted under the Military Service and Retirement Law No. 3 of 2010. Hashd will provide “financial compensation equal to that of their equivalents in the Defense Ministry.”⁴⁰ Hashd personnel should also have access to military colleges and academies, with allocations “to be determined in coordination with the Ministry of Defense.”⁴¹
- **HASHD COMMISSION CHAIR POWERS.** Article 5 notes that the Hashd Commission chair has only the powers delegated to him by the prime minister and that the deputies of the Hashd Commission chair possess only the powers delegated to them by the chairman.
- **HASHD AUTHORITIES TO BE CONSISTENT WITH IRAQI LAWS.** Article 6 notes that Hashd authorities “shall apply inasmuch as they are not contradicted by any text in these instructions: the Military Service and Retirement Law No. 3 of 2010, the Military Penal Code Law No. 19 of 2007, the Military Penal Trials Law No. 22 of 2016, the Civil Service Law No. 24 of 1960 (amended),⁴² the Unified Retirement Law No. 9 of 2014, and the State and Public

Sector Employees Salaries Law No. 22 of 2008 (amended).⁴² This article theoretically introduces a huge body of applicable law to the Hashd.

PRIME MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS ON HASHD REFORMS

In June and July 2019, the Iraqi government began issuing new sets of significant pronouncements regarding proposed reforms to the Hashd. The first came on June 18, 2019, when then prime minister Adil Abdul-mahdi issued a written statement (see Annex I). The statement was a blunt admission that Hashd elements were not under the full control of the state due to “quite a number of violations.” Citing “manifestations and occurrences and behaviors that are not controlled” in the aftermath of the war against the Islamic State, he gave four orders “to end the illegal and sovereign anomalies”:

1. Any foreign force shall be prohibited from acting or moving on Iraqi soil without the permission, agreement and control of the Iraqi government.
2. Any State from the province or outside shall be prevented from being present on Iraqi soil and exercising its activities against any other party, whether another neighboring State or any foreign presence inside or outside Iraq without an agreement with the Iraqi Government.
3. The actions of any Iraqi or non-Iraqi armed forces outside the framework of the Iraqi armed forces or outside the command and the supervision of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces shall be prohibited.
4. Any armed force operating within the framework of the Iraqi armed forces and under the command of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces shall be prohibited from having movement, operations, stores or industries

outside the knowledge, administration and control of the Iraqi armed forces and under the supervision of the Commander-in-Chief.⁴³

This statement by then prime minister Abdulmahdi was a reaction to militia rocket attacks and threats against U.S. facilities in Iraq, along with the May 14, 2019, drone attacks launched from Hashd sites at Jurf al-Sakhar into Saudi Arabia. All this played out against the backdrop of rising U.S.-Iran tensions.⁴⁴ It was the third major public executive order or public statement by an Iraqi prime minister to underline the operational command and control of the Hashd.

This strong statement was followed by Executive Order 237 of 2019, which was issued by Abdulmahdi on July 1, 2019. (See Annex J for a translation of Executive Order 237.) The executive order followed from the June 18 statement, adding the following new aspects to the Hashd reform process:

- **REMOVAL OF UNIT NAMES FROM HASHD FORMATIONS.** The order notes: "All names by which the factions of the Hashd Shabi have operated...are to be definitively abandoned, and to be replaced with military names (division, brigade, regiment, etc.) and that includes the tribal Hashd or any other local formations or at the national level. Also their members are to bear military ranks as applied in the armed forces."⁴⁵ As the next chapter will show, Hashd units have long juxtaposed their unit numbers and names, so the changes proposed are cosmetic, albeit aimed at gradually loosening unit ties to political factions.
- **SHUTTING DOWN OF NONAUTHORIZED CAMPS AND OFFICES.** The order notes that the Hashd should specify a consolidated list of camps where its forces are present. It furthermore adds that "all bases that bear the name of one of the factions of the Hashd al-Shabi are to be closed whether in the cities or outside them...The existence of any armed faction operating secretly or openly outside these instructions is forbidden, and it is to be considered outside the law and accordingly prosecuted... All economic offices or checkpoints or presences or interests

established outside the new framework are to be closed, for the work and formations of the Hashd al-Shabi as a foundation are to be considered a part of the armed forces.”⁴⁶ This aspect reflected growing Iraqi public discontent about illicit Hashd moneymaking schemes in major cities (see chapter 6 for details of these schemes).

The order specified July 31 as the deadline for these instructions to be completed and informed that further “orders will be subsequently issued for the framework of the Hashd al-Shabi Commission and its formations”⁴⁷—intimating the leading edge of a broader Hashd reform process.

On July 29, 2019, two days before the deadline expired, Popular Mobilization Commission (PMC) chairman Faleh al-Fayyad issued a letter (see Annex K) asking for two additional months to implement Executive Order 237. Referring to unpublished annexes, the letter claimed to have “abolished” PMC offices in the provinces, “started the reconceptualization of the directorates and departments,” issued “service and retirement instructions for the members of the PMC,” begun removing unauthorized nomenclatures and merging different sized units into a more regular structure, “shuttered” all economic offices, and identified garrison locations for Hashd forces. The letter also suggested that additional billets would be filled from Sunni provinces to address representativeness concerns, and it stated that the Hashd’s complement of officers would be calculated and that coordination with Iraqi professional military educational institutions would be improved.⁴⁸ At the time of this writing, progress on those promises is hard to assess but appears minimal, and the planned reforms are hidden from public view in the unpublished annexes.

A final prime ministerial action was expressed in Executive Order 328 on September 14, 2019 (see Annex N), which came two days after Hamid al-Khafaf, the director of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani’s office in Lebanon, chided the government for slow enforcement of prior law and executive orders on the Hashd (see Annex M). In Executive Order 328, then prime minister Abdulmahdi inserted himself into direct leadership of the national JOC. Importantly, the Hashd was formally placed under the JOC framework, making it just one of eleven security agencies in the

command.⁴⁹ Executive Order 328 specifies that the prime minister, or his alternate, Staff Lt. Gen. Abdul-Amir Yarallah, would exert operational control over all the formations just listed, now including the Hashd.⁵⁰ The executive order also states that the JOC would take exclusive control of all appointments of commanders from the rank of brigade commander upward, including within the Hashd.⁵¹ This provision has not been executed at the time of this writing, with the Hashd continuing to make freestanding changes to its leadership structure without reference to the JOC.

PROPOSED STRUCTURE UNDER EXECUTIVE ORDER 331

The next notional change to the setup of Iraq's command and control came on September 17, 2019, with the release of Executive Order 331 of 2019 (see Annex O). Citing "the public interest" and "the powers given to us from the constitution," the prime minister ordered the reorganization of the PMF leadership. The key change was a *potential* division of the powers wielded by then vice chair Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. The proposed rewiring of the Hashd (shown in figure 2.2, chapter 2) is most significant in terms of the three senior leadership positions:

- **PRESIDENT OF THE HASHD COMMISSION.** Under the new structure, certain corporate functions are split off from the vice chair position and gathered under the "president of the Hashd Commission," the successor to the Hashd chair position. These split-off functions include the directorates of finance, administration, legal affairs, security (internal affairs), audit and monitoring, spiritual guidance, planning and procurement, and information. Executive Order 331 shows the inspector general of the PMF attached to the president of the Hashd Commission, though presumably with a degree of independence. (The name *president* has not yet replaced the common usage of *chairman* at the time of this writing.)

- **SECRETARY-GENERAL TO THE PRESIDENT.** The executive order identifies a “secretary-general” role within the president’s office, using the Arabic term *amin al-sirr al-aam*. The title has a venerable history in Iraq, connoting a very important surrogate to the top decisionmaker who speaks with the leader’s full authority.
- **CHIEF OF STAFF.** All the directorates not held by the president of the Hashd Commission are under the chief of staff, a role vacant in the PMF since 2017. The chief of staff has five deputies (covering Intelligence and Information, Supplies, Administration and Personnel, Fighters Affairs, and Operations) and directly controls eight “operations commands” that will include twenty-three PMF brigades, suggesting consolidation of the sixty-plus brigades existing at the time of this writing.

Abu Ali al-Basri, assistant to the vice chair of the Hashd, said in January 2020 that Order 331 represented a “paradigm shift” that would result in a “definitive framework for the Hashd,” including standardization of tactical units.⁵² Basri added that the executive order would pave the way for “the exit from the towns” of tactical units, while retaining administrative offices inside urban areas to support the families of martyrs.⁵³

ANALYTICAL OBSERVATIONS

The legal and regulatory history of the Hashd, as described earlier, is illuminating when subjected to scrutiny:

- First, it reveals that the idea of a Shia-led reserve army has been growing for some time. The seeds of the Hashd were sown years before June 2014. The Shia political leadership of Iraq mostly trusts the popular army model—in fact, those leaders in large part welcome such a structure sitting alongside the regular (U.S.-developed) military and counterterrorism forces, in case the forces fail or disagree with the Shia political leadership on Iraq’s future direction.⁵⁴

- Second, the Hashd force is widely conceived as needing a “separate but equal” status. Advocates of the Hashd want it to have the same legal standing as the military and police, yet they are proud of its distinct organizational culture, ranks, unit types, and chain of command.⁵⁵ The Hashd is now nominally covered by the same extensive body of laws as the ISF, yet the unique characteristics of the Hashd (see chapter 2) make a neat integration difficult. After five years of existence, its legal framework is still under three pages long, suggesting a split among parliamentarians over the Hashd’s future and that some senior Hashd commanders prefer to operate in a legal vacuum.
- Third, advocates of the Hashd do not want it to be folded within any of the established defense, interior, or counterterrorism ministries.⁵⁶ No formal measures have been attempted to turn the Hashd into a ministry yet; rather, among pro-Hashd Shia political movements, there is a level of comfort with a new security agency that answers directly to the prime minister or his designated alternative.⁵⁷ The alternative model—control of the Hashd by provincial governors—is associated with local separatism and has never gained much traction outside Sunni areas.
- Fourth, successive Iraqi prime ministers have found the need to repeatedly assert publicly their authority over the Hashd. This is because its longtime vice chair, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, dominated command and control of the Hashd and operated largely independently of the prime minister or his designated deputy, Hashd chair Faleh al-Fayyad. (See chapters 2, 4, and 5 for further discussion on command-and-control issues).
- Fifth, the roles and missions of the Hashd have not yet been defined anywhere—in law, in cabinet decree, or in executive order. This absence makes the Hashd uniquely underdefined: The roles and missions of the army and the police services are

defined by pre-2003 law⁵⁸ and the post-2005 Iraqi constitution.⁵⁹ The intelligence community and the Counter Terrorism Service's roles and missions are defined by the constitution⁶⁰ and by law.⁶¹ Only the Hashd is adrift, without definition of its core competencies, functions, roles, and missions.

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52. National Iraqi News Agency, "Abu Ali al-Basri Reveals," <http://bit.ly/38rczfU>.
53. Ibid.
54. In an interview with senior Iraqi leaders in the summer of 2019, one author received multiple separate statements that pointed to the need for a parallel security force with different ethos, culture, and loyalties to the traditional armed services. Michael Knights, interview with senior Iraqi leaders; names, places, and dates withheld at interviewees' request.
55. Again, interviews in summer 2019 with a range of Iraqi political and military leaders demonstrated an uneasiness with the view that the Hashd's basic culture was necessarily in need of modification. Deviations from the standards of the traditional armed services were often viewed as strengths of the Hashd. Michael Knights, interviews with senior Iraqi leaders; names, places, and dates withheld at interviewees' request.
56. The last of these is known as the Counter Terrorism Service.
57. Throughout many candid conversations, none of the Iraqi interviewees contacted for this project ever brought up the issue of turning the Hashd into a ministry, and none asked about this specific issue though it was recommended—a quite remarkable outcome, considering that many non-Iraqis assume ministry status is the preferred end state of Hashd advocates. Michael Knights, interviews with senior Iraqi leaders; names, places, and dates withheld at interviewees' request.
58. Iraqi Parliament, Law of Military Service and Retirement No. 3 (2010).
59. See Article 9 of the Iraqi Constitution of 2005, available at https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iraq_2005.pdf?lang=en.
60. Ibid.
61. Iraqi parliament, Counter Terrorism Service Law No. 31, August 13, 2016, <https://moj.gov.iq/uploaded/4420.pdf>.

2

Organizational Structure of the Hashd

The Hashd Commission and its subordinate sections and units constitute a major government institution with more than 150,000 personnel, a budget of 2.097 trillion Iraqi dinars (\$2.16 billion),¹ and operations in every Iraqi province outside the Kurdistan Region. A proto-ministry structure has emerged since 2014 that has not only a national-level staff system but also provincial-level administrative offices and a number of enabler units and command centers. In many cases, the staff directorates, enabler units, and command centers are very rudimentary, as befits a new institution operating on a shoestring budget.² This chapter will look at the Hashd institutional structure that has evolved out of military operations since June 2014 and out of the executive orders, cabinet decrees, and laws reviewed in the previous chapter.

NATIONAL-LEVEL LEADERSHIP

The prime minister's commission of al-Hashd al-Shabi, the entity's institutional home, consists of the following:

- **CHAIRMAN/PRESIDENT OF THE HASHD COMMISSION.** Formally termed the chairman until September 17, 2019—with this term still in use at the time of this writing—the president of the Hashd Commission is Iraqi national security advisor Faleh al-Fayyad,

according to the preference of former prime ministers Nouri al-Maliki, Haider al-Abadi, and now Adil Abdulmahdi. The Hashd president, however, can be drawn from anywhere, so the prime minister may hold the role himself or may delegate it with whatever powers he wishes for as long as he wishes.³ The Hashd Commission's president thus plays the same role as a civilian minister, albeit without formally holding ministerial rank, and at present he is dual-hatted as the cabinet-level national security advisor.

- **CHAIRMAN/PRESIDENT'S OFFICE.** At the time of this writing, the Hashd president has never had a large dedicated staff, underlining his figurehead role; real power is held at the deputy chair level. Indeed, the longtime chair, Fayyad, freely admits that the Hashd is not his main concern and that he does not closely control the commission.⁴ This attitude has given enormous leeway to the vice chair of the Hashd. But under Executive Order 331, issued in September 2019, much may change. First, the office is slated to take direct control of the directorates of finance, administration, legal affairs, security (internal affairs), audit and monitoring, spiritual guidance, planning and procurement, and information. Second, a potentially important actor is added to the Hashd president/chair's office, as introduced in the previous chapter: a secretary-general (*amin al-sirr al-aam*). This figure is likely to wield day-to-day operational authority under the president, particularly if the Hashd president continues to be dual-hatted, serving another important role.
- **DEPUTY CHAIRS' OFFICE.** The March 2018 prime ministerial executive order specified the need for two deputy or vice chairs of the Hashd Commission,⁵ though the long-serving vice chair Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis prevented the emergence of a second vice chair. (On February 17, 2016, Prime Minister Abadi appointed a second Hashd Commission deputy chair, Lt. Gen. [Ret.] Mohsen Kaabi, with responsibility for finances and administrative monitoring.⁶ Kaabi mysteriously withdrew from the position less than a month later, and Kataib Hezbollah broke

the news of his resignation.⁷) Abu Ali al-Basri, assistant to the vice chair of the Hashd, said in January 2020 that the vice chair was “the active leadership in the field, the one who assumes responsibility for all the formations of the Hashd,” concluding that (until his death) “most of the aspects were under the review of the martyr Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.”⁸ Until his death on January 3, 2020, all the Hashd staff directorates reported to Muhandis alone (see figure 2.1).⁹ He ruled on matters large and small, from the relative personnel apportioned to units to the naming and unique designators given to units.¹⁰ Under Executive Order 331, the deputy or vice chair’s office is nominally dissolved, but implementation of the order has yet to happen.

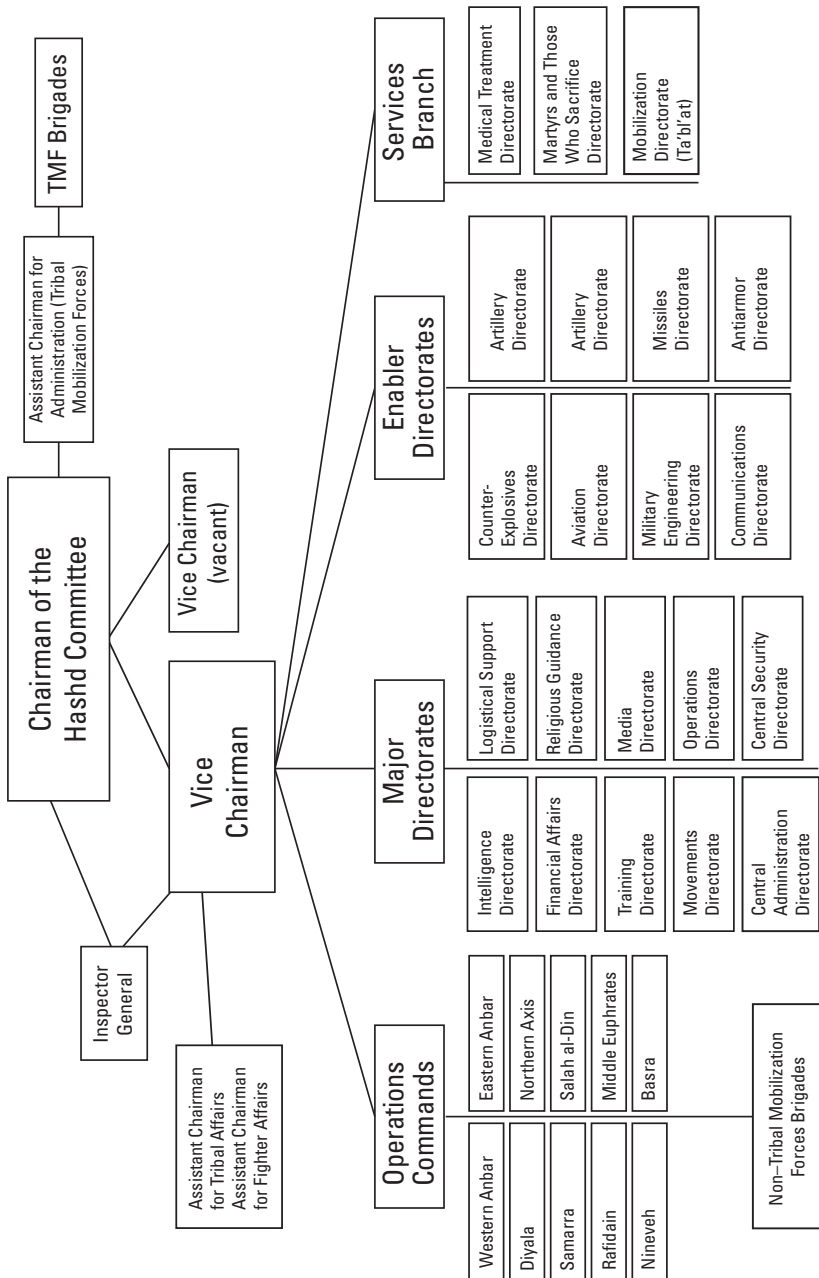
A committee was formed in February 2020 to elect a new deputy head and selected Abdulaziz al-Muhammadawi (Abu Fadak), a Kataib Hezbollah commander. The committee was composed of the aforementioned Abu Ali al-Basri, Abu Muntadher al-Husseini (of Badr), Abu Iman al-Bahali (of Kataib Hezbollah), Abu Ala al-Walai (of Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada), Laith al-Khazali (of Asaib Ahl al-Haq), and Ahmed al-Asadi (of Kataib Jund al-Imam). On February 20, 2020, four shrine foundation Hashd units (so-called *atabat*) rejected the committee’s decision, an indicator of resistance to replacing Muhandis with another official from the “Muhandis core” of the Hashd. (The four *atabat* units were Liwa Ansar al-Marjaiya [Brigade 44], Liwa Ali al-Akbar [Brigade 11], Firqat al-Abbas al-Qitaliyah, aka al-Abbas Combat Division [Brigade 26], and Firqat al-Imam Ali al-Qitaliyah [Brigade 2]).¹¹

- **CHIEF OF STAFF’S OFFICE.** While Muhandis controlled the deputy chair’s office, the role of Hashd chief of staff was minimal. This may now change. As recently as 2016, the chief of staff was Sadiq al-Saadawi, a Badr member, and from 2017 to 2019 the role’s existence was in doubt. (Saadawi became Badr’s senior official in Najaf.¹²) Under Executive Order 331, the chief of staff is to be restored as one of the top two or three posts in the Hashd. Under the executive order, the Hashd chief of staff has five deputies (covering intelligence and information, supplies, administration

and personnel, fighter affairs, and operations) and directly controls eight operations commands.¹³ The appointment of the chief of staff—requiring parliamentary and Joint Operations Center approval—will be important to watch. (For the Hashd Commission structure, see figure 2.2.) Although a chief of staff's office has been developed since 2019, at the time of this writing it did not yet have an appointed leader.¹⁴

- **ASSISTANT CHAIRS' OFFICES.** Until Executive Order 331, the Hashd operated a number of assistant chair offices with specialized functions, although the ongoing role of those offices is unclear.
 - **Hashd Commission assistant chair for tribal affairs.** Thamir al-Tamimi, a Badr member, has the formal title of assistant chair of the Hashd Commission for Tribal Affairs.¹⁵
 - **Hashd Commission assistant chair for fighter affairs.** In November 2018, Ali Shakir al-Khafaf, a leader of obscure background who emerged in 2017, was appointed by Muhandis as assistant chair of the Hashd Commission for Fighter Affairs, making him the overall head of three subdirectorates.¹⁶
 - **Hashd Commission assistant chair for administration.** In 2016, Prime Minister Abadi also appointed Hamid al-Shatri, a Dawa Party official and a confidant of Hashd chair (and national security advisor) Fayyad, as the Hashd Commission's administrative office manager.¹⁷ Shatri, who works for Fayyad, not for the late Muhandis, has special responsibility for the Sunni Tribal Mobilization Forces of the Hashd, whose development has been supported by the U.S.-led coalition and the Iraqi Ministry of Defense. According to then Hashd spokesman Ahmed al-Asadi, Shatri—and his boss, Fayyad—handled “90 percent” of Sunni Hashd business.¹⁸ The remaining 10 percent appear to be local Sunni tribal auxiliaries attached to individual Hashd tactical units.

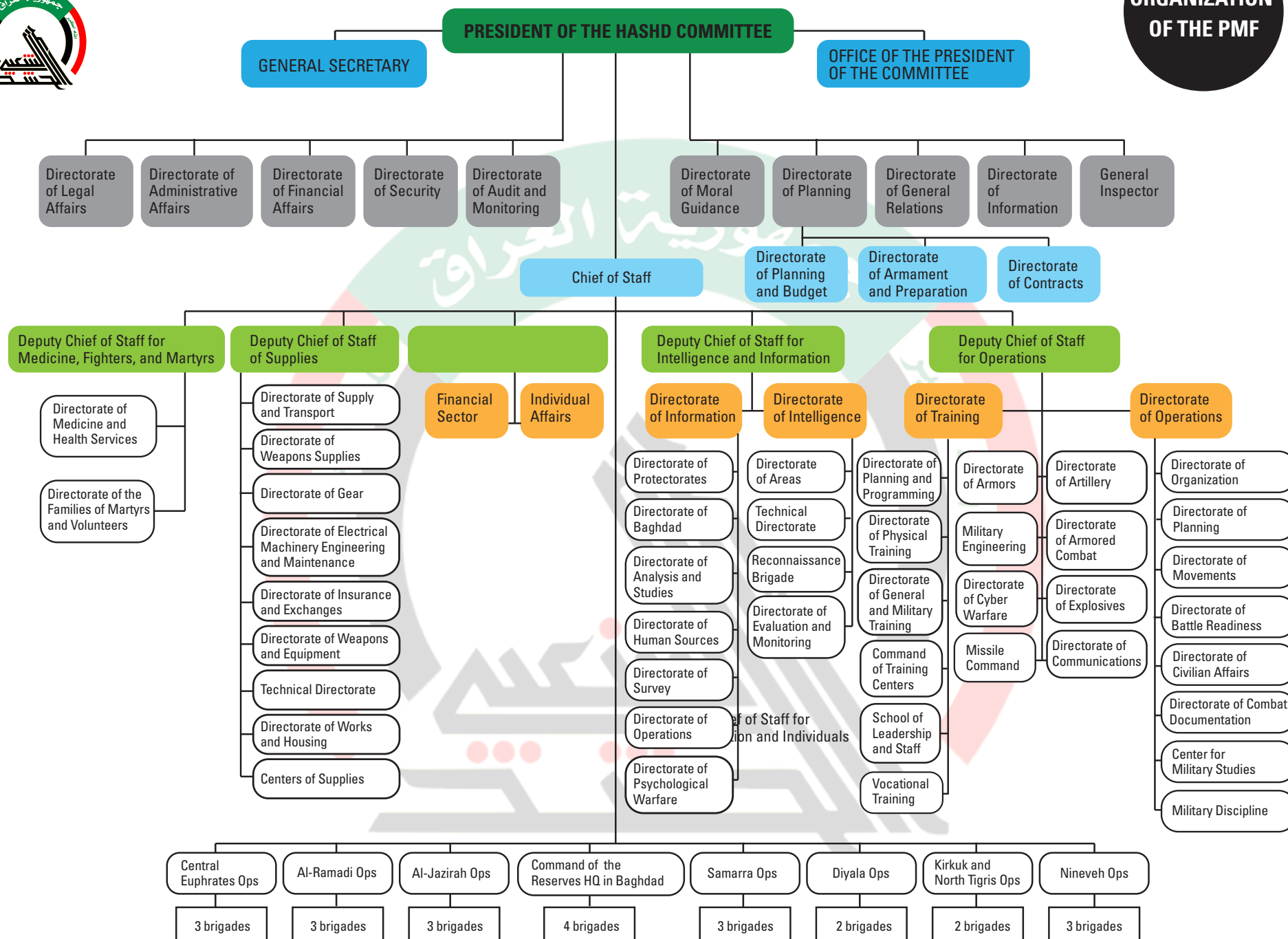
FIGURE 2.1.
PRE-EXECUTIVE ORDER 331 STRUCTURE OF THE HASHD



Note: This remains the extant structure at the time of this writing, with EO 331 changes not having been implemented in nearly any case. Note also the almost complete absence of hierarchical structure and the central position of the late Muhandis, who was the single active Hashd vice chair. Al-Abbas Combat Division, “Statement about some news of an appointment on social media,” February 20, 2020, available at https://twitter.com/AL_Abbas_combat/status/1231230060755062790.

FIGURE 2.2.
HASHD COMMISSION STRUCTURE DECREED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER 331

**ORGANIZATION
OF THE PMF**



STAFF DIRECTORATES UNDER THE HASHD PRESIDENT

Since its founding, the Hashd Commission has operated a system of staff directorates. Twenty-six directorates emerged in accordance with wartime exigencies and in the spirit of Executive Order 91 (2016), the Hashd law (2016), and Executive Order 75 (2018). Executive Order 331 calls for the directorates to be further subdivided, for a total of forty-six directorates. Further, the order identifies the following directorates as reporting directly to the Hashd president's office:

- **ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE.** Called the Central Administration Directorate before Executive Order 331, this body deals with the administration of fighter registration, payroll, and other entitlements. At the time of this writing, Sultan al-Musawi,¹⁹ a Kataib Hezbollah official, leads the directorate. Its previous director was Majid Rahim Saleh al-Wasiti, who died in late 2017, apparently of natural causes.²⁰
- **FINANCIAL AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE.** Qassim Dahif al-Zubaidi held the director post until he was assassinated in April 2018.²¹ The current director is the very low-profile Hussein Ismail Khalil, who is head of the Hashd office in Karbala and a member of Liwa Ali al-Akbar (Hashd Brigade 11), which is a Sistaniyun shrine unit.²²
- **SECURITY DIRECTORATE.** This directorate is led by Abu Zainab al-Lami, whose real name is Hussein Falah Aziz al-Lami²³ or simply Hussein al-Lami. He is an associate of the late Muhandis and likely a Kataib Hezbollah member from Baghdad.²⁴ The deputy director is Abu Kawthar al-Muhammadawi.²⁵ This group nominally monitors lapses in discipline and security within the Hashd. In parallel, it is developing rapidly into a potent internal affairs force with intelligence and special forces capabilities, which could support the power consolidation of Muhandis and Kataib Hezbollah. The unit's patch claims a connection to and authority from the prime minister's office, reading as follows: "Prime

Minister's Office, Security Directorate, Special Operations."²⁶ Under Executive Order 331, the directorate would work directly under the Hashd president or his office.

- **OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL.** On August 8, 2019, Abu Ali al-Basri (Adnan Ibrahim al-Najjar) was designated inspector general of the Hashd Commission.²⁷ He is a very senior Badr leader who led the organization's military forces from 1989 to 1997.²⁸ Before assuming his current role, Basri was often described as the overall "Hashd al-Shabi operations leader,"²⁹ which is distinct from the head of the Hashd Commission's Directorate for Operations (mentioned later).³⁰
- **RELIGIOUS GUIDANCE DIRECTORATE.** This directorate is led by Muhammad al-Haidari, an Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq member with close relations to Kataib Hezbollah and Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba.³¹ This was one of the first directorates to be developed in 2014. It offers classes on literacy and on computer and smartphone use, interspersed with teachings on the Iranian model of *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of the jurisprudent)—a way to indoctrinate students on the role of clerics under the Iranian regime.³²
- **PLANNING AND BUDGETING DIRECTORATE.** At the time of this writing, the directorate is led by Haidar al-Furaiji³³ and is concerned with the framework structure and planning, as well as with budgeting.³⁴ This directorate appears to be very small and to have limited function, but this could change under Executive Order 331, where three sections are envisaged: planning and budgeting, armament and preparation, and procurement contacting.
- **OTHER DIRECTORATES.** Other directorates that report directly to the Hashd president include legal, verification and oversight,

education,³⁵ public relations, and media. Public relations may include the functions undertaken by the Mobilization Directorate (*Tabiat*), which is led by Sheikh Abdul Rahman al-Kadhimi³⁶ and undertakes activities such as Quran readings, iftars during Ramadan, and visits to martyrs' homes. The Media Directorate is led by Muhannad al-Aqabi at the time of this writing, and is part of the War Media Team. The Hashd's spokesman is Abdul Hadi al-Darraj, a former Jaish al-Mahdi supporter who defected to Maliki's faction.³⁷

INTELLIGENCE AND OPERATIONS STAFF DIRECTORATES UNDER THE CHIEF OF STAFF

Other longstanding and new Hashd directorates will be directly attached to the more powerful Hashd chief of staff position created under Executive Order 331. Branches, directorates, and sections under the chief of staff include the following:

- **INTELLIGENCE AND INFORMATION BRANCH.** Before Executive Order 331, the intelligence directorate worked directly with Muhandis and was led by Abu Iman al-Bahali,³⁸ a Kataib Hezbollah-leaning official credited by Iraqi contacts with powerful human and technical intelligence collection capabilities.³⁹ This unit appears highly active in building profiles of political and commercial leaders in Iraq, as well as in generating military intelligence on U.S. military presence and Iraqi security force leaders.⁴⁰ If Executive Order 331 is implemented, a range of directorates and functions will be placed under one Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence and Information. These include the following:
 - **Intelligence Directorate.** In the future envisaged by Executive Order 331, the Intelligence Directorate will consist of the following sections: areas (geographic regions), technical, assessment and monitoring, and a reconnaissance brigade (which appears to encompass the drones of the previous Aviation Directorate, operating since 2017).⁴¹

- **Information Directorate.** Under Executive Order 331, this directorate will include the following sections: areas (provinces and Baghdad), analysis and studies, human intelligence, surveys, information operations, and psychological warfare.

- **OPERATIONS BRANCH.** Before Executive Order 331, this body tracked operations and handled coordination issues between Hashd forces in different regions. Unless authorized by Muhandis, it could not command forces to move, and it served more of an operations role.⁴² It is led by Abu Muntadher al-Husseini (birth name Tahseen Abid Murat al-Abboudi),⁴³ the pre-2014 chief of staff for Saraya Ashura; a former Badr veteran, he also served as Prime Minister Abdulmahdi's advisor for Hashd affairs.⁴⁴ If Executive Order 331 is implemented, a range of directorates and functions will be placed under one deputy chief of staff for operations, as follows:
 - **Operations Directorate.** This body is intended to have sections for organization, plans, readiness, civilian affairs, combat documentation (including media operations), military studies, military regulation, and "movements." The last of these appears to be a continuation of the "Movements Directorate" led by Abu Ahmad al-Rubaiawi (Jawad Kadhim al-Rubaiawi),⁴⁵ which focused on "blue-force tracking" of Hashd units and updating a plot map of friendly forces.⁴⁶
 - **Training Directorate.** Having evolved from the General Directorate for Training (*al-Mudiriya al-Aama lil-Tadrib, or Muawiniya al-Tadrib*),⁴⁷ this directorate is led by Abu Bilal al-Jabiri (Kadhim Jabr Jasim al-Jabiri) at the time of this writing.⁴⁸ Comprising mostly Badr and Kataib Hezbollah personnel,⁴⁹ it is well organized and heavily publicized. Training focuses on proficiency in light and medium weapons, interspersed with religious and ideological instruction (see the earlier section on the Religious Guidance Directorate).⁵⁰ Further details are discussed in the training section of chapter 3. Under Executive Order 331, the training directorate is intended to develop

sections for planning and programming, physical training, general military training, leadership and staff training, and vocational training.

- **MEDICAL, FIGHTERS, AND MARTYRS BRANCH.** Led by Deputy Chief of Staff Khafaf, this branch includes two directorates focused on the welfare of fighters and families:
 - **Martyrs and Those Who Sacrifice Directorate.** This directorate was led by Ibrahim al-Qurayshi until November 2018, whereupon it was taken over by Zainab al-Khalisi.⁵¹ It has a central committee and subgroups (e.g., benefits, housing, healthcare). Factions spend their own money through branches of the directorate, and some centralized money is allocated via the directorate as well.⁵²
 - **Medical Treatment Directorate.** This directorate (*Mudiriyat al-Tababa*, aka Medical Services Directorate) is led by Zhafir Fadel Hussein,⁵³ and includes up to thirty mobile healthcare teams capable of providing medical services and pharmaceutical support to military or civilian communities.⁵⁴ The Hashd Medical Directorate is part of the Deputy Head Office of the Affairs of the Fighters and Martyrs (*Muawaniya Shuun al-Muqatilin wa al-Shuhada*), as is the Care and Social Affairs Directorate (*Mudiriyat al-Raaya wa al-Shuun al-Ijtima'iya*).
- **PROVISIONING BRANCH.** Executive Order 331 appears to anticipate a planned “build-out” of the longstanding Logistical Support Directorate (*Muawaniya al-Dam al-Logisti*).⁵⁵ This unit was led by Abu Hawra al-Ahmadi, a Badr officer, until at least 2016, after which Ahmadi moved to lead the Hashd office in Wasit.⁵⁶ It is currently led by al-Hajj Ammar Adel, an otherwise obscure figure.⁵⁷ This branch is evolving from an inconsequential committee into a more capable institution. It started by coordinating financial donation drives for major operations, with donations gathered by other Hashd units not themselves participating in the operation,⁵⁸ though it appears to be professionalizing

and taking on more functions. Under Executive Order 331, the new branch would have directorates for supply and transport, ammunition, electrical and mechanical engineering, procurement, arms and equipment, technical affairs, civil works and housing, and provisions depots. One unanswered question is whether procurement powers would be held at the higher level of the Planning and Budgeting Directorate within the Hashd president's office, or with the supplies branch under the Hashd chief of staff.

- **ADMINISTRATION AND INDIVIDUALS (PERSONNEL) BRANCH.** Executive Order 331 calls for a small branch containing a directorate for finance and one for personnel affairs. These directorates could be small liaison offices, with main functions held at the equivalent directorates within the Hashd president's office; alternatively, functions held at the higher level could be "hollow" offices. Tracking this issue will determine how much power has really been redistributed within the Hashd system.

HASHD COMMISSION "ENABLER" UNITS UNDER THE CHIEF OF STAFF

Though not specified anywhere in the March 2018 prime ministerial executive order, the Hashd Commission has historically maintained a centralized pool of antitank weapons, artillery, missiles, and tanks. In almost all cases, these contingents started as nationalized Badr units.⁵⁹ Given that the Badr Organization was once a fully fledged division of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps during and after the Iran–Iraq War, it plays a leading role in the centralized maintenance, provisioning, and operation of antitank weapons, artillery, missiles, and armor within the Hashd. Until 2014, the Hashd Artillery Directorate was known as the Badr Divisional Artillery Battalion.⁶⁰ Likewise, the Hashd Tank Directorate was known as the Badr Tank Battalion until 2015.⁶¹ Under Executive Order 331, those units will be placed under the Hashd chief of staff and his deputy chief of staff for operations. Enabler units include the following:

- **ARTILLERY DIRECTORATE.** The Hashd Artillery Directorate (*Mudiriyat al-Madafiya*) is led by Abu Majid al-Basri (Ahmad Sami al-Hilali), the head of Badr's artillery battalion.⁶² It nominally answers directly to the Hashd Commission headquarters—meaning Muhandis, until his death, who was a major sponsor of the force⁶³—but it is likely to answer to the Badr leadership first and foremost. The unit has nine kataib, which equate to batteries in this case.⁶⁴ There are at least six batteries of towed artillery, with each using a single type of artillery piece: D-20 152 mm howitzers, D-30 122 mm howitzers, HM-40 122 mm howitzers, M-46 130 mm howitzers, and 130 mm M-46 and Type-59 field guns.⁶⁵ The directorate also fields two batteries—with eight launchers each—of eight-barrel HM-27 Iranian-built 122 mm multiple-launch rocket systems on Toyota pickup trucks, and one battery—with eight launchers—of forty-barrel HM-20 Iranian-built 122 mm multiple-launch rocket systems on Mercedes-Benz trucks.⁶⁶ Badr appears to have concentrated multiple batteries of tube and rocket artillery in key Hashd battlegrounds such as Fallujah and Tal Afar. The directorate also conducts training for groups of Hashd artillerists from different units in locations such as Balad,⁶⁷ Karbala,⁶⁸ and the artillery school in Speicher.⁶⁹

- **MISSILES DIRECTORATE (*MUDIRIYAT AL-SAWARIKH*).** Originally known as the Missiles Battalion (*Katibat al-Sawarikh*), this is an offshoot of the Artillery Directorate. According to interview material gathered from the directorate by Aymenn Al-Tamimi, the battalion was created by Muhandis on November 15, 2015, and was designated as a Hashd directorate only in 2018. It is claimed that the original cadre for the unit were Kataib Hezbollah operatives and that its first leader was a Muhandis appointee, Abu Jafar al-Tamimi, who was removed from the post in spring 2019.⁷⁰ It would appear from videos posted by the directorate that it is primarily an improvised rocket-assisted munitions unit, with videos showing a ten-barrel IRAM on a heavy truck and smaller three-barrel IRAMs on pickup trucks. The directorate uses very rudimentary flatbed trucks with crane arms to carry spare rounds and reload the IRAMs.⁷¹ Other Hashd units (e.g., Quwat

Waad Allah, or Brigade 33)⁷² have grouped IRAMs in their own “missile battalions,” and it appears that only Kataib Hezbollah missiles have been centrally grouped under Hashd Commission control thus far. Though Missiles Directorate spokesmen have hinted at the existence of hidden and more advanced missiles, possibly of Iranian origin, there is no open source confirmation of Iranian long-range tactical rockets or short-range ballistic missiles being operated by the Missiles Directorate.⁷³

- **ARMOR DIRECTORATE.** Formerly the Hashd Central Tank Directorate, the Armor Directorate is led by Badr member Abu Dhanun al-Khalidi.⁷⁴ Again, this formation nominally answers directly to the Hashd Commission headquarters but is clearly overwhelmingly Badr in composition. Overall, the directorates’ tank strength does not appear to exceed company strength (i.e., fourteen to twenty tanks) and includes T-55s⁷⁵ and T-72s, the latter of which were seemingly gifted to Badr by Iran in 2014.⁷⁶ The formation also operates about forty tracked personnel carriers of the M-113, BMP-1, and BTR-50 types, split into three companies or battalions.⁷⁷ The unit at the time of this writing maintains deployments in western Anbar, Diyala, and Hamrin.⁷⁸ It also operates a depot and maintenance workshop in Camp Speicher, near Tikrit, where many Hashd factions bring their tanks and armored vehicles for repair or source spare parts. The directorate base at Speicher runs classes for tank operators and mechanics.⁷⁹ The unit sends trainers out to Hashd units and can also supply tanks to factions on special request.⁸⁰ In one example, the armor directorate trained members of Liwa al-Taff (Brigade 20) about the operation and maintenance of their own T-55 tanks.⁸¹
- **ANTIARMOR DIRECTORATE.** Of the enabler units, only the anti-tank unit appears to have a real battlefield record as a centralized pool of weapons that can be shifted to key areas. The Directorate of Combating Armored Vehicles (*Mudiriyat Muqatalatal-Duru or Muqawamat al-Duru*) was Badr’s previous antiarmor unit. The unit had been strongly supported by Muhandis, with a Muhandis

trustee, Fadhel Abdul Hussein, in command. The unit is based at Camp Speicher, where it has established the first antiarmor school for the Hashd. The school has a shooting range, teaching labs, and simulator systems. The directorate's forces have extensive combat experience in both Syria and Iraq, areas where the art of modern antiarmor warfare has been intensively practiced. In the field, the antiarmor unit has four battalions or regiments, which are spread out as detachments on key fronts. It has supported numerous Hashd units, most frequently Liwa Ali al-Akbar (Brigade 11), al-Abbas Combat Division (Brigade 26), Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada (Brigade 14), Asaib Ahl al-Haq (Brigade 41), and Kataib Hezbollah (Brigade 45). Antiarmor teams have been sent to key battlefronts to provide defensive resilience against armored Islamic State car bombs or as a means of safely clearing large numbers of static car bombs that the Islamic State would leave as unattended booby traps. The unit uses a range of antiarmor weapons, including Iranian antitank guided missiles (ATGMs) such as the Toophan (a BGM-71 copy), the Dehlavieh (a 9M133 Kornet copy), and the Saegheh (an M47 copy); Russian ATGMs such as the 9M133 Kornet, the 9M113 Konkurs, the 9K111 Fagot, and the 9M14 Malyutka; and Iranian-made SPG-9 recoilless rifles, plus RPG-29 and RPG-7 tandem-warhead munitions.

- **COUNTER-EXPLOSIVES DIRECTORATE (*MUDIRIYAT MUKAFIHAT AL-MUTAFAJJIRAT*)**. This unit, also known as the Field Engineering Directorate (*Mudiriyat Handasat al-Maydan*), is led by Abu Shams al-Akili, whose full name is Ahmad Abd Juma al-Akili.⁸² This directorate undertakes battlefield area clearance of mines, improvised explosive devices, and explosive remnants of war.
- **MILITARY ENGINEERING DIRECTORATE**. This unit is led by Abu al-Kufi (Abd Nuama Safr),⁸³ who is also described as Muhandis's executive assistant. It is dispersed across the combat brigades, with limited pooling of engineering functions held at the Hashd Commission level.

- **COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTORATE.** Led by Hashim Hilal,⁸⁴ this unit has not previously had a high profile.
- **ELECTRONIC WARFARE DIRECTORATE.** This unit appears to have been newly established in Executive Order 331. No information is available about it at the time of this writing, perhaps because it is only at the aspirational stage.

HASHD COMMISSION OFFICES

The March 2018 prime ministerial executive order specifies a rank structure that includes a rank below deputy chairman: commander of region. These leaders (and their staffs) operate at the provincial level. In southern Iraq, the regional directorates mainly provide administrative local branch functions of the Central Administration Directorate, such as payroll, martyrdom allowances, and other entitlements. The provincial Hashd Commission offices are currently under the title Muawaniyat Shuun al-Muqatilin wa al-Shuhada (roughly, Deputy Head Office of the Affairs of the Fighters and Martyrs).⁸⁵ In the liberated predominantly Sunni provinces, the regional directorates have a greater operational role, effectively commanding and handling all administrative duties for the local Hashd forces of the province. (See table 2.1 for the list of region commanders by province.)

TABLE 2.1.
HASHD COMMANDERS BY REGION

PROVINCE	POLITICAL OR MILITIA ALIGNMENT	COMMANDER OF REGION
Babil	Ammar al-Hakim's Reform and Development Alliance	Haidar al-Nasrawi (succeeding Luay al-Zamili) ^a
Baghdad	Saraya Ansar al-Aqidah	Abu Dhiya al-Saghir (Jamal al-Din al-Saghir), the brother of Jalal al-Din al-Saghir of Saraya Ansar al-Aqidah ^b

(table continued on next page)

PROVINCE	POLITICAL OR MILITIA ALIGNMENT	COMMANDER OF REGION
Basra	Likely ties to Liwa al-Muntazir	Ammar Faris Matouq al-Jafari (Abu Yasser), ^c the former assistant commander of the region before the assassination of the previous commander, Salam al-Dirawi, in July 2015
Dhi Qar	Badr	Abu Dua al-Shatri ^d
Diwaniyah	Badr	Ahmed al-Awadi, ^e seemingly a Badr-backed independent
Diyala	Badr	Mushtaq al-Fayyad, ^f seemingly a Badr-backed independent
Karbala	Liwa Ali al-Akbar	Hussein Ismail Khalil, ^g of the “shrine” militia Liwa Ali al-Akbar, who is also the Hashd finance director ^h
Kirkuk	Badr	Muhammad al-Musawi ⁱ
Maysan	Ansar Allah al-Awfiyah	Led by Haidar Jabbar al-Baidhani, ^j who is close to Ansar Allah al-Awfiyah (Brigade 19)
al-Muthanna	Badr	Yasir Abd al-Amir Attiyeh ^k
Najaf	Firqat al-Imam Ali al-Qitaliyah	Qasim al-Khaqani, ^l who is a cousin of Tahir al-Khaqani of Firqat al-Imam Ali al-Qitaliyah
Salah al-Din	Possibly Saraya al-Salam	Sheikh Hayder al-Yaqoubi, ^m a Shia cleric who has been involved in the al-Askari shrine in Samarra
Wasit	Badr	Khaled al-Gharaibawi ⁿ

Notes to Table 2.1.

- a. For the update, interview with Babil Muawaniya, February 5, 2020; for the earlier leadership, League of Babil Activists, post on JustPaste.it, May 15, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/luayzamilibabilhashdmay2019>.
- b. "Source in Saraya Ansar al-Aqidah: Sheikh Jalal al-Din al-Saghir and his sons and his brother and his [brother's] sons are at the forefront of the mujahidin in the liberation operations," Buratha News, October 18, 2015, <http://burathanews.com/arabic/news/277966>.
- c. Hashd Commission Basra office, post on JustPaste.it, June 5, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/ammalfarisjaafaribasra>.
- d. Hashd Commission Dhi Qar office, post on JustPaste.it, July 31, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/abuduashatiri>.
- e. Sayyid Ahmad al-Awadi, July 30, 2019, post on JustPaste.it, <https://justpaste.it/ahmadawadihashddiwaniya>.
- f. Hashd Commission Diyala office, post on JustPaste.it, May 13, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/mushtaqfayadhdiyala>.
- g. Hashd Commission Karbala office, post on JustPaste.it, July 12, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/hashdkarbaladirectorjul2019>.
- h. "Ilam al-Hashd al-Shabi al-Muqaddas," post on JustPaste.it, May 4, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/husseinismailkhalilmay2019>.
- i. "Director of the Hashd office in Kirkuk: we have participated in the bringing about of security and reduction in the crime rate," al-Hashed.net, December 12, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2oHUyR>.
- j. Hashd Commission Maysan office, post on JustPaste.it, January 14, 2016, <https://justpaste.it/haiderjabberbaydani>.
- k. As of January 2020: see <https://justpaste.it/muthannamuawaniyajan2020>.
- l. Fatiq al-Ghazali al-Najafi, post on JustPaste.it, July 23, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/qasimkhaqaninajaf>.
- m. Ammar Jeer Khalil, post on JustPaste.it, October 16, 2018, <https://justpaste.it/hayderyaqoubisalahaldinoct2018>.
- n. Response to query placed with Wasit branch of Muawaniya Shuun al-Muqatilin wa al-Shuhada, February 5, 2019.

HASHD COMMISSION INTERACTION WITH ANBAR AND NINEVEH

Anbar and Nineveh are special provinces where there are no Hashd Commission offices but where special officers act as liaisons between the Sunni Hashd and local security forces and other authorities.⁸⁶ The special liaison officers report to Hashd Commission administrative head Shatri, who, as discussed earlier, works directly for Fayyad, the chairman of the Hashd Commission. In Anbar, the liaison officer is Maj. Gen. Ali Hussein al-Maliki, who was appointed in late December 2019. He is referred to as the “leader of the Anbar Hashd” and functions as an administrative overseer of the tribal Hashd units in the province.⁸⁷ In Nineveh, the officer in question is Brig. Gen. Muhammad Ismail al-Shabaki, who was appointed in late August 2019.⁸⁸

This unique status extends to the treatment of most of the locally grown Hashd units in Anbar and Nineveh. The U.S.-led international coalition established Tribal Mobilization Forces (TMF) in Anbar and Nineveh, though the Iraqi government did not allow similar schemes in Salah al-Din, Kirkuk, or Diyala. The TMF architecture saw the U.S.-led coalition transfer funding and equipment to Iraq’s Ministry of Defense, which was then transferred to the aforementioned office of Shatri, the Hashd Commission administrative head, with special responsibility for the TMF. In Anbar, the TMF grew to 16,000 registered personnel by 2017, and in Nineveh the TMF grew to 18,000 registered troops by 2018.⁸⁹ Outside the TMF framework, other Hashd units raised very small Sunni auxiliary subunits,⁹⁰ and some small units of Sunni auxiliaries were raised as numbered Hashd brigades.⁹¹ In May 2019, the U.S.-led coalition received instructions from Hashd Commission chair Fayyad to cease direct communications with TMF units, a situation that has not been remedied at the time of this writing.⁹²

HASHD OPERATIONS COMMANDS AND SECTORS

The next rank down, commander of formation, is the divisional command or major general equivalent. The fourth section of Executive Order 91, the basis of the Hashd Law, notes that Hashd divisional commanders require parliamentary approval, as with the regular armed forces under Iraq's constitution and laws,⁹³ though the nonuse of divisional command nomenclature means that constitutional and legal provisions are not applied. The only Hashd officers who hold such a divisional-level rank are the leaders of the Hashd operations commands (*qiyadat al-amiliyat*), which are sometimes referred to as "axis" (*mahwar*) commands. These are headquarters that loosely coordinate multiple Hashd brigades and some support elements and enablers within a specific area. An operations command often has subordinate operations sectors or areas of responsibility (*qati amiliyat* or *qati masuliya*, respectively).⁹⁴ Until Executive Order 331, the Hashd operations commands were not authorized in any law, cabinet decree, or executive order. By September 2019, ten operations commands had emerged. Following Executive Order 331, eight are authorized to continue, namely:

- **WESTERN ANBAR AXIS COMMAND.** This command is led by Qasim Muslih, the commander of Liwa al-Tafuf (Hashd Brigade 13).⁹⁵ This sector is led from al-Qaim and has a subsector headquartered at Rutbah.⁹⁶ The Western Anbar Axis appears to overlap with a new Hashd al-Jazirah Operations Command, with the latter being led by an unknown Kataib Hezbollah officer, intended to give KH command autonomy from the Western Anbar Axis.⁹⁷ Kataib Hezbollah and Kataib al-Imam Ali play a powerful role in both subsectors and control local border crossings to Syria, including an unofficial crossing point at Akashat, to skirt the U.S.-backed Syrian rebel base near the Baghdad-Damascus highway at al-Tanf.⁹⁸ In the future, under Executive Order 331, the al-Jazirah Operations Command appears to be replacing the Western Anbar Axis. This command is intended to have three brigades under Executive Order 331.

- **RAMADI (EASTERN ANBAR) AXIS COMMAND.** This command is led by Tahir al-Khaqani, who also leads the Firqat al-Imam Ali al-Qitaliyah (Hashd Brigade 2).⁹⁹ An operations sector within the command covers Tharthar and is led by Liwa al-Muntazir (Brigade 7).¹⁰⁰ This command is intended to have three brigades under Executive Order 331.
- **MIDDLE EUPHRATES OPERATIONS COMMAND.** Led by retired army Maj. Gen. Ali al-Hamdani of Liwa Ali al-Akbar (Brigade 11)¹⁰¹ and largely composed of Liwa Ali al-Akbar and the al-Abbas Combat Division (Brigade 26), this command covers the desert flank of the shrine cities of Karbala and Najaf, from Karbala to Nukhayb and thereafter to the Saudi border. This command is intended to have three brigades under Executive Order 331.
- **NINEVEH OPERATIONS COMMAND.** This command is led by Muhandis appointee Ali Kadhim al-Musawi,¹⁰² with a powerful deputy from Kataib al-Imam Ali (Brigade 40), Abu Ali al-Karwei.¹⁰³ Another individual described as assistant/deputy commander of the Hashd Nineveh Operations Command is Haidar Abu Hadma (Haidar al-Hadamawi),¹⁰⁴ who has been involved with a smaller faction called Quwat al-Imam Hassan al-Mojtaba.¹⁰⁵ On August 2, 2018, the Hashd Western Nineveh Axis/Operations Command and Eastern Nineveh Axis/Operations Command were reduced to operations sectors under the written order of Muhandis.¹⁰⁶ This command is intended to have three brigades under Executive Order 331.
- **DIYALA OPERATIONS COMMAND.** This command is led by Talib al-Musawi,¹⁰⁷ a Badr commander. Based at Camp Ashraf, this command appears to dominate the government's army-level Diyala Operations Command, which is based in Baquba.¹⁰⁸ It exercises operational control over Hashd Brigades 4, 23, 24, and 110—all Badr formations—plus Liwa al-Taff (Brigade 20).¹⁰⁹ The command

seems to include a large operations sector in the Khanaqin area, which is the main base for Hashd Brigade 110 and Liwa al-Taff (Brigade 20).¹¹⁰ Neither the Ashraf-based operations command nor the Khanaqin-based operations sector seems to have operational control of Asaib Ahl al-Haq forces in northern Diyala.¹¹¹ This command is intended to have two brigades under Executive Order 331.

- **SAMARRA OPERATIONS COMMAND.** This command is led by Abu Hassan al-Halfi, a Saraya al-Salam commander.¹¹² This headquarters mirrors the Iraqi government's preexisting Samarra Operations Command. The Samarra urban area is the exclusive preserve of Saraya al-Salam, with no other Hashd groups allowed to operate in the city without its permission.¹¹³ This command is intended to have three brigades under Executive Order 331.
- **KIRKUK AND NORTH TIGRIS OPERATIONS COMMAND (AKA NORTHERN AXIS).** Led by Abu Ridha Yilmaz al-Najjar,¹¹⁴ this axis is based in Tuz Khormatu and covers Kirkuk, northern Salah al-Din, and northern Diyala.¹¹⁵ It appears to have mirrored in coverage the Iraqi government's preexisting Tigris Operations Command, which was focused on areas disputed by Kurdistan and the Iraqi central government. The Northern Front Hashd has a shared "martyrs' training camp" at Taza, run by Quwat al-Turkmen (Brigade 16) but used by all Hashd forces.¹¹⁶ One operations sector is based in Bashir and Taza and another in Amerli. This axis was dominated by Muhandis and senior Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps–Qods Force operations officers.¹¹⁷ This command is intended to have two brigades under Executive Order 331.
- **BAGHDAD RESERVE OPERATIONS COMMAND.** This is a new command that was not identified before Executive Order 331. It is a large formation, with four brigades (of the twenty-three consolidated and enlarged units). It will likely control the Baghdad belts area guarding the main approaches to the city. No further

information is known at the timing of this writing. The command is intended to have four brigades under Executive Order 331.

The reduced number of operations commands from ten to eight (including the addition of Baghdad) means three are being folded under Executive Order 331, namely:

- **HASHD SALAH AL-DIN OPERATIONS COMMAND.** Led by al-Haj Safa al-Saadi, an Asaib Ahl al-Haq commander, and also deputized by an AAH commander,¹¹⁸ this command is located in Tikrit. It covers the same areas as the Iraqi government's Salah al-Din Operations Command. On August 2, 2018, the Bayji Hashd Operations Command was reduced to an operations sector and placed under the Hashd Salah al-Din Operations Command. In actuality, the Hashd Salah al-Din Operations Command is limited to commanding in areas south of Samarra,¹¹⁹ with a patchwork of Hashd groups operating autonomously in Bayji and with Samarra cut out of the operations command area.
- **HASHD BASRA AXIS COMMAND.** Running this command is Abu Hanan al-Basri (Mahdi Saleh al-Basri), the leader of the Basra-based Liwa al-Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (Brigade 1).¹²⁰ Interestingly, the Basra axis has sought permission to develop a marine patrol boat and combat diver unit for monitoring the offshore and oil-loading terminals.¹²¹
- **AL-RAFIDAIN OPERATIONS COMMAND.** Led by Maj. Gen. Nadhim al-Saadi, who is also the commander of Badr's Brigade 10,¹²² this Maysan-based command is home to a second Badr Hashd brigade, 22.¹²³

HASHD COMMISSION TACTICAL UNITS

The March 2018 prime ministerial executive order specifies a structure of lower-ranking commanders, including those of fighting forces, combat

groups, combat subgroups, and combat detachments. It is unclear how those units line up with Iraqi military ranks, but “fighting forces” appears to refer to brigades; “combat groups” to regiments, sometimes referred to as battalions; “combat subgroups” to companies, sometimes referred to as squadrons; and “combat detachments” to platoons.¹²⁴

In reality, the individually numbered units of the Hashd—the distinct factional fighting forces—are not structured or labeled in an orderly manner. Though nominally the same size and scale, numbered Hashd brigades have names that are variously prefixed with *liwa* (brigade), *saraya* (company or squadron), *quwa* (force), *kataib* (different sized units depending on context), and *fawj* (battalion or regiment).¹²⁵ The descriptors do not relate to relative unit size, nor is there a standardized organizational structure for Hashd tactical units akin to the known structure of an Iraqi army or Federal Police brigade, battalion, or company.¹²⁶ This structure could change depending on how Executive Order 331 is implemented, with the intent seemingly to consolidate the more than sixty Hashd brigades into twenty-three more-standardized brigade units. Chapter 6 of this study will explore the differences between the notional and actual structure in greater depth.

CONTROVERSIES OVER MARINE AND AIR FORCES

There is, at present, no official Hashd air force. Though a purported document with Muhandis’s signature ordering the establishment of an air force command circulated on social media on September 5, 2019, an authorized source in the Hashd Commission quickly confirmed that the document was fake.¹²⁷ At some future point, the Hashd could develop either a pooled enabler unit of drones or a new light aircraft or helicopter arm, which could be built out from the aforementioned Aviation Directorate (soon to be part of the Reconnaissance Brigade of the Intelligence Directorate under Executive Order 331). It is also possible that Hashd could seek to enter the air defense field, especially if Hashd units continue to suffer the effects of mystery strikes attributed to Israel.

The Hashd Commission also maintains a small naval force led by

al-Haj Abu Nur al-Ghazi (Abdul Rahim al-Ghazi),¹²⁸ who is connected with Liwa al-Muntazir (Brigade 7; which also runs the Basra Hashd office).¹²⁹ The Hashd's naval formation is called Quwat al-Rasul al-Bahariya ("Messenger Naval Forces"),¹³⁰ and concerns itself with operations involving Iraq's bodies of water, such as rivers, Samarra marshes, and Lake Tharthar in Anbar province.¹³¹ As noted previously, the Hashd Basra axis has sought permission to develop a marine patrol boat and combat diver unit for monitoring the offshore and oil-loading terminals.¹³² Those forces also played a role in the search for bodies after the Mosul drowning disaster in 2019.¹³³

NOTES

1. The 2019 budget allocated \$2.16 billion (a fifth higher than 2018). See Omar al-Nidawi, "The Growing Economic and Political Role of Iraq's PMF," Middle East Institute, May 21, 2019.
2. In 2019, comparative figures show the Hashd with 2.097 trillion Iraqi dinars (\$2.16 billion) of funding versus 22.525 trillion Iraqi dinars (\$18.93 billion) of non-Hashd spending on security, including 11.703 trillion Iraqi dinars (\$9.83 billion) for the Ministry of Interior and 6.05 trillion Iraqi dinars (\$5.08 billion) for the Ministry of Defense. See Robert Tollast, Yesar Al-Maleki, and Harry Istepanian, "Iraq's 2019 Draft Budget Law: A Turning Point in Iraq's Reconstruction?" Iraq Energy Institute, October 29, 2018.
3. See the Popular Mobilization Commission Law of 2016 in Annex E of this study.
4. Michael Knights, interview with Faleh al-Fayyad, June 12, 2019.
5. See Annex G of this study.
6. See Jessa Rose Dury-Agri, Omer Kassim, and Patrick Martin, *Iraqi Security Forces and Popular Mobilization Forces: Orders of Battle* (Washington DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2017), 33, <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/iraqi-security-forces-and-popular-mobilization-forces-orders-battle-0>.
7. "Insihab al-Kaabi min Mansibihi Naiban li-Rais Hayat al-Hashd al-Shabi li-Shuun al-Idara" (Withdrawal of Kaabi from his position as deputy for the head of the al-Hashd al-Shabi Commission for matters of administration), *al-Masalah*, March 10, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2os7Ulj>.
8. National Iraqi News Agency, "Abu Ali al-Basri Reveals the Priorities of the al-Hashd al-Shabi Leadership for the Next Stage," January 30, 2020, <http://bit.ly/38rczfU>.
9. See Nancy Ezzeddine, Matthias Sulz, and Erwin van Veen, "The Hashd Is Dead, Long Live the Hashd! Fragmentation and Consolidation," CRU Report, Clingendael—The Netherlands Institute of International Relations, July 25, 2019, 15. On the basis of

fieldwork, the authors note: "It was also primarily Al-Muhandis who ordered key administrative changes, including: the creation of a smartcard salary payment system linking individual Hashd fighters directly to the PMF [Popular Mobilization Forces] Commission (instead of payments flowing to individual fighters via armed groups); the redeployment of Hashd offices and camps from cities to more rural areas; the deregistration of a number of Hashd groups and fighters; and the establishment of regular training camps for Hashd fighters. In the process, he tightened his grip on the institution."

10. "A Hashd of All Its Volunteers, or of All Its Factions?" *Inside Iraqi Politics*, no. 144, 6.
11. Al-Abbas Combat Division, "Statement about some news of an appointment on social media," February 20, 2020, available at https://twitter.com/AL_Abbas_combat/status/1231230060755062790.
12. Post by Hayder Tariq Shams Ali, July 21, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/saadiqsaadawinajafuly2019>.
13. See Annex O of this study.
14. "Hashd Commission Denies Appointment of Abu Ali al-Basri to Succeed Muhandis," Mawazin News, January, 22, 2020, <https://www.mawazin.net/Details.aspx?jimare=82960>.
15. Abdullah al-Tamimi, "Visiting al-Hajj al-Mujahid Thamer al-Tamimi, Assistant Head of the al-Hashd al-Shabi Commission for Affairs of the Tribes," post on JustPaste.it, September 11, 2018, <https://justpaste.it/thamertamimihashdcommission>.
16. Bil-Wathiq, "Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis yunhi taklif Ma'in al-Kadhimi wa ya'in Dr. Ali Shaker al-Khaffaf khalfan lahu" (In document, "Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis ends the appointment of Ma'in al-Kadhimi and appoints Dr. Ali Shaker al-Khaffaf in succession to him"), al-Buratha News Agency, November 29, 2018, <http://burathanews.com/arabic/documents/341397>.
17. "News Room: Sunday 27th November 2016," al-Rasheed TV, November 27, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvhaSteDr_0 (14:40 onward).
18. Ibid. In the interview, Ahmed al-Asadi says the following when asked about the numbers of "tribal Hashd": "In truth, I don't have the details about it, because the tribal Hashd for the most part—90 percent of it—is connected with the administrative assistant and not connected with us as the Hashd al-Shabi Commission. The administrative assistant is Mr. Hamid al-Shatri. All the details of its administration is [sic] with Mr. Hameed al-Shatri."
19. Kawader al-Hashd, "Al-Sayyid Sultan al-Musawi director of the central administration in the Hashd Shabi Commission visits Sheikh Maytham al-Zaidi commander of the al-Abbas Combat Division...," post on JustPaste.it, May 13, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/sultanmousawimay2019>.
20. Post by Hashd Missiles Directorate, December 1, 2017, <https://justpaste.it/abusajidwasitidec2017>.
21. "Igthiyal al-Mudir al-Mali lil-Hashd fi Dharuf Ghamidha" (Assassination of the financial director for the Hashd in obscure circumstances), *Asharq al-Awsat*, May 1, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2mSxp5r>.
22. Post by Fawj al-Saqlawiya al-Awal, November 7, 2018, <https://justpaste.it/hashdfinancedirectornov2018>.
23. See a Facebook page created using his purported real name from 2018: "Hussein Faleh Aziz al-Lami," post on JustPaste.it, March 28, 2018, <https://justpaste.it/husseinfalehazizallami>. In a video clip posted in March 2015, he gives his first name only as Husse-

- in with the rank of “brigadier general,” <https://www.facebook.com/100007626241244/videos/1527343860863141/>. His background prior to the Hashd is obscure. For example, in an article defending al-Lami titled “The Hashd is cleaner and purer than what you claim, you liar al-Hasani,” the author admits to not knowing anything about Lami prior to his position in the Hashd. In that article, his name is given as Hussein Faleh al-Lami. See al-Maalomah, August 10, 2019, <https://www.almaalomah.com/2019/08/10/422835/>.
24. An interesting set of photos from 2016 shows Abu Zaynab al-Lami with Qasem Soleimani in a visit to the Hashd security operations’ base in Salah al-Din. See Ibn al-Hashd al-Muqaddas, post on JustPaste.it, November 23, 2016, <https://justpaste.it/abuzaynablamisuleimani>.
 25. Martyrs and Those Who Sacrifice Directorate, post on JustPaste.it, November 12, 2018, <https://justpaste.it/abukawtharmuhammadawi>. He is not to be confused with the Abu Kawthar al-Muhammadawi, who has commanded Badr’s 22nd Brigade.
 26. Iraqi Security Force aggregator Tom Cat, “Today’s raid confirmed that alongside ISOF and the Army’s Special Division, the PMF has allocated a unit,” Twitter, February 11, 2019, 5:10 p.m., <https://twitter.com/TomtheBasedCat/status/1095128036423450624>.
 27. Hashd Commission Rafidain Ops Command, post on JustPaste.it, August 9, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/abualialbasri9aug2019>.
 28. Badr, post on JustPaste.it, February 3, 2018, <https://justpaste.it/abualialbasribadr1>.
 29. Ibid. And a post by the Babiliyoun’s Basra branch describes Basri as Hashd chief of staff. See Babiliyoun Basra Branch, April 23, 2017, post on JustPaste.it, <https://justpaste.it/abualialbasriarkanchief>.
 30. Hashd Commission Rafidain Ops Command, post on JustPaste.it, August 9, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/abualialbasri9aug2019>.
 31. Ala al-Obeidi, post on a delegation from the British University in Baghdad visiting Haidari, Facebook, February 22, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/ala.alobaidi.73/posts/576806419502449>. In an interview with Haidari on Asaib Ahl al-Haq’s al-Ahad TV, the channel described him as a leader in the Supreme Islamic Council, October 13, 2018, <https://alahad.tv.iq/?page=article&itemId=49983> (video no longer available). Also see post by Preparation and Development Centre on event held in commemoration of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr under the title “The Hashd Shabi is an extension of the direction of the martyr Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr [may his secret be sanctified],” Facebook, April 15, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2111405529106072&id=100007099354339&_tn__=R.
 32. Hamdi Malik and Michael Knights, interviews with Iraqi security forces officers; names, places, and dates withheld at interviewees’ request. The directorate also publishes a Hashd newspaper.
 33. “The Budgeting and Planning Directorate for the Hashd Commission: assignments and responsibilities,” al-Hashed.net video, January 25, 2018, <http://bit.ly/36b8njB>.
 34. “Planning and Budgeting Directorate in the Hashd Commission...assignments and efforts,” al-Hashed.net video, December 31, 2017, <http://bit.ly/36b8njB>.
 35. The Education Directorate is headed by Hussein Haidar Jasim. See letter from Hashd Education Directorate dated November 18, 2019, advising on the steps Hashd members should follow to apply for external examinations, post available at <https://justpaste.it/hashdeducationdirectorate>.
 36. Tabiat Directorate, post on JustPaste.it, March 19, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/hashdtabiadirector>.

37. "Jaish al-Mahdi, from 'Abu Dir' to 'al-Darraj' and from allying with the Sunnis to waging war against them," al-Hayat, March 20, 2007, <http://www.alhayat.com/article/1329845>. Also see a poster that indicates he subsequently ran on Maliki's State of Law list: anonymous post on JustPaste.it, September 30, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/darrajistateoflaw>.
38. See Fatah Basra, post on JustPaste.it, March 5, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/hashdinteldirector>.
39. Michael Knights, interviews with Iraqi politicians; names, places, and dates withheld at interviewees' request.
40. Michael Knights, interviews with Iraqi security forces officers; names, places, and dates of interviews withheld at interviewees' request.
41. Hashd Aviation Directorate, video on JustPaste.it, April 20, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/hashdaviationapr2019>.
42. Knights, interviews with Iraqi security forces officers.
43. General Directorate for Operations, post on Facebook, April 9, 2019, [https://www.facebook.com/aleamaliat.almarkazia/posts/2274510266169644?__xts__\[0\]=68.ARAiwFz9p7YU9ZR8rndT](https://www.facebook.com/aleamaliat.almarkazia/posts/2274510266169644?__xts__[0]=68.ARAiwFz9p7YU9ZR8rndT) (link no longer live).
44. Akram al-Obeidi, post on Facebook, October 7, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Faili.Kurds/permalink/588992887874075/>. Also see Michael Knights, "U.S.-Iraq Relations at a Crossroads: Policy Options," PolicyWatch 3233, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 2, 2020, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/u.s.-iraq-relations-at-a-crossroads-policy-options>.
45. Kataib Ansar al-Hujja 29th Brigade, post on JustPaste.it, June 18, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/abuahmadrubaiawi>.
46. Knights, interviews with Iraqi security forces officers.
47. "Al-Hamdani: The Hashd has turned from combat to defense and the Muawaniya al-Tadrib has a big plan for the coming year," al-Hashed.net, December 13, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2nNSNbX>.
48. Certificate presented to a Hashd Brigade 41 member for completion of a course, featuring the name and signature of the head of the Hashd's General Directorate for Training. Post by Fawj al-Diwaniya for Hashd Brigade 41, January 27, 2020, <https://justpaste.it/hashdtrainingdirectoratejan2020>.
49. Michael Knights, interviews with Iraqi leaders; names, places, and dates withheld at interviewees' request.
50. Knights, interviews with Iraqi leaders.
51. Hashd News, post on JustPaste.it, January 23, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/zainabkhalisihashdjan2019>.
52. Note an instance of Badr's Islamic cultural center working with unspecified donors and the Martyrs Directorate to provide housing for the family of a "martyr" commander. Badr's Salman al-Muhammadi Regiment, post on JustPaste.it, July 29, 2016, <https://justpaste.it/badrregimentmartyr>.
53. See document titled "Announcement" from the directorate dated July 2019 and addressed to the "Commission's offices in the provinces/Medical services division," post on JustPaste.it, August 5, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/hashdmedicalservicesjuly2019>.
54. On January 13, 2018, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis stated the following: "We possess 30 field hospitals that have treated 60,000 injured military personnel and 300,000 injured civilians." Michael Knights, interviews with Iraqi security forces officers; Hashd Shabi

- Media Directorate, YouTube video, January 13, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJAVumFwCXw>.
55. "Mu'awaniya al-Da'am al-Logisti for the Hashd Shabi mobilizes its vehicles to transport visitors coinciding with downpours in Baghdad," al-Hashed.net photos, April 1, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2n4Yxht>.
 56. "Mu'awaniya al-Da'am al-Logisti," post on JustPaste.it, August 23, 2016, <https://justpaste.it/abuhawraahmadi5>; Hashd Shabi Commission Media—al-Suwaira Office, post on JustPaste.it, May 15, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/abuhawraahmadi6>.
 57. Osama al-Musawi, post on Facebook, April 2, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/ammaraadellogisticsupport>.
 58. Knights, interviews with Iraqi leaders.
 59. Knights, interview with Iraqi security forces officers.
 60. Ibid.
 61. Saham Mousa Hamoud, post on JustPaste.it, April 9, 2015, <https://justpaste.it/badrtanksbattalion2015>.
 62. Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, interview with Artillery Directorate media, June 2019.
 63. See the documentary "The Cover of Fire," produced by Karbala satellite channel, February 4, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JEQW7PAXbE>.
 64. Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, interview with Artillery Directorate media.
 65. Knights, interviews with Iraqi security forces officers.
 66. Ibid.
 67. War Media Team for Hashd Shabi, "Hashd artillery directorate organized a program course (Sayyid Muhammad) in cooperation with the training directorate," training video on YouTube, January 21, 2019, Balad, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWvG9n9JUio>.
 68. Hashd Artillery Directorate: Fourth Karbala Battalion, "Video of Karbala' satellite channel about the fourth Karbala artillery battalion for the Hashd Shabi," Facebook, May 4, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/1285865001544845/videos/1286401621491183/?v=1286401621491183>. The video was filmed near Karbala.
 69. War Media Team for al-Hashd al-Shabi, "Relying on the directives of al-Hajj Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, al-Hashd al-Shabi's artillery directorate organizes a program for five days," YouTube video, March 5, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6SCCgcvZmc>.
 70. Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, "The Hashd's Missiles Directorate: Interview," aymennjawad.org, June 8, 2019, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2019/06/the-hashd-missiles-directorate-interview>.
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PART II:
ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL
OF THE HASHD

Administrative control is a term of art in Western militaries that covers “administration and support, including organization of service forces, control of resources and equipment, personnel management, unit logistics, individual and unit training, readiness, mobilization, demobilization, discipline, and other matters not included in the operational missions.”¹ Chapters 3 and 4 of this study will address the administrative control aspects of the Hashd in two segments: first, the rights and privileges of Hashd members under the Iraqi constitution, law, cabinet decrees, and executive orders; second, the responsibilities and duties of Hashd members under those same statutes. These issues must be clearly understood if security sector reform, normalization, or modernization of the Hashd is attempted in future years. Only when the Hashd enjoys all its rights and privileges, but also fulfills all its responsibilities and duties, can it truly be considered part of the Iraqi security forces.

3

Rights of Hashd Members

Like all government employees, Hashd members are entitled to a set of rights and privileges. These entitlements include registered membership, a contract of service, payment and other allowances, regular and sick leave, promotion rules, retirement and martyrdom, plus the tools required to operate as effectively and safely as possible—training, education, equipment, logistics, and life support. The sections that follow examine the rights and privileges of Hashd members under the Iraqi constitution, law, cabinet decrees, and executive orders.

OPAQUE MEMBERSHIP OF THE HASHD

One of the most overlooked aspects of the Hashd phenomenon is that for most, if not all, of its history, it has been very difficult to determine exactly who is and who is not formally enrolled in, or performing their duties with, the Hashd at any given moment. Determining the exact legal and payroll status of fighters operating in the Hashd units is thus one of the most opaque aspects of the Hashd phenomenon. Persons claiming to operate under the Hashd umbrella are not always fully contained within the formal structure of the Hashd Commission. For instance, as one Kataib Hezbollah member told Aymenn Al-Tamimi in an interview:

I would receive the salary when I got back to Iraq, and it is the same salary as the Hashd: 600,000 [Iraqi dinars] would come with a gift of 200,000, not like the rest of the factions... Whoever is within the Kata'ib and brigades of the Kata'ib, his salary is from the Hashd Commission. Even if he fights outside Iraq and even if he is martyred outside Iraq, they register him as having been martyred inside Iraq so they can guarantee his rights.²

The Hashd's membership has a fuzzy beginning. In June 2014, a patchwork of fighters entered al-Hashd al-Shabi from different routes. Preexisting Shia militia groups like Asaib Ahl al-Haq and Kataib Hezbollah (and their spin-offs) were already active on the ground in Iraq under Maliki's Sons of Iraq and Popular Defense Brigades (*Saraya al-Difa al-Shabi*) concepts, though mostly still being paid by the group's internal payroll and administrative systems.³ Many of the fighters from these units subsequently fell under the Hashd Commission, and their parent militias were very happy to share the cost of sustaining their personnel with the Iraqi state. Following Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's fatwa, the influx of civilian volunteers added a new layer of recruits, many of whom already had government jobs from which they were initially absent and later formally seconded.⁴ By the end of summer 2014, the number of fighters claiming to fall under the Hashd Commission rubric may have topped 160,000.⁵ (Abu Ali al-Basri, assistant to the Hashd vice chair, said in January 2020 that the Hashd numbered 160,000, including 30,000 members from the Sunni provinces.⁶) Very quickly, the issue of paying the fighters came to the fore. The clearest division was between those who were registered and unregistered.

Fighter Registration

Registration began in late 2014 and was initially undertaken using temporary rolling contracts.⁷ In this era (2014–15), the Hashd fighters hoped for but had no clear expectation of permanent employment or benefits. Considerable anecdotal evidence shows that Hashd units were haphazardly allocated new fighters during the crisis of 2014, with volunteers experiencing little agency in what units they ultimately joined.

Volunteers thus ended up in the units that would take them, with little sense of who led the units or whether they had been active against U.S. forces before 2011.⁸ The Hashd Commission initially had a number of temporary billets approved by the new prime minister, Haider al-Abadi, totaling around 120,000.⁹ Fighters were, in turn, registered on ninety-day contracts authorized by the prime minister's office for the Hashd Commission.¹⁰ Simple forms were filled out and nonstandardized identification cards sometimes issued.¹¹ For the first five years of the Hashd's existence, no biometric data or photocopies of ID cards were provided to the government.¹²

Most Hashd units were unable to register all their armed volunteers, but the proportion of registered to unregistered varied widely by unit. Those who were not formally registered were recorded as unregistered fighters on a "wait list" of sorts.¹³ Some unregistered fighters also held jobs in the private sector (such as running shops), which they could still attend on the flexible and generous two-week leave periods enjoyed by the Hashd fighters.¹⁴ Others did not register because they held government jobs and salaries already. Reregistration windows saw registered and unregistered fighters swapping places fluidly, as men left the unit, transferred to other Hashd units, or gave up slots for those who needed payment more urgently.¹⁵ In some units, salaries were at times redistributed and averaged out between registered fighters and unregistered fighters lacking other financial means in order to give everyone a baseline income.¹⁶

The Hashd Commission has historically operated somewhat akin to Iraq's Finance Ministry, with the finance directorate writing checks that Hashd chair Faleh al-Fayyad signed, which were then sent to Hashd unit commanders and their treasurers to cash at local banks.¹⁷ The unit commanders then enjoyed almost complete discretion regarding how to disburse the money, with little accountability. With payroll and registration decentralized and held at unit headquarters, the local Hashd unit commanders had tremendous authority over their men, deciding who would remain registered and what unit members would be paid.¹⁸ Unit commanders also routinely taxed their men up to 30 percent of their payroll to generate "unit funds,"¹⁹ which may be intended to defray costs but which also provide a convenient cover for unit-level skimming off the public payroll. Those problems led to consideration of the

use of electronic payroll systems that will be discussed in forthcoming sections.

Right-Sizing and Auditing the Hashd

By 2016, the government's key concern was not only how many fighters were listed individually by units (perhaps 122,000 authorized with pay in 2016, plus an extra 40,000–50,000 unregistered)²⁰ but also how many fighters were actually showing up for duty. As in the other parts of the Iraqi military, the government had concerns about “ghost soldiering” in the Hashd, a practice that involves registering a soldier on a unit payroll but allowing him to absent himself from duty, with the unit commander and the soldier splitting the illicit income.²¹

Debate intensified over how many budgeted billets should be allocated for the Hashd. Some Iraqi factions that lacked strong militias—such as Ammar al-Hakim's Hikma movement and Muqtada al-Sadr's Ahrar movement—lobbied for a reduction of the Hashd authorized manpower base below 122,000 to reflect the number of fighters actually participating in military operations.²² In contrast, the Hashd Commission sought expansion to at least 144,000 and ideally 152,000 billets.²³ (In June 2019, Hashd chair Faleh al-Fayyad reported that the number of registered Hashd members was 135,000.²⁴)

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi sought to audit all the claimed registered individuals and record their names alongside any of the four main forms of personal identification (*hawiyah*, *shahadat al-jinsiya*, *bataqat al-sakan*, and *al-tamwiniya*) and to implement the same biometric requirements as other public service jobs (i.e., photos and fingerprints).²⁵ In the end, Abadi failed twice in this effort. In 2016, he tried to appoint a co-deputy alongside Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis to gain insight into Hashd administration and lay the groundwork for a cut of 25,000 salaries, but the individual—the aforementioned Mohsen Kaabi—was immediately intimidated into resigning.²⁶ In April 2018, the Hashd finance director Qassim Dahif al-Zubaidi was assassinated while in the process of preparing an audit on Abadi's behalf.²⁷ Majid Rahim Saleh al-Wasiti—the head of the Central Administration Directorate, the body with control of fighter registration—also died in 2017, though apparently of natural causes.²⁸

Another means of testing the real-world manpower of the Hashd forces was also avoided in 2018: the registration of Hashd fighters to vote in the separate special elections of the Iraqi security forces (ISF). Iraqi election law requires that the security forces vote before the public so that all security forces can be on duty to protect the public on Election Day. Instead, on May 12, 2018, the Hashd voted on the same day as the public in special voting centers within their own bases, thus concealing their exact on-duty numbers and shielding such votes from any external monitoring.²⁹

Biometric Registration

Since 2017, the Iraqi government has been struggling toward a process of *tawtin al-rawatib*, literally meaning “settling of salaries” but practically referring to an automated payment system.³⁰ The concept was to make payments to Hashd members through banks, as opposed to unit-level commanders and treasurers. Preparations were made for the *tawtin al-rawatib* for Hashd fighters in 2018. To this end, a notice was sent to Hashd formations to register their fighters accompanied by forms to be filled out.³¹ The forms also required the signature of the fighter’s formation leader and the formation’s stamp. The mechanism selected would allow money to be sent to electronic cards that could be used to transfer payments into bank accounts or cash issued by banks.³²

On March 25, 2019, the head of finance for the Hashd Hussein Ismael Khalil announced a biometric (fingerprint) enrollment process for the Hashd, which began in October 2018 and which (by March 2019) had registered “80,000 out of nearly 160,000” members.³³ The process is being undertaken by International Smart Card, a company owned by Iraq’s two biggest state-owned banks, Rafidain Bank and Rasheed Bank, together with the Iraqi Electronic Payment System.³⁴

Though many Hashd units are still being paid by cash, an electronic payment system is being tested to disburse Hashd benefits for people with disabilities and for widows.³⁵ Under this trial, the enrollment process results in the issue of a “Key Card,” a form of debit card popular in Iraq. Each month, Hashd claimants receive their entitlement as an electronic transfer to the card. They take their card to the bank, confirm their identity with a fingerprint, and then receive payment in cash or

deposit into a bank account. This approach is more transparent and reliable than cash payments and paper records, or even chip-and-pin payment systems. The system theoretically creates an electronic record to ensure that the correct person is paid.

Biometric registration does not take all the power away from Hashd leaders. The payment instructions still come from the Hashd Commission, so it may cancel or alter the payment amount for a member, or deregister members from the payroll.³⁶ It will be harder for units to change taxes—because the unit treasurer will not be disbursing cash payments—but units may still find ways to extract monies from their members. Nor does this approach prevent the ghost soldier phenomenon—as ghost soldiers in the past have typically turned up for payday only, which they still could do. As with any biometric and electronic payment system, the process has integrity only if the senior leadership has integrity and the process is subject to oversight. Thus, it is fundamentally important to Iraq that the Iraqi government independently audit the biometric registration system being undertaken by International Smart Card and the Iraqi Electronic Payment System. The companies running the biometric and electronic payment systems must be verified as being clear of Hashd influence, or the obvious potential exists for a conflict of interests.

Registered and Unregistered Hashd

Because of the deliberately opaque manner in which the Hashd Commission has operated, different Hashd groups seem to have ended up with widely varying mixes of registered and unregistered fighters, resulting in some groups' having to limit their numbers or to spread salaries among fighters, while others are more than adequately supported.³⁷ The determining factor of unit resourcing is whether individual Hashd groups are associated with the most powerful Hashd factions—such as Kataib Hezbollah and Badr, which control the key administrative posts within the Hashd Commission and over which the Iraqi prime minister has little oversight.³⁸ In addition to receiving government stipends through the Hashd Commission, different Hashd groups have found ways to supplement their government income and equip and sustain

their forces using shrine funding, criminal activities, and foreign support (see chapters 4 and 5).

In the 2019 budget, the authorized and registered manpower of the Hashd is 135,000, supported by a budget of \$2.16 billion.³⁹ (This number compares with an authorized strength of 583,666 and a budget of \$9.83 billion for the Ministry of Interior, and with authorized strength of 288,979 and a budget of \$5.08 billion for the Ministry of Defense.⁴⁰) According to the authoritative Iraqi defense analyst Hisham al-Hashimi, in May 2019, around 24,000 unregistered persons were serving in the Hashd without regular pay or formal contracts.⁴¹ This factor suggests a total armed manpower of 159,000 personnel, of which 17.7 percent are unregistered. This number coincides with the figure given by Hashd finance director Hussein Ismael Khalil in March 2019 of “nearly 160,000” members.⁴² Table 3.1 provides an impression of the spectrum of support enjoyed by different Hashd groups in July 2018, when the Hashd carried out its reregistration process to prepare for the boost in salary and income parity with the ISF.

MILITARY SERVICE AND RETIREMENT RIGHTS

The March 8, 2018, Executive Order 85 issued by then premier Haider al-Abadi was the clearest statement yet concerning the rights and privileges of Hashd fighters. As noted previously, Article 4 states that Hashd personnel are promoted under the Military Service and Retirement Law No. 3 of 2010. Hashd members will receive “financial compensation equal to that of their equivalents in the Defense Ministry.” Hashd personnel should also have access to military colleges and academies, with allocations “to be determined in coordination with the Ministry of Defense.”⁴³ As with other ISF members, Abadi decided that the Hashd would receive equivalent rights under “the Unified Retirement Law No. 9 of 2014, and the State and Public Sector Employees Salaries Law No. 22 of 2008 (amended).”⁴⁴ Those laws lay out the expectations of the soldier within the Iraqi political context and are worth examining in detail as they now apply in their entirety to the Hashd.

TABLE 3.1.
SAMPLE OF REGISTERED VS. UNREGISTERED HASHD MEMBERS BY UNIT, CIRCA 2018

HASHD FACTION	REGISTERED PERSON	UNREGISTERED PERSONNEL	AVERAGE MONTHLY PAY	SUPPLEMENTARY INCOME AND SUSTAINMENT	NON-HASHD COMMISSION SOURCES OF HEAVY WEAPONRY
MUHANDIS-FAVORED HASHD UNITS					
Kataib Hezbollah (Brigades 45, 46, 47)	6,000 (100%)	0 (0%)	\$650–1,200	IRGC-QF	IRGC-QF
Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada (Brigade 14)	2,723 (100%)	0 (0%)	\$650	IRGC-QF	IRGC-QF
Saraya Talia al-Khurasani (Brigade 18)	3,200 (100%)	0 (0%)			
Asaib Ahl al-Haq (Brigades 41, 42, 43)	6,000 (100%)	0 (0%)	\$650	IRGC-QF	IRGC-QF
Badr-affiliated (Brigades 1, 4, 5, 9, 10, 27, 52 and 110)	22,000 (100%)	0 (0%)	\$650	IRGC-QF	IRGC-QF
OTHER HASHD UNITS					
Liwa Ali al-Akbar (Brigade 11)	3,714 (88%)	500 (12%)		Shrine foundations IRGC-QF	
Liwa al-Tafuf (Brigade 13)	429 (53%)	371 (47%)		Shrine foundations IRGC-QF	
Saraya al-Salam (Unit 313)*	12,000 (66%)	6,000 (33%)	\$430	Shrine foundations	Sadrism movement
Al-Abbas Combat Division (Brigade 26)†	2,107 (40%)	3,203 (60%)	\$450–600	Shrine foundations	Ministry of Defense
Liwa Ansar al-Marjaiya (Brigade 44)	1,890 (54%)	1,610 (46%)	\$450–600	Shrine foundations	Ministry of Defense
Sunni Tribal Security Forces in Anbar	10,000 (62%)	6,000 (38%)	\$500	Sunni MPs and tribal leaders	Ministry of Defense (often coalition provided)

Key: IRGC-QF = Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps–Qods Force; MPs = members of parliament

Note: This table is based on the authors' interviews. In some cases, the proportions may have shifted by the time of writing. All numbers were sourced by the authors in an anonymized interview program with Hashd officers.

* Saraya Salam may have moved to 100 percent registered fighters in 2019 as a result of deals made between the Sadrist movement and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

† *Atabat* financial reserves provided by the shrine foundations historically provided around \$2.52 million monthly for the force until 2018. The PMC has progressively registered more *ataba* shrine units such as Hashd Brigades 11, 26, and 44. See Michael Knights and Hamdi Malik, "The Al-Abbas Combat Division Model: Reducing Iranian Influence in Iraq's Security Forces," PolicyWatch 2850, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, August 22, 2017, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-al-abbas-combat-division-model>.

Payment and Allowances

Iraqi military salaries are set by Article 8 of the Military Service and Retirement Law and the Law of Salaries of State Employees and the Public Sector (Law No. 22 of 2008).⁴⁵ Payment was set according to rank-based pay grades, beginning at \$800–850 per month for privates, depending on allowances.⁴⁶ (In 2019, the pay is now about 1.1 million dinars, or \$923 per month.⁴⁷) Articles 79–82 of the Military Service and Retirement Law list the monthly allowances for married persons and family members, namely "70,000 dinars for each wife and 15,000 dinars for each of his children up to the fourth child on the basis that it should not exceed 50% of his salary."⁴⁸

Until November 2018, the pay scale for Hashd fighters was lower than for other ISF members. Junior soldier pay in the Hashd varied between 600,000 and 800,000 dinars, or \$504–671, per month (vs. 1.1 million dinars, or \$923, per month for junior soldiers in the regular Iraqi forces).⁴⁹ In the 2019 budget, Hashd salaries were equalized with other ISF salaries, and their pay scale now lines up with the synchronized Hashd and ISF ranks, as per Article 1 of the March 8, 2018, executive order. As of November 2018, authorized and registered Hashd members receive the same pay and allowances as other ISF members: 1.1 million dinars, or \$923, per month for junior volunteers, with more for higher ranks and men with families.⁵⁰

Some Hashd members receive less, in practice, for a number of reasons. Units often tax their fighters by up to 30 percent to create unit funds, which may defray expenses or which may be taken by the Hashd faction's leaders or political wing.⁵¹ In other cases, the units may be spreading the authorized number of registered fighter payments across a larger number of unauthorized and unregistered fighters, as was the case with Saraya al-Salam before the 2019 budget.⁵² Some Sunni Tribal Security Forces are registered with the Hashd Commission, yet they have inexplicably still not been paid for two years because of holdups at the Hashd Commission.⁵³ Others have consistently received junior soldier salaries of \$500–600 per month—at the lower end of the salaries received by other Hashd groups before 2019.⁵⁴ Some of the uncertainties and inequities surrounding pay may be reduced by the biometric and e-payment system that is being introduced. Until such a system works, there will continue to be incentives for units to raise funds through illicit activities, by drawing on foreign or private citizen support, or by agreeing to let unit members take extended periods of leave.

Regular and Sick Leave

Articles 40–44 of the Military Service and Retirement Law establish the rules for periods of leave. Regular leave with full salary is set at thirty cumulative days per year of service, to a maximum of 180 days within any two-year period. Sick leave is capped at two years if there is no recovery, upon which the soldier will be discharged.⁵⁵

In practice, regular leave is an area where the less discipline-bound Hashd has enjoyed advantages over the ISF. The Iraqi security forces tend to serve in rotations of twenty days on, ten days off.⁵⁶ In contrast, Hashd units often allow troops to serve as little as ten days on, ten days off, which is a very generous leave pattern.⁵⁷ Anecdotal evidence⁵⁸ and at least one published interview⁵⁹ also suggest that Hashd members can easily step away from Iraqi government service to fight in Syria, while still receiving their full salary—in effect, going absent without leave.⁶⁰

Promotion

Articles 9–20 of the Military Service and Retirement Law set the rules for promotion in the ISF, now to include the Hashd.⁶¹ (All the following sections are drawn from the law and so will not be individually footnoted.)

- **MINIMUM SERVICE PERIODS PER RANK.** Article 9 provides a list of the number of years of service (including service in the pre-2003 military) required to graduate to consideration for the next rank. (For instance, a minimum of eighteen years of service to make full colonel and twenty-two years to make brigadier general.) For combat arms, the candidates must have served in field units for not less than half the promotion period for each rank. In the less formal setting of the Hashd, those strictures are never applied; indeed the Hashd revel in their rejection of tradition military culture.

- **MINIMUM EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS FOR PROMOTION.** Article 15 notes that ranks of “divisional commander and above” will be considered only if the candidate graduated from staff college, and Article 16 notes that lesser ranks must complete the requisite professional courses. As noted earlier, those strictures have never been applied to the Hashd in practice, partly because divisional command is not a formal rank in the Hashd and partly because almost no Hashd commanders have attended professional military educational courses.

One issue to bear in mind is that Iraqi law contains a wide-ranging opt-out to the earlier requirements. The Military Service and Retirement Law includes numerous exceptions that may be made by the commander-in-chief of the armed forces (i.e., the prime minister), the minister of defense, and the chief of staff. For instance, Article 37 refers to exceptions to promotion requirements that may be made for those judged to have performed an “honorable heroic deed” during war.⁶² This provision gives ample room for promotions within the Hashd to skirt the legal requirements.

Retirement, Martyrdom, and Incapacitation

Articles 7 and 33 of the Military Service and Retirement Law identifies the duration of service as twenty years (extendable by five years), or a set of retirement ages, after which personnel will be referred for retirement.⁶³ Articles 45–60 note that if he has served a minimum term (nominally fifteen years, though considerable flexibility exists), the discharged pensioner has a government pension until death and his dependents receive payments thereafter. Articles 61–78 cover compensation for incapacitation and death in the line of duty.

In practice, the retirement, martyrdom, and incapacitation aspects of the Military Service and Retirement Law are only loosely applied to Hashd forces. In some cases, the dependents of Hashd martyrs have received benefits, such as free treatment “health cards” issued by martyrdom benefit offices at Hashd Commission regional directorates in each province.⁶⁴ Those cards are stamped “Martyrs’ Foundation,” have a hotline number to call if free service is denied, and include phrases such as “The relatives of the martyrs are a trust on our necks.”⁶⁵ Sadrist fighters from Saraya al-Salam complain that martyrdom benefits are harder to secure for their members than for Muhandis-favored groups.⁶⁶ Other reports state that Muhandis-favored groups use their administrative advantages to get fighters who were killed in Syria registered as having died while in Hashd service in Iraq.⁶⁷

The Hashd medical directorate initially used local hospitals, but this approach proved so inefficient and so disruptive to the functioning of civilian facilities that efforts were made to develop Hashd field hospitals. According to Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, thirty basic Hashd field hospitals had been developed by January 2018,⁶⁸ though they were poorly equipped and lacked adequate supplies, even by the low standards of Iraqi military medicine. The Hashd medical directorate also “organizes blood drives, sets up emergency hospitals for IDPs [internally displaced persons], and coordinates with [Iraqi military] medical staff, in some cases using [Iraqi military] helicopters” for casualty evacuation.⁶⁹ Seriously wounded Hashd fighters may sometimes be sent to Iran or Lebanon for urgent or long-term care.⁷⁰

TRAINING AND EQUIPPING THE HASHD

Military forces are customarily entitled to training and equipment to ensure that serving troops can operate as effectively and safely as possible, considering the available resources.

Training and Professional Education

The Military Service and Retirement Law makes no specific commitments about the provision of training, education, or equipment to ISF personnel, except insofar as these amenities are sometimes necessary for promotion. However, there is a reasonable expectation that soldiers should receive a modicum of basic and advanced training and that professional military education is made available to eligible candidates. Indeed, Article 4 of the March 8, 2018, Executive Order 85 explicitly notes that Hashd personnel should also have access to military colleges and academies, with allocations “to be determined in coordination with the Ministry of Defense.”⁷¹ In January 2020, Abu Ali al-Basri, assistant to the Hashd vice chair, stated that Hashd officers would be fast-tracked through professional military education colleges at Nasiriyah and Rustamiyah (in Baghdad) in order to meet qualification standards.⁷²

In practice, Hashd training has historically varied by faction and has focused on basic training:

- **BADR ORGANIZATION.** As might be expected from a paramilitary force in existence for three and a half decades, Badr maintains well-organized and depot-like recruitment and training bases at Camp Ashraf (in Diyala) and in Basra, Baghdad, Babil, and Karbala.⁷³ New Badr-led training facilities have also been set up at Tuz Khormatu (“Martyrs’ Training Camp,” outside Kirkuk) and Amerli (near Tuz Khormatu) since 2014.⁷⁴ Though run by Quwat al-Turkmen (Brigade 16), fighters from all Hashd factions are allowed to train at the sites.⁷⁵ In general, Badr extends training assistance to most other Hashd units. For example, Liwa al-Muntazir held a course in Camp Ashraf named after its deceased leader Dagher al-Musawi.⁷⁶

- **SARAYA AL-SALAM.** The Sadrist movement did operate the Sayyid al-Kawnayn lil-Ulum al-Askariya Academy—a divisional training center in Baghdad⁷⁷—before reportedly closing the facility in 2017 on the grounds that the original aim in setting up the academy had been achieved and the institutions of the Iraqi state needed to be strengthened.⁷⁸
- **KATAIB HEZBOLLAH.** KH maintains training camps in Jurf al-Sakhar in Iraq.
- **KATAIB AL-IMAM ALI.** KIA maintains a training facility in Aziziyah, on former Iraqi military facilities just south of Baghdad.
- **ASAIB AHL AL-HAQ.** AAH maintains training sites in Basra, Karbala, Jurf al-Sakhar, and (for Sunni auxiliaries) Jalula.
- **ATABAT.** The al-Abbas Combat Division also maintains divisional training centers in Karbala and Babil, with smaller sites elsewhere.⁷⁹
- **SMALLER FACTIONS.** Most factions have training camps. For instance, Saraya Talia al-Khurasani (Brigade 18) has training sites in Karbala and Anbar (the latter named after an IRGC general).⁸⁰ Liwa al-Tafuf (Brigade 13) has a camp in Karbala from which Saraya al-Khurasani fighters have graduated.⁸¹ Kataib Jund al-Imam (Brigade 6) has training camps in Karbala and Speicher (Tikrit Air Base).

In January 2020, Abu Ali al-Basri, assistant to the Hashd vice chair, stated, “We have withdrawn much of the forces [from the frontline] for training,” suggesting a gathering of Hashd combat units at garrison locations with easier logistics and greater opportunities for training.⁸² All Hashd factions appear to be able to undertake training at Camp Speicher, where a form of collective training center is led by Badr and Kataib Hezbollah.⁸³ Lebanese Hezbollah trainers have worked alongside most Hashd forces in the past, and as recently as July 12, 2019, an advisory role for Lebanese Hezbollah personnel at Speicher has been documented.⁸⁴ Coalition-led training courses for Sunni Hashd forces exist at Taji, al-Asad, and Qayyarah.⁸⁵ (Of interest, Saraya al-Salam and

shrine Hashd units have been prohibited from training with any foreign forces, whether coalition or Iranian.⁸⁶⁾

Equipping the Hashd

There is also a reasonable expectation that all ISF units, including the Hashd, should be equipped to a minimum standard. As the very least, this equipment should include a government-provided uniform, boots, and some form of personal protective equipment (i.e., a helmet and body armor). Government-provided vehicles and fuel are other minimum expectations and are based on mission requirements.

With regard to equipment, the Hashd factions active before June 2014 enjoyed more access to heavy weapons, reflecting their long sponsorship by Iran and the permissive environment for them to develop their own heavy weapons and military vehicle fleets for use in Iraq and Syria before the formation of the Hashd.⁸⁷ Before and since 2014, Iran has periodically resupplied Iran-supported Hashd elements with personal equipment and uniforms.⁸⁸ Heavier equipment—for example, Safir jeeps, SPG-9 recoilless rifles, Kornet antitank guided missiles, and Katyusha-type 107 mm and 122 mm rocket artillery—has also been directly provided from IRGC stocks or has been locally manufactured in Iraq (in the case of 122 mm, 240 mm, and 333 mm IRAMs).⁸⁹ New Hashd formations raised since 2014 have consistently been at a disadvantage compared with those militias active before 2014: for example, Liwa Ali al-Akbar (11th Hashd) was fighting in 2016 with one Iraqi government-supplied antitank missile-launching team per regiment, while an adjacent Badr unit had six Iranian-supplied Kornet teams on the same-sized frontline.⁹⁰

Since 2014, Hashd units have found a range of ways to meet their materiel requirements:

- **COMMANDEERED EQUIPMENT.** All Hashd forces use large numbers of four-wheel-drive pickup trucks, often commandeered from civilian service or donated.⁹¹ All Hashd forces also appropriated abandoned or recaptured Iraqi army and Federal Police materiel, particularly (U.S.-made) Hummers, mine-resistant

ambush-protected vehicles, and tracked armored vehicles from numerous provider nations,⁹² plus heavy machine guns, antiaircraft cannons, mortars, and even howitzers.⁹³

- **IRANIAN-PROVIDED EQUIPMENT.** Some new Hashd units—even shrine Hashd, such as Liwa al-Tafuf (Brigade 13)—moved into the pro-Iran orbit of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in order to “plug-in” to Iranian provision of materiel or receive “loans” of equipment by Iranian-backed Hashd units. The most commonly provided weapons were Iranian-made SPG-9 recoilless rifles; Katyusha-type 107 mm and 122 mm rockets; 120 mm mortars; Nasir automatic grenade launchers; and antitank guided missiles, such as Toophan (BGM-71 copy), Dehlavieh (9M133 Kornet copy), and Saegheh (M47 copy).
- **MINISTRY-PROVIDED EQUIPMENT.** Iraq’s Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior have provided significant equipment stocks to Hashd forces. In some cases, that equipment was purchased, such as Iranian-sold Toophan antitank guided missiles and European-purchased small arms distributed by the Ministry of Interior. The U.S. military has also provided entire brigade equipment sets for Tribal Security Forces.
- **SALVAGED SADDAM-ERA EQUIPMENT.** To maintain their independence, some Hashd shrine forces and Saraya al-Salam have also developed their own salvage operations in collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, which maintains large armored vehicle graveyards in southern Iraq.⁹⁴
- **NEW HASHD MILITARY INDUSTRIES.** Various Hashd units have established military industries inside Iraq. Badr has facilities in Khalis, Baquba, Balad Ruz, al-Numaniyah, and al-Zafaraniyah (jointly with Kataib Hezbollah). Asaib Ahl al-Haq has factories in Nahrawan, Bismayah, and Jurf al-Sakhar. Kataib Hezbollah has a facility in Ain al-Tamur, near Karbala. Saraya al-Salam has a

factory in southern Qadisiyah, at al-Hamza. Assessments indicate that most of the facilities produce basic military items such as boots, uniforms, belts, and hats. Some forms of ammunition and mortar shells are being produced in the major plant in Zafaraniyah. Some facilities, such as Kataib Hezbollah's complex at Ain al-Tamur, are suspected rocket artillery production and storage facilities.⁹⁵ Another idea is for Hashd-controlled workshops to be mandated maintenance hubs for the armored vehicles used by private security companies.

The Hashd Commission has long sought to develop its own centralized procurement arm (in the logistics directorate). On January 10, 2015, for instance, the Hashd "Directorate of Logistical Support" issued a tender for hundreds of soft-skin utility vehicles.⁹⁶ Other tenders have been prepared for items such as body armor, communications devices, ambulances, water tankers, fuel carriers, and engineering vehicles.⁹⁷ The procurement budget of the Hashd reached \$441 million in 2017, though as little as \$80 million appears to have been disbursed in that year, a low rate of investment budget execution even by Iraqi government standards.⁹⁸ This situation underlines the embryonic state of the Hashd as a subministry, with similar limitations to governor's offices in becoming spending units.

FIGURE 3.1.
LETTERHEAD FROM THE AL-HASHD AL-SHABI COMMISSION OF THE PRIME
MINISTER'S OFFICE DEPARTMENT OF LOGISTICAL SUPPORT, JANUARY 10, 2015



Logistics and Life Support

Soldiers in the ISF are nominally provided food, water, and (where possible) shelter and other basic services. Food and drink are often purchased locally by the unit using a per capita unit allowance called the Soldier Life Support Fund, which is disbursed to unit commanders and which historically has been a key driver of unit-level corruption as a result of officers' ability to skim money from the system or pocket the money allocated to absent "ghost soldiers."⁹⁹

All Hashd units operate their own rudimentary logistical systems for delivering food, fuel, water, shelter, and other consumables. The unit generally receives a lump-sum grant to cover its expenses before each operation, controlled—as ever—centrally by the Hashd Commission.¹⁰⁰ Depending on the size of the unit, the grant is typically 350–500 million dinars (\$251,000–\$419,000).¹⁰¹ Units draw from this fund to pay operational expenses, such as fuel, food, and water deliveries.¹⁰² This equivalent of the Soldier Life Support Fund is equally rife with corruption at the unit level. Hashd units also "top up" their logistical allowance by taxing local communities and truckers on major roads.¹⁰³

Shrine Hashd and Saraya al-Salam forces often operate close to their shrines in Najaf, Karbala, and Samarra, thus reducing logistical strain. Muhandis-favored and other Hashd units operating in remote areas (such as the Syrian border) require substantially more logistical support, necessitating the engineering of new all-weather roads and the use of Hashd engineering units and local contractors.¹⁰⁴ The Hashd Directorate for Logistical Support began holding conferences in 2017, followed by the al-Abbas Combat Division's "first foundational conference for logistical support caravans" in 2018.¹⁰⁵ On January 25, 2019, Kataib al-Imam Ali (Brigade 40) held its first Hashd conference for logistics and support.¹⁰⁶

The vehicle maintenance activities of Hashd units appear to be reasonably good, reflecting traditional Iraqi skill at operating rough-and-ready mechanical workshops and salvaging parts. Hashd military operations are also driven by the use of large numbers of unarmored civilian vehicles, which are comparatively easier to maintain and can draw on civilian mechanics.¹⁰⁷ Similar to training bases, the larger Hashd units have maintenance depots. Badr and the al-Abbas Combat Division each maintain national-level maintenance depots, as does Liwa al-Tafuf,

whose commander has a special proclivity for mechanical repair and salvage.¹⁰⁸

A final issue of logistics is ammunition and weapons storage. The Hashd have a lamentable safety record because of their lack of training in weapons handling and safe storage of explosives. The record is made worse by their lack of adequately equipped facilities and, importantly, by their habit of storing explosives in urban areas. Iraq has witnessed a rash of large explosions in major cities where the Hashd store explosives and projectiles in unsafe conditions during periods of high heat. On August 12, 2019, one civilian was killed and twenty-nine were wounded when a joint Federal Police and Hashd ammunition storage facility at Camp al-Saqr exploded in southern Baghdad.¹⁰⁹ Other major urban explosions took place on November 3, 2018 (Tuz Khormatu, Kataib Hezbollah, wounding thirty-six civilians); August 6, 2018 (Karbala, al-Abbas Combat Division [Brigade 26], killing one and wounding nineteen); June 6, 2018 (Sadr City, Asaib Ahl al-Haq or Saraya al-Salam, killing eighteen civilians); and September 2, 2016 (eastern Baghdad, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, killing fifteen civilians, wounding dozens more, and igniting eight rockets that landed within the city).¹¹⁰ In Amerli on July 19, 2019, a militia base operated by Quwat al-Turkmen (Brigade 16) and Fawj Amerli (Brigade 52) also witnessed an explosion close to civilian dwellings.¹¹¹

NOTES

1. "Administrative control"—or ADCON—is defined in U.S. doctrine as "the direction or exercise of authority over subordinate or other organizations with respect to administration and support, including organization of Service forces, control of resources and equipment, personnel management, unit logistics, individual and unit training, readiness, mobilization, demobilization, discipline, and other matters not included in the operational missions of the subordinate or other organizations." See U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, July 12, 2017, xxii.
2. Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, "Kata'ib Hezbollah and Syria: Interview," August 23, 2019, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2019/08/kataib-hezbollah-and-syria-interview>.

3. Michael Knights, interviews with Iraqi politicians; names, places, and dates withheld at interviewees' request.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. National Iraqi News Agency, "Abu Ali al-Basri Reveals the Priorities of the Hashd Shabi Leadership for the Next Stage," January 30, 2020, <http://bit.ly/38rczfU>.
7. Michael Knights, interviews with Hashd officers; names, places, and dates withheld at interviewees' request.
8. Ibid.
9. Knights, interviews with Iraqi politicians.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Knights, interviews with Hashd officers.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid. In Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada, for instance, the unit took 350,000 dinars of the members' 1.1-million-dinar (\$924) monthly salary provided by the Hashd Commission.
20. Knights, interviews with Iraqi politicians.
21. For background on the "ghost soldier" issue, see Michael Knights, "The Future of Iraq's Armed Forces," al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies, March 2016, 19–20, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/The-future.pdf>.
22. Knights, interviews with Iraqi politicians.
23. Ibid.
24. Michael Knights, interview with Faleh al-Fayyad, June 12, 2019.
25. In an interview, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said that the Hashd would not submit names of registered individuals for audit, May 7, 2018, <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=yWV9jFsDLcc>.
26. Haider al-Abadi, interview, May 3, 2018, <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=XbhR87J47m8>.
27. Integrity UK, "Iraq Intelligence Report," May 3, 2018, <https://www.integrityuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Daily-Report-3rd-May-2018-Iraq-1.pdf>.
28. "The Hashd Shabi Commission Announces the Death of the Director of Its Central Administration: General Majid Rahim Saleh," al-Hashed.net, December 1, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2rM0Aco>.
29. The Hashd Commission arranged for on-duty fighters to vote in their place of duty at thirty-five designated polling centers in six provinces. Off-duty fighters voted with the public. Both votes took place on the main Election Day, May 12, not on the special voting day. See "Infographic: Means for Fighters of the Hashd Shabi to Vote in the Iraqi Elections 2018," Hashd Shabi Media Directorate, May 6, 2018, https://m.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=10&v=g4lrcdq50lY; and "How Will the Hashd Shabi Fighters Manning the Fronts Protect Mosul City Vote?" Hashd Shabi Media Directorate, May 5, 2018, <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=vco2Je2mDHU>.
30. "What Does It Mean to Localize the Salaries of Employees in Iraq and How to Benefit

- from It Financially?" *al-Sumaria News*, March 29, 2017, <https://www.alsumaria.tv/news/199272/>.
31. Knights, interviews with Iraqi politicians.
 32. Ibid.
 33. "We Have Begun Implementing the System of 'Tawtin al-Rawatib,'" *al-Sumaria News*, March 25, 2019, <http://bit.ly/3bLQZoc>.
 34. Ibid.
 35. Knights, interviews with Iraqi politicians.
 36. Knights, interviews with Hashd officers.
 37. Knights, interviews with Iraqi politicians.
 38. Ibid.
 39. See "Iraq's 2019 Draft Budget Law Analysis," Iraq Energy Institute, October 29, 2018, <https://iraqenergy.org/2018/10/29/iraqs-2019-draft-budget-law-analysis/>.
 40. Iraq Energy Institute, "Draft Budget Law Analysis," <https://iraqenergy.org/2018/10/29/iraqs-2019-draft-budget-law-analysis/>.
 41. Michael Knights, interview with Hisham al-Hashimi, June 10, 2018.
 42. "We Have Begun Implementing 'Tawtin al-Rawatib,'" <http://bit.ly/3bLQZoc>.
 43. See Annex G of this study.
 44. Ibid.
 45. Iraqi parliament, Military Service and Retirement Law (No. 3, 2010) and the Law of Salaries of State Employees and the Public Sector (Law No. 22, 2008).
 46. Michael Knights, interviews with Iraqi security forces officers; names, places, and dates withheld at interviewees' request.
 47. Ibid.
 48. Article 79 of the Military Service and Retirement Law.
 49. Michael Knights and Hamdi Malik, interviews with Hashd officers; names, places, and dates withheld at interviewees' request.
 50. Ibid.
 51. Ibid.
 52. Ibid.
 53. Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, "The Hashd's 90th Brigade: Interview," May 22, 2019, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2019/05/the-hashd-90th-brigade-interview>.
 54. Robin Beaumont and Arthur Quesnay, "The Return of the State and Inter-Militia Competition in Northern Iraq," *Noria*, June 14, 2018, <https://www.noria-research.com/the-return-of-the-state-and-inter-militia-competition-in-northern-iraq/>.
 55. Articles 40–44 of the Military Service and Retirement Law.
 56. Michael Knights, interviews with Iraqi military officers; names, places, and dates withheld at interviewees' request.
 57. Mustafa Habib, "Better Pay, Better Weapons: Are Shiite Militias Growing More Powerful than Iraqi Army?" *Niqash*, January 29, 2015, <https://www.niqash.org/en/articles/security/3614/Are-Shiite-Militias-Growing-More-Powerful-Than-Iraqi-Army.htm>.
 58. Knights and Malik, interviews with Hashd officers.
 59. Tamimi, "Kataib Hezbollah and Syria," <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2019/08/kataib-hezbollah-and-syria-interview>.
 60. Author conversation with Mustafa al-Yasiri, who served as a Saraya al-Jihad official in Syria, March 1, 2018. And author conversation with Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada member, February 2020.

61. Articles 9–20 of the Military Service and Retirement Law. The full law can be accessed at <http://bit.ly/2pkqVxg>.
62. Article 37 of the Military Service and Retirement Law.
63. For instance, general officers formally cannot serve after reaching age sixty-three, and colonels retire at fifty-seven. Knights, interview with Iraqi security forces officers.
64. Knights and Malik, interviews with Hashd officers.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. Tamimi, “Kata’ib Hezbollah and Syria,” <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2019/08/kataib-hezbollah-and-syria-interview>.
68. “Al-Mohandis: We possess 30 field hospitals that have treated 60,000 wounded military personnel and 300,000 injured civilians,” al-Hashd al-Shabi Media Directorate, January 13, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJAVumFwCXw>.
69. See Jessa Rose Dury-Agri, Omer Kassim, and Patrick Martin, *Iraqi Security Forces and Popular Mobilization Forces: Orders of Battle* (Washington DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2017), <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/iraqi-security-forces-and-popular-mobilization-forces-orders-battle-0>.
70. Ibid.
71. See Annex G of this study.
72. National Iraqi News Agency, “Abu Ali al-Basri Reveals the Priorities,” <http://bit.ly/38rczfU>.
73. “Abadi’s Fruitless Quest to Reorganize the Hashd,” *Inside Iraqi Politics*, no. 167 (December 2017): 6.
74. Knights, interviews with Iraqi security forces officers.
75. Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, interview with al-Hajj Ahmad As’ad al-Jayerli, a commander in the Hashd North Axis, August 2018.
76. Liwa al-Muntazir Media, post on Facebook, May 19, 2019.
77. “The General Guidance for Saraya al-Salam,” anonymous post on JustPaste.it, March 21, 2017, <https://justpaste.it/sayyidkawnainacademy>.
78. “Saraya al-Salam Cancels the Sayyid al-Kawnain Academy for Military Sciences,” *al-Sumaria News*, July 16, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2MQPmvc>.
79. Al-Abbas Combat Division, Babil representation, post on JustPaste.it, November 11, 2017, <https://justpaste.it/alabbascombatdivisionbabilcamps>.
80. The training camp, known as the “Sheikh Hajj Hamid Taqavi Training Center,” is named after Hamid Taqavi, an IRGC–Qods Force general who was killed by an Islamic State sniper in 2014. Taqavi served as a military advisor to Saraya Talia al Khurasani when he was killed. See Bill Roggio and Caleb Weiss, “Iraqi Shiite Militia Promotes Training Camp Named After Qods Force General,” *Long War Journal*, September 19, 2015, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/09/iraqi-shiite-militia-promotes-training-camp-named-after-qods-force-general.php>.
81. Liwa al-Tafuf, post on JustPaste.it, May 13, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/tafufcamp18brigademay>.
82. National Iraqi News Agency, “Abu Ali al-Basri Reveals the Priorities,” <http://bit.ly/38rczfU>.
83. “The Shield Fighter School Opens in the PMU,” al-Masalah, July 18, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2JrEmCc>.
84. Media for Third Muqatilat Duru’ Battalion, post on JustPaste.it, July 12, 2019, <https://justpaste.it/muqatilatduruJuly2019>.
85. Knights, interviews with Iraqi security forces officers.

86. Knights, interviews with Hashd officers.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. Hamdi Malik, interviews with Hashd officers.
91. A survey of imagery shows mainly Chevrolet Silverados and Fords, plus Toyota Hiluxes.
92. Imagery shows mainly BMPs, M-113s, MT-LBs, BTR-80s, AMX-10Ps, Revas, and Panhard Cascavels.
93. These are mostly 12.7 mm, 14.5 mm, and 23 mm machine guns and cannons, plus 80–120 mm mortars.
94. Including Egyptian Fahd armored vehicles seized from Kuwait in 1990.
95. Knights, interview with Hashimi, May 12, 2018. Also see Malik, interview with Hashd officers.
96. Michael Knights, interviews with commercial vendors; names, places, and dates withheld at interviewees' request.
97. Ibid.
98. Knights, interviews with Iraqi politicians.
99. Knights, "Future of Iraq's Armed Forces," 19–20, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/The-future.pdf>.
100. Michael Knights and Hamdi Malik, interviews with Hashd officers; names, places, and dates of interviews withheld at interviewees' request.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. Michael Knights, interview with Phillip Smyth, June 10, 2019.
106. Ibid.
107. Knights and Malik, interviews with Hashd officers.
108. Ibid.
109. For a rundown of incidents, see Michael Knights and Alexandre Mello, "Militias Are Threatening Public Safety in Iraq," PolicyWatch 3165, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, August 14, 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/militias-are-threatening-public-safety-in-iraq>.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid.

4

Responsibilities of Hashd Members

Executive Order 85, issued March 8, 2018, by then prime minister Haider al-Abadi, laid out the responsibilities and duties of Hashd fighters. Article 6 notes that Hashd authorities “shall apply inas-much as they are not contradicted by any text in these instructions: the Military Service and Retirement Law No. 3 of 2010, the Military Penal Code Law No. 19 of 2007, the Military Penal Trials Law No. 22 of 2016, the Civil Service Law No. 24 of 1960 (amended), the Unified Retirement Law No. 9 of 2014, and the State and Public Sector Employees Salaries Law No. 22 of 2008 (amended).”¹ This very substantial set of laws lays out a bevy of strictures that now regulate the activities of Hashd members, should the Iraqi government choose to apply them.

MEETING CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Because Hashd members are now governed by the Military Service and Retirement Law No. 3 of 2010, their first responsibility is to meet the entry requirements for service in the military. Table 4.1 outlines the entry requirements for officers and private soldiers (volunteers) in the armed forces.

TABLE 4.1.
ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR JOINING THE IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

FOR OFFICERS (RANK OF LIEUTENANT AND ABOVE)*	FOR VOLUNTEERS (RANK OF PRIVATE TO DEPUTY OFFICER)†
• Iraqi and of Iraqi parentage • Age: greater than 20 years old and not more than 26 years old; not greater than 28 years old for members of the army and the Ministry of Defense • Good manners, reputation, behavior; nonconviction of any crime or misdemeanor disruptive of honor, crimes of terrorism, or crimes urgent to domestic or foreign security • Graduation into one of the following: – Iraqi military colleges – Foreign military colleges recognized by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, to which student delegations are sent by the Ministry of Defense – Nonmilitary colleges and institutes with a minimum duration of four years – Private courses that are organized by the ministry • Satisfactory physical fitness and good health	• Iraqi • Age: not less than 18 years and not more than 25 years old for volunteer for technical work; not more than 30 years old for volunteer to serve in other branches • Honesty, good reputation, and good conduct • Satisfactory physical fitness and health • Nonconviction of a felony or misdemeanor that violates honor or of terrorism crimes or crimes that harm the internal and external security of the state • Primary school certificate at a minimum • Granted rank of deputy corporal if holding at least the intermediate school certificate

Sources: Articles 4 and 6 of the Military Service and Retirement Law No. 3 of 2010.

* See Article 4 of the Military Service and Retirement Law (No. 3, 2010).

† See Article 6 of the Military Service and Retirement Law (No. 3, 2010).

Most of the Hashd formations have never published their own conditions of service under which they recruited and signed up their fighters. The key exception is the al-Abbas Combat Division, which produced its own list of recruitment conditions in 2014 (see figure 4.1).²

FIGURE 4.1.
AL-ABBAS COMBAT DIVISION RECRUITMENT CONDITIONS, 2015

1. The principal motive should be heeding the call of the supreme religious *marjaiya* to defend Iraq, its people, and its holy sites.
2. The applicant should be between 20 and 50 years old.
3. The applicant should be of sound physical condition.
4. The applicant should not be affiliated with any party or political entity.
5. The applicant must know that he will work under the supervision of the security apparatuses exclusively—as the fatwa of defense made clear—and in the sector that defending the homeland and its holy sites requires.
6. Preference for acceptance is given to one who has prior military experience and is in the known classes, such as engineering.
7. Preference for acceptance is given to one who possesses arms that make him suitable to work in the division and implement its obligations.
8. Preference is given to the unmarried applicant.
9. The applicant should not have been convicted of a felony or dishonorable misdemeanor.
10. The applicant should not be a dropout from the security apparatuses, or his relationship with them should not have been legally terminated.
11. Government employees can join on the condition that they obtain agreement of their offices.

Note: The applicant will be subject to an interview by a specified committee.

Source: “Al-Abbas (Peace Be upon Him) Combat Division Announces Conditions of Recruitment in Its Ranks,” Global al-Kafeel Network, January 21, 2015, <https://alkafeel.net/ar-news/index.php?id=2468>.

The March 2018 Instructions on Hashd Fighters Affairs later provided its own conditions of Hashd service. Article 2 mirrors almost exactly the Iraqi military requirements from Articles 4 and 6 of the Military Service and Retirement Law No. 3 of 2010. The instructions note that Hashd members “(a) must be Iraqi; (b) must be between the ages of 18 and 25 for service in technical branches, or 18 and 30 for service in other branches; (c) must possess good character and sound reputation; (d) must meet the conditions of physical fitness and health; (e) must not be convicted of any felony, dishonorable misdemeanor, terrorism offense, or crime against the state’s domestic or foreign security; (f) must possess at least an elementary school education.”³

However, as noted earlier, Article 2 also allows the prime minister to “exempt from the relevant legal conditions those fighters who have participated in combat against Daesh for at least one year.”⁴ In practice, this provision gives very broad leeway to exempt almost all Hashd members. In January 2020, Abu Ali al-Basri, assistant to the Hashd vice chair, laid out expectations that Hashd officers might be fast-tracked through professional military education in order to meet qualification standards, noting in particular, “We have suggested the matter of preparing the officers in the prior and current government, and we discussed with the leaders of the army to qualify graduates of the colleges and preparatory institutes through military courses, and it was agreed to insert the graduates of the colleges with a short course so that they could attain a rank, in comparison with the period of the course for graduates of the preparatory institutes.”⁵

In practice, one final entry requirement exists specifically for Sunni members of the Hashd: vetting by Iraq’s National Security Service and potentially vetting by the U.S.-led coalition if foreign training and equipment are being provided.⁶

BASIC SOLDIERING DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Members of the Hashd are now expected to avoid breaches of the military system of established law, rules, regulations, and duties. Those requirements are laid out in the Military Penal Code Law No. 19 of 2007.⁷

Present for Duty

The most basic such requirement is to be present for duty. Chapter IV (Absenteeism and Absence) and Chapter V (Desertion) set the conditions under which military personnel are viewed as being absent without leave.⁸ As Iraq is still considered a country in the midst of a national emergency (rather than at peace), the punishment for absenteeism ranges from more than three years of imprisonment to the death penalty. As noted earlier, the Hashd typically do not conform to the Iraqi military duty and leave rotation (twenty days on, ten days off), suggesting the need for tightening and standardization.

In most militaries, and indeed in Iraq before 2003, military policing systems ensure that troops cannot freely leave their posts without approval. Under the pre-2003 national service military system, the military police and Baath Party had dedicated units that could find miscreants in their home areas.⁹ The post-2003 all-volunteer army never recreated this capability to track missing personnel and search for them in likely places. Presently, each military unit is required to police its own absentees in an informal manner, trying to locate and message the miscreants.¹⁰ More often, men cover for absentees. Much of the corruption in the Iraqi military—namely, the ghost soldier phenomenon¹¹—centers on tolerated or colluded absenteeism. Chronic offenders are sometimes released from their contracts or discharged without punishment if they desert the unit when they are needed, but this is very rare.¹²

Unsurprisingly, the monitoring of presence or absence is equally or more lax in the Hashd. In addition to routinely taking excessive leave, Hashd fighters are not subject to any real oversight regarding their presence at or absence from their post. On-duty personnel are tallied at the brigade or regiment level. No one else checks to see whether or not fighters are present, or in which area they are fighting. Even if a higher organ is going to check these facts, it would be the Hashd Commission, under Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. This situation had allowed Muhandis and his allies to cover for the diversion of Hashd fighters to Syria for extended periods while they nominally serve in Iraq on the government payroll.¹³ The situation has been further confused by a lack of clarity over who is and is not registered at any single moment.

Identification Requirements

A basic requirement for the armed forces is to be identifiable, to wear a recognizable uniform, and to carry appropriate identification. The March 2018 Instructions for Hashd Fighter Affairs established for the first time the requirement for Hashd fighters to wear standardized uniforms and insignia, though the instructions have not been implemented to even the low standards of the rest of Iraq's security forces.¹⁴ Nor does the Hashd have a stable identification document.¹⁵ The most basic identity documents are typed letters, stamped by unit commanders for three months (to grant the fighter transit through checkpoints).¹⁶ A huge array of official-looking plastic identity cards has also proliferated bearing the logo of the Hashd Commission, sometimes in combination with a Republic of Iraq crest or sometimes with text reading "the Republic of Iraq Islamic Resistance."¹⁷ Like weapons permits (handled in next section), Hashd ID cards have become a hot ticket item for forgers. Hashd vehicles are meant to have military license plates, but they have a polyglot range of license plates, depending on where the vehicles came from: security force plates if they were originally security ministry vehicles, other government agency plates if they originated in civilian ministries, and civilian plates if the vehicles came from civilian sources.¹⁸

Bearing of Weapons

A final area of the military system concerns bearing weapons off the battlefield and off duty. In Iraq, the law of the land allows each family to keep a firearm (pistol or rifle) in the house, along with a limited amount of loaded ammunition. Iraqi civilians are not legally allowed to carry their weapons outside their home unless they have a special permit issued by a senior local security commander within the armed forces, typically a division commander or above.¹⁹ A ministry, such as the Ministry of Interior, might issue weapons permits to bodyguards and private security companies, but the conditions are strict and renewing such permits can be difficult.²⁰ Security force members are expected to use military-owned weapons during government service, and those weapons are stowed at depots.²¹ Depending on where a soldier serves, he may be permitted to keep his weapon on hand during some or all

movements to and from leave, in order to be ready to defend himself if he is leaving or arriving in a “hot area.”²²

The Hashd, in contrast, has a more mixed record on bearing weapons. Many Hashd fighters brought their own personal weapon to war.²³ Indeed, owning a gun is mentioned in the al-Abbas Combat Division recruitment criteria in Table 4.2 as a preferable characteristic of a volunteer. As the war has progressed, fewer fighters are still using their own rifles and more disciplined Hashd units—such as the *atabat*—have established depots where fighters leave weapons as they depart the front line on leave.²⁴ Some more organized Hashd units—notably Badr and Saraya al-Salam—have made a point of incorporating a weapons permit into their identity cards or issuing separate weapons permits, albeit cards issued on their own initiative and without approval from either the Popular Mobilization Commission (PMC) or the cabinet.²⁵ Those cards appear to give fighters the ability to move through checkpoints *whether they are on or off duty*. Unsurprisingly, a busy black-market trade has developed in Hashd weapons permits.²⁶ The most valuable cards are those from the most powerful Iranian-backed Hashd factions—Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, and Saraya Talia al-Khurasani. The reason is likely that those groups are the most brazen at using their identification to pass through normal checkpoints in cities, even carrying weapons inside city centers.²⁷

PROHIBITION ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Article 74 of the Military Penal Code Law No. 19 of 2007 strictly prohibits political activities by members of the armed forces. The article is worth reproducing in full:

First: Whosoever is found to be attending a political meeting or a member of a political organization, participates in a demonstration, or directs other toward the same, or distributes political literature, or delivers a political speech, is punishable with imprisonment for (5) five years.

Second: Whosoever, without permission, becomes a member of a charitable organization is punishable with imprisonment not exceeding (30) thirty days.²⁸

The Iraqi constitution also forbids political activities. Article 9, Section 1, Part C, is worth quoting in full:

The Iraqi armed forces and their personnel, including military personnel working in the Ministry of Defense or any subordinate departments or organizations, may not stand for election to political office, campaign for candidates, or participate in other activities prohibited by Ministry of Defense regulations. This ban includes the activities of the personnel mentioned above acting in their personal or professional capacities, but shall not infringe upon the right of these personnel to cast their vote in the elections.²⁹

In addition to this prohibition, Executive Order 91 of 2016 explicitly directed the Hashd to break ties with political parties. As noted previously, Article 6 states, “Any connection between personnel of the PMC and any political, partisan, or social organization shall be severed, and no political activity shall be permitted within its ranks.”³⁰ From the civilian side, Law No. 36 of 2015 on political parties also prohibits serving members of the armed forces from participating in political parties.³¹

Despite these prohibitions, many elements in the Hashd have skirted the limitations on mixing military service with a political career. Unlike regular military officers, Hashd commanders have used the informal membership rules of the Hashd to temporarily drop their military connection during political activities and elections, only to reactivate those ties after their political actions. It would simply not be possible for regular Iraqi military officers to resign their commissions at will, regardless of their service commitment, and then flip back and forth between their military assignments and political careers.

It is also the case that politicians who have nominally broken their ties to Hashd units still have unchanged levels of influence over their operations and administration. Badr leader Hadi al-Ameri is the most prominent example of a politician who still wields effective command

of a wide range of Hashd units.³² During the 2018 elections, the journal *Inside Iraqi Politics* noted that the identification of Hashd units and political candidates of the Fatah bloc was so close “that it is common for the media to simply refer to Fatah as ‘the Hashd Alliance’ and use Ameri’s face” on posters. Badr’s Hashd units used their Facebook pages to boost Ameri’s electoral campaign and to mirror Fatah slogans.³³ Another example is Ahmed al-Asadi, who has retained his seat in parliament (and his position on the parliamentary Defense and Security Committee) despite also heading the Popular Mobilization Forces’ unit Kataib Jund al-Imam and operating as the official Hashd spokesman from 2014 to 2019.³⁴ Thus, Hashd commanders—including among the Sunni tribes³⁵—have encountered no consequences for making a mockery of both Iraqi military law and prime ministerial executive orders on the issue of politicization.

As noted previously, a final aspect of Iraqi military culture is the special elections, in which the security forces cast their votes during local and national elections on a different day from civilians. This arrangement enables the security forces to maximize the number of on-duty troops on election day, when security must be ensured. Special elections require unit-by-unit voter rolls to be generated and special polling stations (with observers) to be established on security force bases. Article IV of Iraq’s election laws notes:

Military employees, members of the Ministries of Defence and Interior and all other security institutions ... shall vote according to special procedures established by the Independent Electoral Higher Commission (IHEC) based on official lists containing the names and the departments. The different departments shall commit to submit these lists in a period of not less than 60 days before elections. According to these lists, the security and military employees’ names shall be deleted from the voters’ register. If these lists are not submitted according to the above procedures, they can vote in the general elections like other citizens according to the voters’ register.³⁶

This method has been implemented in all five national and three provincial elections since 2005 (as well as the 2005 constitutional referendum). Yet despite having nearly four years' notice, it proved impossible to integrate the Hashd with this system in the 2018 national elections, the first polls held since the force was established. This is because the PMC was unable to designate exactly who was in the Hashd and who was not.³⁷ Instead, Hashd units on duty during the election were allowed to vote on Election Day in special polling stations on their bases. This irregular arrangement—governed neither by civilian voting procedures nor by military special elections—resulted in the Hashd voting being *the least observed polling in Iraq*.³⁸ This matter remains troubling, as does the PMC's inability to provide a roster of its members to the Independent High Electoral Commission. Nothing could better underline the administrative dysfunction surrounding the blurry membership of the Hashd.

RULES OF CONDUCT AND MILITARY ETHICS

The Military Penal Code Law No. 19 of 2007 lists a range of infractions of military ethics in addition to absenteeism. The list includes crimes against persons and property, such as mistreatment of civilians and prisoners (Article 61); looting (Article 61); diversion of military materiel (Article 63); and exceedance of the authorities of a soldier's post or other abuses of power (Article 52).³⁹ Iraqi security forces are also bound by international humanitarian law⁴⁰ and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,⁴¹ of which Iraq is a signatory. As Amnesty International has noted, Iraq is bound by the Geneva Convention of 1949, "which provides for humane treatment of civilians and captured combatants. Murder, torture, and cruel treatment are prohibited. Also prohibited are arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances."⁴²

Some of these articles were reinforced in Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's "Advice and Guidelines to the Fighters in the Arena of Jihad," which was issued on February 12, 2015. The entire text is reproduced in Annex F. In summary, it contains the following forms of advice:

- Exhortations not to "indulge in acts of extremism," including

the killing of “an elder, a child, a woman,” and including desecration of corpses

- Prohibition on stealing property
- Strict guidance against harassing and assaulting women, making special reference to preserving and respecting their “honor”
- Avoidance of sectarian hatred and equal respect for the rights of all people⁴³

Gross Human Rights Violations by Hashd Elements

One of the reasons Grand Ayatollah Sistani issued this advice is that the Hashd was already experiencing severe disciplinary and ethical problems in its first year of operation. Muhandis-leaning Hashd elements were among the least savory—with Human Rights Watch listing the Badr Brigades, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, Kataib Hezbollah, Saraya Talia al-Khurasani, and Kataib Jund al-Imam as the worst offenders.⁴⁴ Of the shrine militias, only Liwa Ali al-Akbar was also listed by Human Rights Watch for alleged violations.⁴⁵

In one of the first detailed accounts of crimes undertaken by Hashd members, in October 2014 Amnesty International documented dozens of cases of abductions, ransom, and unlawful killings by Shia militias in Baghdad, Samarra, Kirkuk, and other locations. The report noted: “Shia militias... have been taking advantage of the atmosphere of lawlessness and impunity to abduct and kill Sunni men, seemingly in reprisal or revenge for [Islamic State] attacks and at times also to extort money from the families of those they have abducted.”⁴⁶ Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch issued substantial reports that documented Hashd misconduct in 2016 and 2017.⁴⁷

Particularly serious abuses took place in May 2016 during the clearances of Fallujah and Saqliwiyah,⁴⁸ resulting in the summary execution of forty-nine unarmed Sunni males at Hashd screening sites and the disappearance of 643 other Sunni military-age males.⁴⁹ Amnesty International documented further mass disappearances of Sunni males at the Razzaza crossing between Anbar and Karbala provinces,⁵⁰ attributed

largely to Kataib Hezbollah, which is widely believed to maintain an illegal detention facility with 1,700–3,000 detainees in Jurf al-Sakhar, east of Razzaza.⁵¹ The Hashd has a notorious record for not allowing displaced Sunnis to return to their homes without making payments, or for wholesale refusing the resettlement of Sunnis to depopulated areas.⁵²

As Fanar Hadad correctly notes in his 2018 study of the Hashd,⁵³ all Iraqi security forces carry out atrocities, and the Hashd is hardly unique on this count. Individual and mass violations by regular Iraqi security forces also occur,⁵⁴ and they too have rarely been investigated in a serious way.⁵⁵ As members of the Iraqi security forces, covered by a host of laws, the Hashd should submit their members to the same military justice as all the other services. This system is regulated by the Military Penal Trials Law No. 22 of 2016. This system is occasionally exercised—as shown in the case of two soldiers who assaulted a civilian family in 2017⁵⁶—but it is not yet applied to Hashd forces. In fact, neither the Fallujah atrocities nor the Razzaza/Jurf al-Sakhar detentions were ever properly investigated, despite prime ministerial commitments to do so.⁵⁷ A similar situation has taken place at Tikrit and al-Dour in Salah al-Din.⁵⁸

Violent Suppression of Popular Protests

From October 2019 onward, a number of Hashd senior commanders and officials were central to the large-scale violent suppression of unarmed Iraqi civilian protests. Specifically, on October 3, a group of Iraqi militia and security leaders worked with Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps officers to form a crisis cell in Baghdad.⁵⁹ Based at one operations room in Jadriyah and one near Ibn Sina Hospital, Iranian liaison officers in the cell provided advice based on Iran's own counteractivist experiences, intelligence material on activists, and secure communications used by the snipers.⁶⁰ Reuters noted evidence that “the snipers were elements of militias reporting directly to their commander instead of the chief commander of the armed forces...They belong to a group that is very close to the Iranians.”⁶¹

The crisis cell included commanders such as Hashd chair Faleh al-Fayyad, Hashd vice chair Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, Hashd operations chief and prime ministerial advisor Abu Muntadher al-Husseini, Hashd Central Security Directorate head Abu Zainab al-Lami, Qais al-Khazali

(head of Asaib Ahl al-Haq, Hashd Brigades 41–43), Hamid al-Jazayeri (commander of Saraya Talia al-Khurasani, Hashd Brigade 18), Abu Ala al-Walai (commander of Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada, Hashd Brigade 14), and Abu Iman al-Bahali, head of the Hashd intelligence directorate.⁶² Abu Zainab al-Lami, Qais al-Khazali, and Qais's brother Laith (a Hashd operator with Asaib Ahl al-Haq) were all sanctioned by the United States under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act on December 6, 2019, for their roles in the repressive actions, and other U.S. and British designations will likely follow in 2020.⁶³

Shooters from Saraya Talia al-Khurasani, Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, and Badr were involved in the mass killing of unarmed protestors.⁶⁴ Hashd forces were subjected to international criticism for mass illegal detention and torture,⁶⁵ intimidation attacks on protestors and journalists,⁶⁶ assassinations, bombings, and ransacks of television channels,⁶⁷ lethal targeting of protestors using riot weapons,⁶⁸ and sniper attacks on protestors.⁶⁹ Hashd members drew widespread international condemnation for these actions,⁷⁰ which have killed 536 people and wounded 23,545 at the time of this writing, according to the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights.⁷¹ In January 2020, fighters from Saraya al-Salam (Hashd Brigades 313 and 314) were also involved in attacks on Iraqi protestors and the opening up of protest sites to attack by Badr militias that burned the protestors' tent encampments.⁷²

Hashd Elements Who Are Above the Law

In some respects, however, the Hashd take a lack of accountability to new levels because of the fear that some units—such as Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, and their spin-offs—have cultivated among civilians and the regular security forces. For instance, in testimony, one observer related the following incident in Muqadiyah in 2016:

He was just sitting in a café with three others when a car pulled up and two masked men stepped out. They called him by name and then just shot him in the face. The police station is 100 meters away from the café, but militias know that they can act as they please, and nobody will stop them.⁷³

Similarly, also in Diyala in 2016, a well-known reporter for Iraq's al-Sharqiya television station, Saif Talal, and his cameraman were summarily executed by Hashd fighters referred to as "uncontrolled militia"⁷⁴ immediately after traveling with an Iraqi army three-star general's convoy.⁷⁵

This kind of lawless behavior has continued until the time of this writing. Some examples are worth citing. Riyadh al-Adhadh, chair of the Baghdad Provincial Council, was openly abducted by Asaib Ahl al-Haq members in 2014, triggering no consequences.⁷⁶ In the May 2018 elections, Asaib Ahl al-Haq members staked out voting booths in Sunni areas of northern and eastern Baghdad and literally guided the hands of hundreds of voters to their candidates' names using physical intimidation.⁷⁷ Out in the rural areas, Asaib Ahl al-Haq has been even more overtly violent. In July 2018, the group kidnapped local Iraqi army officers and Sunni tribal leaders in the Dujail area, north of Baghdad.⁷⁸

In July 2018, one of the authors was in Baghdad at a time when a major confrontation erupted between members of Kataib Hezbollah and Iraqi police on Palestine Street. The Kataib Hezbollah members were in five stolen cars and refused to surrender to police. After an extended standoff at a Kataib Hezbollah office, they refused to surrender even to the minister of interior himself, a senior Badr leader; eventually, only one person and one (of five) cars were surrendered, and even then they were taken into custody by the Hashd's own security directorate, with no proof of any follow-on action.

Self-Policing by the Hashd?

In 2018 and 2019, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and other Hashd leaders purportedly began a proactive effort to "cleanse" the Hashd of criminal elements. This effort saw Badr make partially successful efforts to crack down on lawless elements of Turkmen militias in Tuz Khormatu and Kirkuk, while the Hashd Security Division publicized that it had closed 320 sites accused of impersonating recognized Hashd groups or otherwise falsely claiming affiliation with the Hashd ("fake bases")⁷⁹ between September 2018 and May 2019. It performed numerous arrests (despite lacking arrest powers).

In reality, therefore, the Hashd are not subject to military justice, as required by Iraqi legislation, even to the limited extent the rest of the security forces are. The Hashd have developed a parallel self-policing security division that is run by the very militias—particularly Kataib Hezbollah—who are most intimately involved in criminal activities. Groups like Kataib Hezbollah are entirely above the law—even military law. Willful disobedience of the national chain of command is the final area of Hashd behavior to which we now turn.

NOTES

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**PART III:
OPERATIONAL
COMMAND
AND CONTROL
OF THE HASHD**

Whereas administrative control focuses on the recruitment, training, and equipping of military forces, operational command and control focuses on the use of such forces in operations. Command is not defined in any published Iraqi document or law, but it is defined by the U.S. military as “the authority that a commander in the Armed Forces lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment...Although commanders may delegate authority to accomplish the mission, they cannot delegate the responsibility for the attainment of mission objectives.”¹ *Control* is differently defined as “authority that may be less than full command exercised by a commander over part of the activities of subordinate or other organizations. Control is the process by which commanders plan, guide, and conduct operations.”²

This part of the study deals with the operational and tactical activities of the Hashd in today’s Iraq. It begins with treatment of the most fundamental set of questions relating to the Popular Mobilization Commission and the Popular Mobilization Forces: Who controls the Hashd forces? Are they under the command of the prime minister, or do they take their instructions from elsewhere? If elsewhere, is there an alternative centralized commander, or is authority highly diffuse? With regard to operations, how is the Hashd deployed in practice? How are Hashd forces used on the battlefield, and what are their differing strengths and capabilities?

5

Command and Control of the Hashd

The most fundamental responsibility of any member of the Iraqi security forces—now including Hashd members—is to follow all legal orders issued by the national command authorities of the Iraqi government, principally the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, the prime minister. This responsibility is broken out into two separate lines of expectation in the Military Penal Code Law No. 19 of 2007: Articles 42 and 45 discuss the crimes of abstaining from obeying orders and rebelling against state authority, while Article 52 describes the crime of exceeding the authorities and limitations of a commander's post.³

COMMAND-AND-CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS AND THE HASHD

The supreme commander of the Hashd is clearly the Iraqi prime minister, who is empowered by Iraq's constitution as the commander-in-chief of all security forces inside the country.⁴ Article 5 of the 2016 Hashd law notes that the Hashd Commission chair has only the powers delegated to him by the prime minister. The vice chair has no formal powers except those delegated, in turn, by the Popular Mobilization Commission chair.

For most of the post-2003 period in Iraq, operational control of major military forces has extended from the Iraqi Joint Operations Command

in Baghdad to the multidivision operations commands in the provinces. Before June 2014, Shia militias such as Kataib Hezbollah and Asaib Ahl al-Haq deployed forces to the Iraq-Syria border under an informal arrangement with the Office of the Commander-in-Chief during the end days of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's tenure. Because no single Iraqi headquarters had operational control of the forces once they were in the field, the forces "floated" around in a freewheeling manner. Since June 2014, the Hashd has continued to operate a parallel operational control mechanism of growing complexity.

In more peaceful provinces, the aforementioned offices of the Hashd Commission or Hashd operations commands provide rudimentary coordination of local constabulary operations in conjunction with the Iraqi police's joint coordination centers or operations commands. Even so, individual Hashd units have wide latitude to direct their own operations on the basis of their commanders' political clout. In some areas, militias have near-exclusive jurisdiction to control local security. In Jurf al-Sakhar, just southwest of Baghdad, Kataib Hezbollah has carved a minor principality out of Sunni areas liberated from the Islamic State in 2014. The principality has its own oil refinery and fisheries, as well as crop and dairy farms and facilities for processing poultry.⁵ Badr has enjoyed similar privileges in Diyala since 2003, and it has expanded beyond its pre-2014 control of the Diyala-based 5th Iraqi Army Division to take over major military facilities, including Camp Ashraf, as well as to run the central parts of the province as a Badr military canton.⁶

In "hot" provinces where major operations are under way against the Islamic State, the Hashd also runs the aforementioned axis commands and smaller operations commands that it has established, notably, without any external authorization. Examples include the Western Nineveh Operations Command and the Eastern Nineveh Operations Command, both of which were established in 2017 by Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis to compete with the Iraqi army-led Nineveh Operations Command, and both of which were dissolved (again by Muhandis) in August 2018. The Hashd Salah al-Din Operations Command parallels the Iraqi army-led Salah al-Din Operations Command. The Sadrist Saraya al-Salam movement likewise created its own Samarra Operations Command that operates in the city alongside the authority of the identically named Samarra Operations Command led by the Iraqi army. The unity of operational

control established by the pre-2014 operations commands has been shattered by the refusal of Hashd forces to operate under Iraqi military headquarters. This refusal has resulted in many instances where the Hashd has rejected legal orders from the Iraqi prime minister or has exceeded its authorities by taking actions independent of the national chain of command.

REFUSING LEGAL ORDERS

As one Iraqi security contact delicately put it, the Hashd's track record of refusing orders is partially visible and partially invisible because the Iraqi prime minister knows better than to issue orders that senior Hashd commanders will not follow.⁷ This statement amounts to an elegant way of explaining that independent sub-elements of the Hashd, such as Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, and Saraya Talia al-Khurasani, often do as they please.

Refusing Orders During Battle

The behavior of some Hashd elements during the battle of Tikrit in March 2015 provides a case study of their wider latitude to accept or reject legal orders than any normal Iraqi military unit has. Kataib Hezbollah and Asaib Ahl al-Haq sought to exclude U.S. support from the battle after Iraq's prime minister requested coalition air support to unfreeze the attritional fighting. Kataib Hezbollah spokesman Jafar al-Husseini threatened any participating U.S. aircraft, warning, "[W]e have the capabilities to shoot them down."⁸ Moeen al-Kadhimi, a Badr politician and head of the Hashd Committee on the Baghdad Provincial Council, announced that "all the popular mobilization will refuse to fight until the American airstrikes stop."⁹ Asaib Ahl al-Haq spokesman Naim alAboudi announced: "We are suspending activities...We will be ready to launch an offensive when the coalition forces stop bombing."¹⁰ It is inconceivable that any Iraqi army or Federal Police unit would make comments of these kinds.

Insubordination off the Battlefield

Outside fighting contexts, some Hashd units—particularly Kataib Hezbollah—have also signaled their unwillingness to follow legal orders from the Iraqi prime minister, or they have taken steps to undermine prime ministerial authority.

Intimidation of Senior Religious Figures

In Baghdad, even the most politically connected members of society are not safe if militias choose to target them. Alaa al-Musawi—appointed head of the Shia *waqf* (religious endowment) by Iraq's most senior cleric, Ali al-Sistani—suffered a home invasion by Asaib Ahl al-Haq forces on July 10, 2019, and thereafter had to be sheltered in a government safe house. Although the exact identity of Musawi's attackers is widely known in Iraqi society, nothing has been done to punish the militiamen involved.¹¹ Musawi was targeted because he named Asaib Ahl al-Haq leader Qais al-Khazali as an impediment to the *waqf's* attempt to remove AAH militiamen from a mosque in Babil.

Intimidation of Senior Political Figures

In the months before this study was completed, Hashd elements (mainly Kataib Hezbollah) were involved in an escalating series of intimidation operations against Iraqi politicians. In the aftermath of the January 3, 2020, deaths of Soleimani and Muhandis, Kataib Hezbollah threatened numerous Iraqi members of parliament if they did not attend the January 5 session to expel U.S. forces from Iraq.¹² Later, Kataib Hezbollah's spokesman Abu Ali al-Askari threatened President Barham Salih and demanded that he not fly to Davos to meet U.S. president Donald Trump.¹³ As Iraq moved into a new prime ministerial nomination process, Kataib Hezbollah made its most blatant public move to date, suggesting the identity of Iraq's next prime minister, recommending that the grand ayatollah change his ruling on the matter, and threatening a potential prime ministerial candidate. The message is worth reproducing in full:

It is better for Iraq and its people to stick to Sayyed Adil Abdulmahdi, and restore him to his natural position, to overcome what has not been overcome.

And perhaps the most important of the obstacles that hinder his return to all his responsibilities is the opinion of the *marjaiya* that led to his resignation, so if this obstacle is removed he will continue performing his assignment, and completing his tasks.

And some of them have circulated nominating Mustafa al-Kadhimi as candidate for the position of PM, and he is one of those accused of helping the American enemy to carry out the crime of assassinating the leaders of victory al-Hajj Soleimani the commander and his companion al-Hajj al-Muhandis. And we only consider his nomination as a declaration of war on the Iraqi people which will burn what remains of the security of Iraq.¹⁴

Seizure of Property

Hashd units have also seized properties, both urban and rural. Kataib Hezbollah is the most notable offender. In Jurf al-Sakhar, Kataib Hezbollah somehow obtained the deeds to large tracts of land, from which it has developed its own canton free of government presence or authority. In Baghdad's diplomatic district in Jadriyah in May 2019, members of Kataib Hezbollah also tried to seize a building allocated to the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan leader Lahur Sheikh Janghi Talabani, before they were forced out by Presidential Brigade forces.¹⁵

Refusal to Redeploy Under Prime Ministerial Orders

As long ago as July 15, 2017, then Iraqi prime minister Haider al-Abadi began trying to place the militias in the newly liberated Nineveh Plains under government control. On August 2, 2018, Abadi signed Executive Order 1388, which required the Popular Mobilization Forces to exit Mosul and the Nineveh Plains, and to transfer all PMF units in Nineveh to the operational and administrative control of the army-led

Nineveh Operations Command. On April 1, 2019, then Iraqi prime minister Adil Abdulmahdi reiterated the order. The 50th Brigade (Kataib Babiliyoun) reached out for help to the Iranian ambassador in Iraq, a Revolutionary Guard officer named Iraj Masjedi, and he informed the brigade to ignore the Iraqi prime minister. As of February 2020, the withdrawal has still not been carried out, and in fact the militias were reinforced with tanks sent by Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.¹⁶ Thus, two small militias, the Hashd's 30th Brigade (Liwa al-Shabak/Quwat Sahl Nineveh) and 50th Brigade, have thumbed their noses at two successive prime ministers and indeed outsurvived both in office.

Unauthorized Use of Export-Controlled Technologies

After the collapse of the Iraqi army in June 2014, Kataib Hezbollah and Badr took control of at least seven M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks and did not return them for more than three years, despite repeated orders from Prime Minister Abadi to do so. This incident triggered a crisis between the United States and Iraq concerning sensitive technology protection and end-user conditions, which resulted in the U.S. suspension of service of the Iraqi M1A1 fleet and distracted significant leadership attention from the fight against the Islamic State.

In the end, all but one Abrams tank was recovered or otherwise accounted for, with four returned to the government and with Badr keeping three at a site with Iraqi army maintainers in Baquba, Diyala province. However, segments of some of the tanks were cut off by Iranian technicians in Diyala and moved to Iran in November 2017.

Under Abu Zainab al-Lami, the Hashd Central Security Directorate also makes unauthorized use of U.S.-provided night vision equipment when undertaking raids. Such use violates U.S.-Iraq agreements on the specified use of such devices by Iraqi army and Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) end users.

Refusal to Return Ministry Property

The Iraqi prime minister is still struggling at the time of this writing to force the Hashd to hand over army and Federal Police vehicles and artillery, which Hashd members claim as "spoils of war" because they recovered the systems from the Islamic State.

Intimidation of Prime Ministerial Appointee

Efforts to dilute Muhandis's administrative control of the Hashd Commission were blunted when Mohsen al-Kaabi, the prime minister's appointee as co-vice chair, was quickly intimidated into resignation within weeks of being appointed in February 2016.

Refusal to Consider Prime Ministerial Orders to Disband

These instances cause concern that some Hashd elements might refuse future orders to disband, reduce in size, or partially disarm. Asaib Ahl al-Haq¹⁷ has stated that it would not obey a government directive to disestablish the Hashd, thereby placing the force outside the command of the Iraqi state. Rhetorically, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba has pushed even further against the idea, as the movement's Yusuf al-Nasiri stirred up a controversy when he called for "rebuilding the security apparatuses, dissolving the Iraqi army, and considering al-Hashd al-Shabi to be the first army, not the auxiliary" in Iraq.¹⁸ Badr members have historically been more cautious to appear subordinate to the serving prime minister, but their actions in the future are not ensured.¹⁹ Saraya al-Salam and the *ataba* units are the most amenable to future controls being placed on the Hashd by the national command authorities.²⁰

EXCEEDING AUTHORITY

In addition to refusing or slow-timing legal orders, some Hashd elements have made a habit of going beyond their authorities as members of the ISF. This is precisely why then prime minister Abdulmahdi began issuing orders in summer 2019 that stress the need for a return to centralized command and control. He stated:

The actions of any Iraqi or non-Iraqi armed forces outside the framework of the Iraqi armed forces or outside the command and the supervision of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces shall be prohibited...Any armed force operating within the framework of the Iraqi armed forces and under the command of the Commander-in-Chief of the

Armed Forces shall be prohibited from having movement, operations, stores or industries outside the knowledge, administration and control of the Iraqi armed forces and under the supervision of the Commander-in-Chief.²¹

The following sections will detail some instances of negative Hashd actors exceeding their authority.

Maintenance of Illegal Detention Facilities

Like most formations within the ISF, the Hashd does not enjoy the power of arrest or detention, yet it has consistently detained Iraqi civilians—sometimes for years on end without trial. As noted previously in significant detail, Kataib Hezbollah continues to maintain illegal detention facilities in Jurf al-Sakhar despite numerous efforts, including some supported by the prime minister’s office, to arrange the transfer of well over one thousand detained Sunni military-age males to government facilities.²² Kataib Hezbollah somehow finagled a form of government leasing of many parcels of land at Jurf al-Sakhar, but it has exceeded the rights of any normal landlord by excluding Iraqi government presence and oversight within what is developing into a small Kataib Hezbollah principality.

Making Independent Foreign and Security Policy

One of the most serious areas in which Hashd leaders exceed their authority is in the development of independent foreign and security policy. At a time when Iraq is nominally seeking to develop as a neutral player, rather than embroiling itself in the region’s proxy wars, some Hashd elements—notably Kataib Hezbollah—are effectively fighting their own foreign wars using Iraqi citizens, soil, and government funds.

Threats to Foreign States

As Brandon Wallace has documented, Iraqi leaders of various Hashd elements such as Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada, Kataib Hezbollah, Hara-kat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, and Asaib Ahl al-Haq regularly threaten violence against Bahrain and Saudi Arabia for the suppression of

political and religious rights within the Gulf Shia communities.²³ Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba and Asaib Ahl al-Haq also threatened to attack U.S. assets in Iraq if Washington responded to the chemical weapons attacks carried out under Bashar al-Assad's regime; both have threatened to undertake military actions against Israel in the Golan Heights.²⁴ In one famed case, Kataib Hezbollah tried to ransom Qatari royals seized by militiamen, but a transfer of \$283 million was stopped by Iraq's intelligence services in the VIP lounge of Baghdad International Airport.²⁵ None of those examples are Iraqi government-directed foreign policies; rather, they are military threats issued by Hashd leaders and spokesmen who are unsettling Iraq's regional relations and making unilateral foreign policy while serving within the ISF.

Attacks on Foreign States

On May 14, two explosive-laden long-range drones were launched from Kataib Hezbollah's Jurf al-Sakhar base in the direction of Saudi Arabia. The drones detonated on two pump stations on Saudi Arabia's East-West Pipeline. The attack coincided with a May 12 Iranian frogman attack on four tankers at Saudi Arabia's other non-Hormuz export route, which suggests a high degree of coordination between Kataib Hezbollah and Iran's security services. Interestingly, starting on March 12, 2019, Iraq's military air traffic control was pressured to restrict the overflight of Jurf al-Sakhar by U.S. drones.

Attacks on U.S. Targets Inside Iraq

Throughout the year, Iran backed militias that launched more than thirty rocket attacks on U.S. sites in Iraq.²⁶ Targeted sites included the U.S. embassy in Baghdad; U.S. bases at Balad, Taji, Qayyarah, Kirkuk, Mosul, and al-Asad; plus U.S. oil industry accommodation sites in Basra. In 2018, the U.S. consulate in Basra was closed because of rocketfire and other militia threats, and other U.S. diplomatic sites have been operating at under 50 percent manning since the United States detected threats in May 2019. On October 1, 2017, a U.S. soldier was killed and another wounded by an explosively formed penetrator—a roadside bomb provided by Iran. A U.S. investigation concluded that the attack had been

launched by an Iran-backed militia after an American advise-and-assist mission expanded into Camp Speicher, a site from which militia leaders wanted to exclude U.S. forces. In July 2019, a U.S. supply convoy was struck by a roadside bombing in Basra. On December 27, 2019, a U.S. contractor was killed by Kataib Hezbollah rockets at the K1 base in Kirkuk.²⁷ On January 26, 2020, militias undertook a mortar strike on the dining hall at the U.S. embassy in Baghdad at the peak serving time, luckily causing no casualties.²⁸

Unauthorized Deployments to Syria

Taking unauthorized deployments a step further, Hashd groups have also deployed to Syria. The involvement of Hashd fighters in the Syrian civil war is a murkier but very consequential example of exceeding the authorities of duty in the ISF. Iraq's prime minister is required to approve Iraqi military actions in Syria, such as Iraqi Air Force strikes or cross-border operations. Those operations are typically brief in duration and are considered diplomatically sensitive. In contrast, thousands of Iraqi fighters have moved fluidly across the border to undertake operations in Syria since 2014, often drawn from the same pre-Hashd militia factions that sent fighters to Syria before June 2014. Some Iran-backed Hashd elements appear to have sent fighters to Syria; however, such elements often claim that those same fighters are serving in Iraq so that they might continue receiving their Iraqi state salary.²⁹ According to the authoritative Iraqi security analyst Hisham al-Hashimi, the Hashd formations with forces inside Syria include:

- Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (Brigade 12) with more than 1,500 troops
- Kataib al-Imam Ali (Brigade 40) with 1,000 troops
- Kataib Hezbollah (Brigades 45, 46, and 47) with 1,000 troops
- Asaib Ahl al-Haq (Brigades 41, 42, and 43) with 1,000 troops
- Harakat al-Abdal (Brigade 39) with an unknown number in Syria
- Saraya Talia al-Khurasani (Brigade 18) with 300 troops

- Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada (Brigade 14) with 200 troops
- Smaller contingents from Saraya al-Jihad (Brigade 17) and Ansar Allah al-Awfiya (Brigade 19),³⁰ and occasional deployments by Badr units

The complexity of determining the exact identity of contracted Hashd members makes it difficult to confirm whether members of the ISF are absenting themselves from paid service in Iraq to fight in Syria under the Assad regime. As Aymenn Al-Tamimi's interview with one Kataib Hezbollah member revealed, Hashd members from well-connected groups such as Kataib Hezbollah are able to fight in Syria while receiving not only their full salary at home but also a bonus payment for serving abroad, presumably provided by Kataib Hezbollah.³¹ More recently, Liwa al-Tafuf (Brigade 13) undertook civic works in the Abu Kamal area in Syria to restore water networks in coordination with the Syrian army and Iranian forces in Syria.³²

According to an interviewee, Qasim Muslih, commander of Liwa al-Tafuf and the Hashd Western Anbar Operations Command, frequently crosses into the Abu Kamal area in eastern Syria.³³ Thus, the phenomenon of Hashd members undertaking independent foreign policy in Syria, without Iraqi government orders and using Iraqi government assets, constitutes not something in the past but an ongoing illegal and unconstitutional alliance with foreign powers: Iran and Syria.

Training Foreign Militants

Another area in which Hashd fighters may exceed their authority is the provision of training and weapons to non-Iraqi militants. Militias present inside the Hashd such as Kataib Hezbollah have hosted and trained foreign fighters who have later used training and even materiel received at Hashd bases in Iraq to undertake militant attacks in their home countries.³⁴ This training contravenes Article 8 of the constitution, damages relations with foreign nations (particularly Bahrain and Kuwait³⁵), and exposes the Hashd to justified claims of providing support to designated terrorist movements.³⁶ Like the dispatch of fighters to Syria, the training of foreign militants in Iraq

shows that elements of the Hashd both design and execute their own independent foreign policy, which is constitutionally an exclusive authority of the Iraqi state.

Moneymaking Ventures

The ISF is prohibited from establishing moneymaking businesses or diverting military forces to serve private businesses under Articles 54, 55, and 61 of the Military Penal Code Law No. 19 of 2007. Chapter IV (Absenteeism and Absence) and Chapter V (Desertion) of the same law also set the expectation that security forces should put their full efforts into their military duties. In contrast to those expectations, the Hashd has developed extensive commercial activities across Iraq's provinces, in part because of a sense of entitlement that the Hashd should get economic spoils after the war. Widespread and large-scale profiteering operations are run by individual factions from their "economic offices" in major cities. Such operations have engendered a backlash, which former prime minister Abadi neatly summed up by asking how Hashd leaders had suddenly ended up living in palaces in Baghdad's affluent Jadriyah neighborhood. The negative role of the economic offices was stressed by then prime minister Abdulmahdi in his July 1, 2019, executive order, which specifically noted the following: "All economic offices or checkpoints or presences or interests established outside the new framework are to be closed, for the work and formations of the Hashd Shabi as a foundation are to be considered a part of the armed forces."

At the time of this writing, no evidence has come forward of any economic offices being closed. Hashd assistant to the vice chair Abu Ali al-Basri stated in January 2020 that such offices would not be closed but rather would be limited to supporting Hashd martyrs and benefit recipients.³⁷

Tolling, Taxing, and Smuggling

Control of key road systems and ports of entry is a major money-maker for Hashd commanders. Hashd units have been credibly linked to dozens of tolling and taxing schemes across northern Iraq, where their control of key roads is turned into illicit wealth.³⁸ A report by the London School of Economics and Political Science quoted

a government official who estimated that Asaib Ahl al-Haq alone generated \$300,000 daily in 2017 through illegal checkpoint fees in Jalula.³⁹ Fieldwork undertaken in northern Iraq by the Clingendael Institute described “millions of dollars” raised by Hashd forces through the Mosul-Dohuk custom checkpoint, which explains why Liwa al-Shabak (Brigade 30) will not vacate the profitable checkpoints despite multiple commands from Iraq’s prime minister to do so.⁴⁰

Clingendael fieldwork likewise showed that “tariffs and taxes levied by Badr on goods transported from Kurdish to Arab Iraq generate about \$12–15 million per month at the Safra border crossing alone.”⁴¹ Hashd units are also involved in systematic customs evasion at international border crossings such as Shalamchah (Basra), Zurbatiyah (Wasit), Muthariyah (Diyala), and Umm Qasr, where Hashd trucks transport taxable goods through customs posts. Clingendael fieldwork noted that “a similar situation is said to apply to tariffs and smuggling at the Shalamchah (near Basra) and Chazabeh (near Amarah) border crossings between Iran and Iraq in the south of the country.”⁴² Tolling also takes place at the outer edges of cities such as Mosul and Tuz Khormatu, and it may even occur at remote checkpoints on trucking highways and junctions leading to cement works or other high-traffic sites.⁴³

Mafia-Type Economic Extortion

Hashd fighters—registered, unregistered, or outright impersonators—are involved in a range of mafia-type extortion activities. First, simple protection rackets exist within markets, with criminals often presenting themselves as a security company hired to protect against a nonexistent threat. Second, many Hashd units have become embroiled in local property auctions or the renting of vacant government-owned properties, an activity that provides an incentive to limit or shape the return of displaced populations. High-end property manipulation is also under way, particularly in Baghdad, where militias must be approached before property transactions and cut into the profits.

Hashd leaders also use their military strength to penetrate local government in areas with fragile security conditions. From the provincial to the national level, some Hashd leaders are developing

influence over various officials in an effort to guide the awarding of contracts. Hashd elements such as the Central Security Directorate use their technical intelligence-gathering and intimidation capabilities to develop leverage over officials. Those Hashd leaders frequently insert loyalists and relatives into the offices of ministers, directors general, governors, and provincial council members to monitor compliance. Larger Hashd elements such as Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, and Badr keep a *wakeel* (proxy or agent) in every ministry and provincial governor's office. One fieldwork-led 2018 study noted the following:

Running a militia within the framework of the Popular Mobilization enables its leaders to penetrate a given territory, and to govern it by controlling state institutions in the name of the "price paid by the martyrs" who fell in the battle against [the Islamic State]. The return of the central state in Northern Iraq therefore operates alongside a dynamic in which the militias take over public institutions and embezzle the funding allocated to these institutions. Each sub-district has become the sphere of influence of a given militia that is itself tied to a national-level political party, foremost among them the Badr Organization. In Tikrit for instance, the local militia group controls the post of Health Director for the city, enabling it to embezzle the budget allocated by the Health Ministry. Should the central state attempt to put a stop to such extortion, the militias call on their networks in Baghdad to block any enquiry.⁴⁴

Oil Smuggling

Hashd elements have been exploiting Iraqi oil fields and storage sites since at least 2015. Two main mechanisms exist: smuggling of crude into Iran or other foreign markets, and diversion of oil products from legitimate uses. The Hashd's ability to ensure access through checkpoints and to protect oil trucking has yielded a potent capability to siphon off increments of crude and other oil products to be moved in 220-barrel trucks by direct road delivery to end-users or through Iraq's ports for export on small vessels.

The Hashd has taken over security in a number of oil fields. Ajeel,

Hamrin, and Alas were the first fields garrisoned by the Hashd in 2015, followed by Naft Khana, Pulkhana, Qayyarah, and Najmah by 2017.⁴⁵ Some Hashd forces have also settled in the Bai Hassan and Avana fields in Kirkuk, along with the Ain Zalah field in Nineveh. Crude is trucked to Iranian border crossing points with the Kurdistan Region at Bashmeg, Parwezkhan, and Hajj Umran, as well as at Mutheriyah and Mandali in Diyala. Some crude is trucked south to Basra, where Badr and a range of other Hashd groups recruit strongly and where industrialized oil-smuggling through ports appears to be slowly returning. Both local and northern crude is stolen and exported, with Basra having reemerged in 2014 as a loading point for oil smuggled to the south from northern Iraq. The Shalamchah border crossing (to Iran) and Pier 11 of the Umm Qasr port are the main export routes. Hashd elements also support the export of Iranian oil piped into Basra through small flexible pipes strung along the bed of the Shatt al-Arab waterway. This oil is merged with other illicit oil shipments leaving Basra.

Further, Hashd elements manipulate oil products imported from Iran to Iraq, where quantities of oil products are illegally skimmed off during the import process. The Hashd exaggerates its gasoline needs to the Ministry of Oil and diverts parts of its allocation to illegal resale. Additionally, Hashd elements use their physical control of the refineries to divert quantities of products—both gasoline intended for government ministries and heavy fuel oil intended for asphalt plants.

Government Contracting and Reconstruction

The Hashd Commission has begun to probe the development of a major construction arm that could corner the market in government- and donor-funded reconstruction, akin to the role played by the IRGC-owned Khatam al-Anbia company in Iran. In February 2019, the Hashd leadership made an unsuccessful attempt to force the transfer of Mutasim, a large state-owned construction business, from the Ministry of Construction and Housing to the Hashd Commission. Hashd units have offered their military engineering capabilities and personnel to help reconstruct roads and sewers in a number of damaged or deprived provinces.⁴⁶

Large-Scale Looting

To an even greater extent than regular security forces, the Hashd's weak discipline has allowed it to loot on a scale not seen since Saddam Hussein's army looted Kuwait in 1990–91.⁴⁷ In 2016, for instance, Asaib Ahl al-Haq led the looting of Iraq's largest oil refinery at Bayji, systematically ripping the key equipment from the facility and selling it to the highest bidders.⁴⁸ As one investigation of Hashd looting operations noted, "Looted items like electrical wires and mechanical equipment found their way across Iraq and were sold in markets through brokers for one-eighth of their regular price."⁴⁹ In 2019, Hashd fighters were found by a Reuters investigation to have taken over Mosul's scrap metal yards, from which they have run a multimillion scrap metal business since the liberation.⁵⁰

Investment Arms at Unit Level

Many larger Hashd factions now have investment departments through which they try to increase their income. Property is a key focus, and Hashd units leverage their ability to identify vacant properties, prevent the return of rightful owners, and establish armed control to manipulate sales prices. Even in Baghdad today, Sunnis on Hashd-controlled streets cannot sell or rent their houses without asking permission from the local militia commanders first and giving them a cut of the proceeds. Hashd leaders such as Shibl al-Zaydi of Kataib Imam al-Ali (Brigade 40) have amassed real estate empires in some of the richest parts of Baghdad, including Jadriyah, with no apparent way to account for their sudden wealth.

Undermining the Joint Operations Command

Some of the more powerful Hashd formations have a troubling track record of overriding the national-level Joint Operations Command, either to prevent activity they wish to block or to undertake actions that are not authorized.

Moving Forces Without Authorization

Moving forces without authorization is a second area of concern. The ISF does not plan or undertake major military operations

independent of the chain of command, meaning the prime minister and the JOC. Executive Order 91, the basis for the Hashd law, explicitly states the following: “The redeployment and redistribution of forces among the provinces shall be the sole prerogative of the commander in chief of the armed forces.” In many cases, this provision has been blurred by the prime minister’s apparent willingness to let the Hashd operate outside the JOC framework. In some cases, unauthorized movements have become clearer.

The Hashd Commission’s operation to clear western Nineveh, undertaken without consulting the government, was an extraordinary example of going beyond authorization. Launched on October 29, 2016, Operation Muhammad Rasallah Allah II was the largest independent Hashd operation of the war, and it drew on forces from Badr, the al-Abbas Combat Division (Brigade 26), Firkat al-Imam Ali al-Qitaliyah (Brigade 2), Saraya al-Jihad (Brigade 17), Kataib Hezbollah’s Saraya al-Difa al-Shabi (Brigade 46), Kataib Jund al-Imam (Brigade 6), Asaib Ahl al-Haq’s Saba Dujail (Brigade 42), and Liwa Ali al-Akbar (Brigade 11).⁵¹

The episode occurred because the Hashd Commission chafed at being ordered by the prime minister to stay out of the Mosul clearance operation. Its comeback was to blindside the national chain of command and launch an independent military operation to liberate western Nineveh and Tal Afar.⁵² Hadi al-Ameri, not the Iraqi prime minister, ordered the operation from the newly established Western Nineveh Operations Command—itself an unauthorized Hashd creation.⁵³ One can argue that the new operation both aided and distracted from the Mosul battle; regardless, it was not part of the plan agreed to by the prime minister and his JOC.

Preventing Movement by Other Forces

Hashd leaders such as Muhandis also use their political clout to insert political directives into the JOC when Hashd leaders wish to prevent certain activities. In some cases, this action is meant to prevent the CTS, Iraqi army, or coalition forces from entering an area where the Hashd wishes to maintain primacy. Those directives have damaged the anti-Islamic State campaign by keeping U.S., coalition, and CTS assets away from the exact areas—Diyala, Salah al-Din, rural Kirkuk,

and western Nineveh—where the Islamic State maintains its hide-outs and where high-tech intelligence and helicopter-based raiding are needed the most. As noted, groups such as Kataib Hezbollah have also used their influence to shut down U.S. drone movements in areas where those units are undertaking unauthorized activities, such as importing Iranian drones, launching drones at Saudi Arabia, developing unauthorized military industries, or maintaining illegal prisons.

Illegal Arms Caches and Military Industries

As former prime minister Abdulmahdi's orders of June 18 and July 1, 2019, indicate, there is significant concern that Hashd forces have been building weapons and explosives stockpiles and, indeed, developing military industries (see the prior comments in chapter 3 about Hashd military industries, all of which are outside government control). Most obviously, these sites pose a grave danger to public safety, as illustrated by various arms dump explosions in Iraqi cities in 2018 and 2019 during periods of high heat. Those sites also pose a longer-term concern regarding illegal weapons development and stockpiling outside the knowledge or control of the state (see chapter 3).

THE HASHD VS. THE "RESISTANCE"

One way the Hashd leadership has sought to dodge blame for unconstitutional and unlawful activity among its ranks is to draw a nebulous distinction between the Hashd and the self-styled "resistance" factions, which militarily oppose the United States and Israel. In the 2012–13 period, a number of the Iraqi factions conventionally identified as the resistance initially intervened in Syria as part of a joint IRGC-backed expeditionary entity called the Haydari Force. Coming from outside Syria, this force is to be contrasted with Liwa Abu Fadl al-Abbas and the groups that evolved from it, whose roots lie with Iraqis already living in Syria prior to the civil war.⁵⁴ In late May 2019, a video emerged claiming the establishment of the so-called Free Revolutionaries Front, which featured several individuals with blurred faces but set against the flags

of the Hashd and multiple Hashd factions: specifically, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, Saraya Ashura, Saraya Talia al-Khurasani, Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada, Liwa al-Tafuf, Kataib Jund al-Imam, Badr, Kataib Hezbollah, Kataib al-Imam Ali, and Saraya al-Salam. In the video, the speaker declared the factions' unity to confront the U.S. presence and called on Iraqis to join the front.⁵⁵ The PMC officially denied any connection with the video and affirmed the Hashd to be "an institution affiliated with the general commander for the armed forces."⁵⁶

In an interview in January 2020, Hashd Commission assistant to the vice chair Ali al-Basri noted that the PMC was "separating the factions of the resistance from the brigades of the Hashd Shabi."⁵⁷ After the "resistance factions" met in January 2020 in Iran,⁵⁸ he added, "the resistance had contact and ideas to develop their relations with each other, but the martyrdom of the martyrs [Qasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis] had big impacts, among them uniting the ranks and increasing the coordination and unity of force among them."⁵⁹

The notional differentiation of the "resistance" from Hashd forces could become more real over time, assuming the membership of these factions is disentangled. At present, though, it represents a spurious claim intended to insulate the Hashd from being implicated in events like the killing of Americans, attacks on diplomatic sites and foreign trainers, and unauthorized operations in Syria or against neighboring states such as Saudi Arabia.

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6

Operational Employment and Capabilities of the Hashd

This survey has thus far made clear that the Hashd Commission forces are not exactly structured like the rest of the Iraqi security forces. The following sections are intended to clarify exactly what kind of military force the Hashd represents: its size, on-duty personnel, tactical organization and military roles, missions, and capabilities.

SIZE AND STRUCTURE OF TACTICAL UNITS

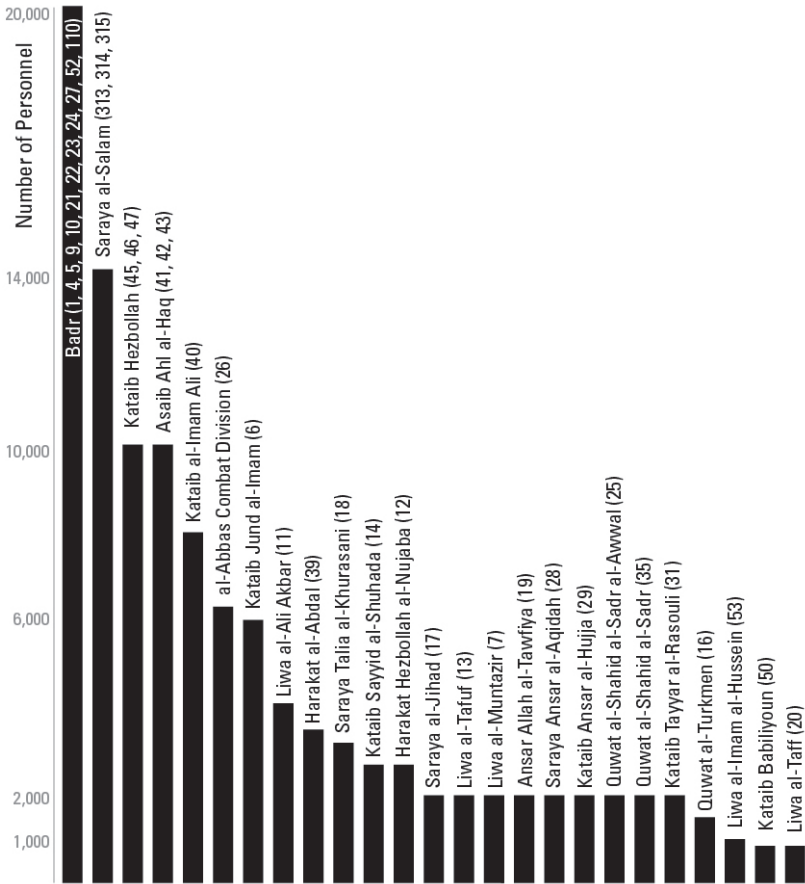
A normal military force generally has a standardized organizational structure for each subunit and an ordered hierarchical nesting of those units: a typical number of battalions or regiments in a brigade, of brigades in a division, and so on. The Hashd, however, has lacked this kind of designed structure, at least at this writing. Defining how many factions exist within the Hashd is a fuzzy endeavor. According to Hisham al-Hashimi, the Hashd comprises sixty-six predominantly Shia subunits, forty-three Sunni tribal forces, and a dozen ethnically based minority units. Of those 121 subunits identified as Hashd formations, with registered Hashd personnel, fewer than sixty have been allocated a unique numerical designator (i.e., a “brigade” number). Many tribal forces and Baghdad-based “Defense” Hashd auxiliary units are not recognized by the Hashd Commission.

This informal structure points to the remarkable variety of unit size within the organization. Abu Ali al-Basri, assistant to the Hashd vice chair, said in January 2020 that “three or four” of the formations had 4,000 or more troops and were termed “divisions” or “big brigades.”¹ For example, Saraya al-Salam (Brigades 313, 314, and 315) is, in reality, at least a divisional-size force (*firqa* in Arabic). The al-Abbas Combat Division (Brigade 26) is likewise a well-structured formation, with a divisional staff, an artillery brigade, a divisional commando battalion, and three infantry brigades.² Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, and Kataib al-Imam Ali are also larger formations. Basri noted that a further seven brigades had 3,000–4,000 troops and nineteen formations had just over 2,000 fighters.³ The other formations all had fewer than 2,000 fighters.⁴ Not considered in this tally, as many as one hundred micro-units operate as detachments, each with an on-paper establishment strength as low as 50–600 troops. Sunni Tribal Military Force units are frequently 50–200 men strong, with the largest having fewer than 700 registered troops.⁵

Examples of the authors’ assessed registered personnel strength of Hashd brigades are listed in Figure 6.1. The units’ generous leave policy means as few as half of the troops are on duty at any moment. Under Executive Order 331, as noted earlier, the number of brigades is to be reduced from sixty-plus to just twenty-three, which suggests a consolidation of personnel into stronger brigades.

The standardization envisaged in Executive Order 331 may bring some order to the organizational structure of smaller combat units. Until the time of this writing, each brigade-sized unit has had three to eight subunits that equate to the Hashd law’s “combat groups” but are typically referred to as regiments (or, less frequently, battalions). This arrangement suggests that regiments within the Hashd have establishment strengths of 200–400 personnel; the regiments are broken down further into “combat subgroups” or company-size forces of around a hundred.

FIGURE 6.1.
MAJOR HASHD UNITS WITH KNOWN PERSONNEL NUMBERS



DEPLOYMENT OF HASHD COMBAT FORCES

More than a decade ago, the ISF established a system of geographic areas of responsibility (AORs) for the different operations commands, which were often but not always aligned with provincial boundaries. An operations command held operational control of all security forces in the province, though sometimes police commanders and provincial security committees had operational control within specific cities. Operations commands might also include sub-operations commands (e.g., the Eastern Anbar Operations Command), which also had tightly regulated AORs. Divisions and component brigades of the ISF were generally clustered together within individual AORs of an operations command and stayed in those areas for extended periods.

In part because of the nature of the war against the Islamic State, and in part because of the patchwork character of the Hashd, the deployment of Hashd units and subunits has been somewhat disorderly. As noted previously, in “hot areas,”⁶ the Hashd has used “axis” commands where different Hashd brigades were willing to loosely coordinate their efforts under an agreed-on commander. The axis commands appear to deconflict and coordinate mutual assistance among Hashd forces in an AOR. The Hashd Commission regional directorates can also play a rudimentary administrative control role for local Hashd units deployed in a province. Hashd units are constantly mixing and contributing fluidly to each other’s AORs. Most Hashd units send their members to multiple battlefronts at any given time, though members may have a primary focus on one area.

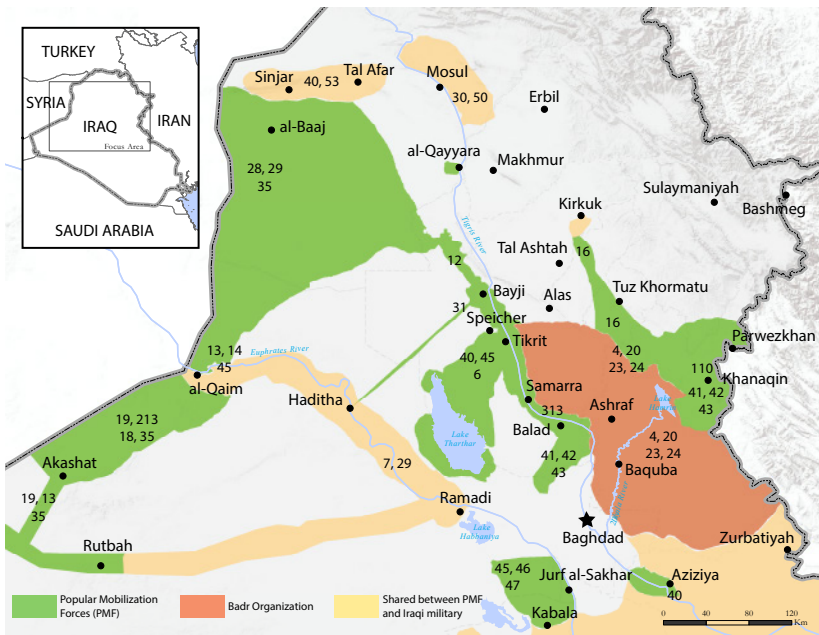
Map 6.1 shows the dominant forces in key AORs in Iraq. Specifically:

- **Green areas** are those where the Hashd is the dominant security force.
- **Beige areas** are areas of shared responsibility between the Iraqi army or police services and the Hashd. Those areas include the swath of protective forces shielding Karbala and Najaf, where Hashd Brigades 11 and 26 work closely with Iraqi army and border forces. Until Iraqi army and Federal Police

forces redeploy to southern Iraq, all eight southern provinces should be considered areas of shared control.

- **Brown areas** are dominated by Badr-controlled parts of the Iraqi army and must be considered a category of their own.
- **Other areas** are either Kurdish controlled or areas where the Iraqi army, Federal Police, and Counter Terrorism Service are the dominant forces.

MAP 6.1.
NORTHERN IRAQ AND ANBAR: AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY BY DOMINANT UNIT TYPE



Map credit: Brandon Mohr. The map was reproduced with kind permission from the West Point Combating Terrorism Center. See the original in Michael Knights, "Iran's Expanding Militia Army in Iraq: The New Special Groups," *CTC Sentinel* 12, no. 7, August 2019, <https://ctc.usma.edu/irans-expanding-militia-army-iraq-new-special-groups/>.

Local Hashd Units

Some Hashd units have a localized and defensive mission and a stable AOR that relates to their unit identity.

- Since the clearance of the Islamic State from Iraqi cities, the larger *ataba* (shrine) units have taken on defensive missions that directly aid shrine security. The al-Abbas Combat Division has a relatively cohesive primary AOR, which covers the border between the Anbar and Karbala provinces and has at its center the desert town of Nukhayb. Liwa Ali al-Akbar likewise has a primary AOR that screens Karbala city from Anbar province.
- Badr has a range of territorial defense units of the Hashd that operate in areas local to their ethno-sectarian base, such as the Shia Kurdish (Fayli) Brigade 110 near Khanaqin, the Shia Turkmen Liwa al-Hussein (Brigade 53) in the Tal Afar area, the Yazidi subunit Fawj Lalish near Sinjar, the Shia Turkmen Brigade 52 near Amerli, and the Shabak Brigade 30 on the Nineveh Plains. (The Badr-backed Brigade 50 also focuses exclusively on the Nineveh Plains, purporting falsely to be a locally recruited Christian unit.) The multi-faction Shia Turkmen Brigade 16 of the Hashd is tied to the Tuz Khormatu and Kirkuk areas, which reflects its recruitment area.
- A number of local Sunni Hashd units operate alongside “outsider” or transplanted units as locally recruited auxiliaries. Examples include Liwa Salah al-Din (Brigade 51), Hashd Hawija/Hashd al-Zab (Brigade 56), Quwat Ahrar al-Iraq (Brigade 86), Quwat al-Shahid Umayyat al-Jabbour (Brigade 88), Fursan al-Jabbour (Regiment 48), Nawader al-Shammar (Regiments 69 and 70, or Brigade 91),⁷ and sub-brigade units attached to outsider units—e.g., Fawj Dir al-Qaim, a Sunni auxiliary attached to Liwa al-Tafuf (Brigade 13) in Anbar.⁸

Transplanted Hashd Units

Other Hashd units have “bedded down” in specific AORs far from their

recruitment bases in southern Iraq, and now police Sunni or cross-sectarian areas:

- The Sadrist Saraya al-Salam units have concentrated their efforts on Samarra, the most exposed Shia shrine city in Iraq. On December 12, 2017, Muqtada al-Sadr called for “the closure of most of their offices except the central ones of them, in order to benefit from them for humanitarian service work and civilian work.”⁹
- Asaib Ahl al-Haq deploys subunits to many areas, but its main focus seems to be southern Salah al-Din and northern Baghdad, including Balad, Dhuluiyah, Dujail, and Taji. AAH has developed a secondary AOR in northern Diyala as well, and it dominates the Iranian border crossing. AAH tends to use local Sunni micro-militias as auxiliaries.
- Badr Brigades 5, 23, and 24 appear to focus on central Diyala and are based at the organization’s central hub at Camp Ashraf. Those forces control the Baghdad–Kirkuk and Baghdad–Iran highways.
- Risaliyun Kataib Tayyar al-Risali, Brigade 31 of the Hashd, has carved out a long-term role leading the security of Bayji, the strategic refinery town in northern Salah al-Din. For a period, Risaliyun used local Sunni micro-militias as auxiliaries.
- Kataib al-Imam Ali, Brigade 40 of the Hashd, defends its appropriated military base in northern Wasit. Kataib Hezbollah does the same with its annexed territories in Jurf al-Sakhar. Kataib al-Imam Ali and Kataib Jund al-Imam (Brigade 6 of the Hashd) jointly control Camp Speicher in Salah al-Din.
- A range of Hashd units have taken responsibility for the Syrian border AOR south of al-Qaim, including Ansar Allah al-Awfiya (Brigade 19), Sayyid Talia al-Khurasani (Brigade 18), Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada (Brigade 14), Saraya al-Jihad (Brigade 17), Liwa al-Tafuf (Brigade 13), and Kataib Ansar al-Hujja (Brigade 29). Liwa al-Muntazir (Brigade 7) provides security for the Baghdad–al-Qaim highway, a main supply route for Hashd elements in Anbar and Syria.

Floating Hashd Units

Some Hashd units are notably freestanding of any geographic AOR and may be found in significant strength on various battlefields at any time. Those units include Kataib Hezbollah's original cadre (Brigade 45); Kataib al-Imam Ali; Saraya al-Salam's Rapid Reaction Force; and elite Badr units such as Hashd Brigades 1, 5, 9, 10, 21, and 27. Many less capable Hashd units nevertheless maintain small elite units at company strength (i.e., a hundred troops) that rush to reinforce major operations.

VARYING COMBAT CAPABILITIES

The combat capabilities of Hashd units vary greatly, particularly their offensive capabilities. Most Hashd units have performed effectively in defensive missions and as "hold forces" in liberated areas. Many units have undertaken long-range operational movements to swarm Islamic State-held towns and to occupy areas that were lightly defended—notably, the pursuit of Islamic State forces after the battle of Tikrit and the clearance of border areas west of Mosul. Hashd forces pushed back Islamic State outposts from places such as Samarra, Jurf al-Sakhar, and (after U.S. air attacks) Amerli.

Hashd forces have attempted to break Islamic State urban defenses—at Tikrit, Bayji, and Fallujah—but without success. In Tal Afar and Sinjar, the Islamic State melted away before the assaults. Few Hashd units have thus engaged in prolonged high-intensity combat in rural or urban settings, which means the actual combat capabilities of Hashd units in Iraq are difficult to gauge. Indicators of higher offensive capabilities include combat experience, support from Iranian and Lebanese Hezbollah advisors, provision of adequate ammunition reserves, operation of heavy artillery weapons and main battle tanks, and use of drones. This simple methodology produces three tiers of forces, which are ranked according to offensive and expeditionary capabilities (see table 6.1).

TABLE 6.1.
NUMBERED UNITS OF THE HASHD, SORTED BY ASSESSED OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY

TIER ONE: STRONG OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY	TIER TWO: WEAK OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY	TIER THREE: NEGLIGIBLE OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY
• Badr's Hashd, Brigades 1, 5, 9, 21, 27 • Asaib Ahl al-Haq, Brigades 41, 42, 43 • Kataib Hezbollah, Brigades 45, 46, 47 • Kataib Imam al-Ali, Brigade 40 • Saraya al-Salam, Rapid Reaction Force • Liwa al-Tafuf, Brigade 13 • Saraya al-Jihad, Brigade 17 • Kataib Jund al-Imam, Brigade 6 • Harakat al-Abdal, Brigade 39 • Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada, Brigade 14 • al-Abbas Combat Division* • Saraya Talia al-Khurasani, Brigade 18	• Badr's Hashd, Brigades 4, 10, 22, 23, 24, 110 • Saraya al-Salam, Brigades 1–7 (under Hashd numeric of Brigade 313) • Liwa Ali al-Akbar, Brigade 11 • Liwa al-Muntazir, Brigade 7 • Ansar Allah al-Awfiya, Brigade 19 • Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, Brigade 12 • Saraya Ansar al-Aqidah, Brigade 28 • Kataib Ansar al-Hujja, Brigade 29 • Quwat al-Shahid al-Sadr al-Awwal, Brigade 25 • Kataib Tayyar al-Rasouli, Brigade 31 • Quwat al-Turkmen, Brigade 16 • Saraya Ashura, Brigade 8 • Quwat Waad Allah, Brigade 33	• Firqat al-Imam Ali al-Qitaliyah, Brigade 2 • Quwat al-Shahid al-Sadr, Brigade 15 • Liwa al-Taff, Brigade 20 • Liwa al-Shabak/Quwat Sahl Nineveh, Brigade 30 • Quwat al-Shahid al-Sadr, Brigade 35 • Liwa Ansar al-Marjaiya, Brigade 44 • Kataib Lalish, Brigade 36 • Kataib Babiliyoun, Brigade 50 • Salah al-Din, Brigade 51 • Fawj Amerli, Hashd, Brigade 52 • Liwa al-Hussein, Brigade 53 • Hawija Hashd, Brigade 56 • Quwat Ahrar al-Iraq, Brigade 86 • Hashd, Brigade 88 • Sunni Tribal Mobilization Forces and Hashd tribal forces, including 90s series Hashd units

* Ranks as a tier-one unit because of its close logistical, training, and fire-support cooperation with the Iraqi military.

- TIER-ONE UNITS are those that can undertake offensives against fortified, capable enemies, in addition to undertaking mobile swarming attacks and defensive operations. Such Hashd units are experienced in carrying out major operations. They operate heavy artillery rockets, tanks, and ammunition reserves, and they typically receive advice and intelligence support from Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah.
- TIER-TWO UNITS are those that cannot undertake unilateral offensives against fortified, capable enemies but are capable of mobile swarming attacks and defensive operations. Such Hashd units have limited experience in major operations. They possess light artillery, small numbers of armored fighting vehicles, and limited ammunition reserves, and they receive limited or no advice and intelligence support from Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah.
- TIER-THREE UNITS are capable only of defensive actions. They have almost no experience with major offensive operations, are almost entirely limited to small arms and soft-skin vehicles (e.g., Hilux pickups), have shallow ammunition reserves, and do not receive advice and intelligence support from Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah.

RELATIVE STRENGTH OF HASHD AND NON-HASHD FORCES

The present establishment strength of Iraqi army, Federal Police, CTS and Emergency Response Division, Emergency Police, and border troops is around 208,000, with approximately 138,000 on duty at any time (see tables 6.2 and 6.3). No Hashd unit gets a combat power rating as high as Iraq's CTS units. Almost all Iraqi army and Federal Police units would earn the equivalent of a tier-one Hashd unit rating, given that they are able to draw on coalition logistical, intelligence, and air support, plus the significant armor and artillery capabilities of the Iraqi army and Federal Police. Emergency Police and border troops perform the same role as tier-three Hashd forces.

Taking into account the Hashd's 50 percent "on-duty" manning at any time, one can reduce the numbers even further when considering

attrition, corruption, sickness, and annual leave. Other security forces nominally maintain 66 percent manning minus attrition, corruption, sickness, and annual leave. This consideration yields the weighted figures shown in table 6.3, which suggest that the Hashd provides about 76,000 on-duty troops. This number is compared to 138,000 non-Hashd security forces, not including the Iraqi police.

The information in tables 6.2 and 6.3 suggests that the CTS, Iraqi army, and Federal Police provide considerably more tier-one-type units than does the Hashd, in part because of greater coalition support for those Defense Ministry and Interior Ministry units. This support is borne out by the manner in which the CTS, Iraqi army, and Federal Police led the hardest urban clearance operations in the war against the Islamic State, while the Hashd played a defensive and flank security role in most major operations. As they showed at Tal Afar, the tier-one Hashd units were keen to prove themselves in a major offensive operation against a dug-in, capable opponent, but that opportunity never presented itself during the war. The only major urban clearance operation undertaken by the Hashd was at Tal Afar, where the enemy had melted away before the battle commenced. All other urban clearance operations involving the Hashd—Tikrit, Bayji, and Fallujah—needed to be completed by tier-one CTS, Iraqi army, and Federal Police forces after Hashd forces failed to achieve their objectives.

This disparity may not hold true in the future, particularly if coalition support is withdrawn. If U.S. logistical and operational support were no longer available, many Iraqi army brigades would have to be reclassified as tier-two units. Likewise, if Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah were to ramp up their support for many Iran-friendly Hashd units that subscribe to Ayatollah Khomeini's *velayat-e faqih* doctrine—and if those units professionalized—then the number of tier-one Hashd units could sustain or increase, but only among those units willing to represent the interests of the self-styled “axis of resistance” led by Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah.

If Badr-commanded units of the Iraqi army and Federal Police were counted alongside the Iran-friendly Khomeinist Hashd units, then the combination would wipe away the comparative advantage of the non-Hashd military forces in tier-one units. The internal balance of power within the ISF thus remains fluid and is quite possibly tilting in favor of pro-Iran elements.

TABLE 6.2.
ASSESSED ESTABLISHMENT STRENGTHS OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF UNITS, IN
TOTAL AND BY ASSESSED TIER

	Hashd	Iraqi Army	Federal Police	CTS and ERD	Emergency Police	Border
TIER ONE	48,000	96,000	6,000	14,000	—	—
TIER TWO	54,000	4,000	38,000	2,000	—	—
TIER THREE	50,000	—	—	—	42,000	6,000
TOTAL	152,000	100,000	44,000	16,000	42,000	6,000

Note: All Iraqi army and Federal Police brigades are assessed at an average of 2,000 establishment strength. Emergency Police and border brigades are assessed at an establishment strength of 1,500.

CTS = Counter Terrorism Service; ERD = Emergency Response Division

TABLE 6.3.
ASSESSED ON-DUTY STRENGTHS OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF UNITS, IN TOTAL AND
BY ASSESSED TIER

	Hashd	Iraqi Army	Federal Police	CTS and ERD	Emergency Police	Border
TIER ONE	24,000	64,000	4,000	9,240	—	—
TIER TWO	27,000	2,640	25,080	1,320	—	—
TIER THREE	25,000	—	—	—	27,720	4,000
TOTAL	76,000	66,640	29,080	10,560	27,720	4,000

Note: These figures do not account for attrition, corruption, sickness, and annual leave. They also do not include Hashd forces diverted to Syria.

CTS = Counter Terrorism Service; ERD = Emergency Response Division

ROLES AND MISSIONS OF THE HASHD FORCES

As noted in chapter 1, the Hashd is unique among the security forces in that it has no defined core competencies, functions, roles, or missions. This status was unsurprising in the early days—amid emergency conditions—but five years have passed since the establishment of the Hashd, and still no clarity exists. In this regulatory vacuum, the Hashd has sought to lay claim to a range of roles and missions, including these:

- **PROTECTION OF SHRINES.** The Hashd now provides the flank security for Najaf and Karbala provinces, on the border with Anbar, and Hashd units provide the urban and perimeter security at Samarra.
- **BORDER CONTROL WITH IRAN AND BASHAR AL-ASSAD'S SYRIA.** The Hashd—particularly its Iran-leaning elements—controls the entirety of the Syria-Iraq border that abuts the Assad regime's area of control. Hashd elements linked to Iran are similarly dominant at Iraq-Iran border crossings. Thus, a role of apparent interest to the Iran-leaning Hashd dominates all points of entry linking Iran and Syria through Iraq. This role is expanding to include Iraq's maritime seaboard at Basra through a new marine service.
- **GARRISONING ISLAMIC STATE-THREATENED SHIA COMMUNITIES.** The Hashd has claimed special responsibility for protecting Shia communities in places such as Kirkuk, northern Salah al-Din, Tal Afar (mainly Shia Turkmen), and northern Diyala (Shia Kurds, the *Fayli* by their Arabic name). The Hashd has also sought to establish long-term protective missions for other threatened communities such as the Yazidis. The location of those communities along the Iraq-Kurdistan frontline has created the sense that the Hashd is also arrayed against possible Kurdish expansionism.

CIVIC ACTIVITIES OF THE RESERVE DIRECTORATE

Various Hashd groups have tried to expand their presence in the public sphere through civic activities, but the one body that has been able to penetrate this sphere in an organized manner is the Mobilization Directorate. This body consciously emulates Iran's Basij, even where apparel is concerned. For example, in some of their activities, Hashd members wear a scarf associated with the Basij. Such an affiliation is often not obvious in photographs because Iraqi men wear a variety of scarves and are more likely to routinely wear them than are Iranian men.

The Mobilization Directorate organizes summer camps for school-children and youth,¹⁰ which feature football tournaments;¹¹ cultural, art, and media festivals;¹² exhibitions (some of them on university campuses);¹³ educational courses;¹⁴ tribal outreach sessions;¹⁵ and cultural entertainment trips.¹⁶ The directorate also builds¹⁷ and runs¹⁸ cultural camps, participates in cultural events such as the Baghdad Book Fair¹⁹ and in religious ceremonies and rituals,²⁰ and delivers aid to martyrs' families and the injured.²¹

The Military Engineering Directorate, another body within the Hashd Commission, also provides some services for citizens. As an example, Muhandis personally ordered the movement of a landfill that was located close to residential areas and caused problems for the residents.²² The directorate has also developed roads in several areas in Iraq.²³ Another effort undertaken by Hashd is demining. For example, the large, division-sized al-Abbas Combat Division (Brigade 26) demined areas around the Shalamchek border crossing near Iran.²⁴ As a sign of the potential growth of the Hashd's role in demining efforts, the Iraqi Ministry of Health has discussed demining operations with the Hashd's Counter-Explosives Directorate.²⁵

When flooding occurred in Iraq in spring 2019, Hashd vehicles rushed to avert disaster in areas close to the rivers. Hashd units also helped protect oil fields from flooding,²⁶ and Hashd leaders instructed their forces to join the relief efforts.²⁷ The Hashd Commission claims to have helped a large number of towns avoid disaster when many throughout the country were flooded.²⁸ In addition to these centralized activities, many Hashd units have their own endeavours, albeit on a smaller scale.

REGIME SECURITY ROLE FOR THE HASHD

Interviews with senior Iraqi leaders suggest that the Hashd is regarded as an institution that could play a role in future regime security. As Iraq's then prime minister Adil Abdulmahdi explained, the Hashd is viewed to be committed to the defense of the country's post-2003 order, which he defined as the Shia-led era and the rejection of Baathism.²⁹ Whereas the Iraqi army and CTS are seen as U.S. creations with some sympathies toward the pre-2003 state, the Hashd is viewed by many Iraqi Shia leaders as wholly committed to the post-2003 order and led by "the old opposition elements."³⁰ The Hashd exists in the minds of many Shia leaders as an insurance policy—a reserve army that protects both against the military collapse of the regular armed forces, as occurred in 2014, and against disloyalty by the regular armed forces toward the post-2003 Shia-led order and nonaggression toward Iran.³¹

Notes

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4. Ibid.
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6. Such hot areas include Diyala, Anbar, Kirkuk, Nineveh, and Salah al-Din.
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16. "Students' of Baghdad Universities' Trip to the Marshes in the Province of Dhi Qar," YouTube video, May 12, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2uKD1J7kUk>.
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southern governorates of Diyala and Nineveh. See “The Hashd Announces Saving 100 Towns from the Risk of Deluges and Floods,” *al-Sumaria News*, April 8, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2BPQhpp>.

29. Adil Abdulmahdi, interview by Michael Knights, Baghdad, June 16, 2019.
30. Ibid.
31. Abdulmahdi’s views were reflected less eloquently among many of those senior Shia leaders interviewed for this study; names, dates, and places of interviews withheld at request of interviewees.

Security-Sector Reform and the Hashd

The previous chapters have set forth the legal and administrative structure of the Hashd, while pointing out the differences between how the force should notionally be structured and how it has actually been operating until this writing. After briefly summarizing the reality of today's Hashd, this chapter will delve into what can and should be done to preserve the positive aspects of the Hashd while minimizing its negatives.

THE REALITY OF TODAY'S HASHD

The Hashd, as this monograph has shown, is a young, dynamic, and partly formed organization. It is heterogeneous in its factional makeup, yet even after Muhandis's death, the Hashd appears to have become overly reliant on leaders from one faction—Kataib Hezbollah—and its close allies. Key characteristics of today's Hashd are outlined as follows.

A Self-Protecting Institution

The Hashd is now an organization of 135,000 personnel on paper, but it is more likely heading imminently toward an authorized manpower of 160,000. In the context of an average six-person family in Iraq, this

increase means that at least 800,000 Iraqis directly rely on the Hashd as the income source for their household head, with many more extended family members also partially reliant on the salaries and benefits provided by the Hashd. Because of turnover, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have served in the Hashd or have supported its efforts over the past five years. The Hashd has been heavily promoted in conventional and social media since the fall of Mosul in 2014, and it is entrenched in the Iraqi psyche as an important part of the victory against the Islamic State. This all means that the Hashd is unlikely to be fully demobilized—because neither the core of Iraqi society nor its politicians and religious leaders want to disestablish the force at this stage.

Punches Above Its Weight

The Hashd lacks the training, equipment, and international partnership available to the Iraqi army, Federal Police, and Counter Terrorism Service. It is also much less well funded than the conventional security forces. For example, in 2019 the Hashd received 9.2 percent of the security budget, versus 26.7 percent for the Ministry of Defense and 51.8 percent for the Ministry of Interior.¹ It is worth noting that despite the Hashd's declared 135,000 registered personnel—and 160,000 under arms—the force receives only one-third of the Ministry of Defense's budget. Yet even with its present shortfalls, the Hashd has become a formidable security actor, because unlike other agencies, it is directly supported by a sympathetic Shia public and political class, by a large political cadre in parliament, and by external backers in Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah. Whereas the Iraqi military has some military-technical advantages, the Hashd is a political-military force that can punch well above its weight and is likely to seek more resources, to eclipse the Defense Ministry.

Dominated by the Late Muhandis's Clique

One platitude regarding the Hashd is that it is heterogeneous and nonunitary. Though this sentiment is true to some extent, it concealed the fact that the Hashd Commission's structure did provide a mechanism by which Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and his allies were able to strongly consolidate their power. When tallying Hashd Commission

staff directorates and enabler units at the time of his death, Muhandis emerged as the single most powerful player in the commission. In figure 7.1, the weighted rating assigns values to each major leadership role in the Hashd Commission (excluding numbered combat brigades) and produces an aggregate, which underlined Muhandis's domination of the roles that mattered most at the time of his death.

FIGURE 7.1.
POWER DISTRIBUTION GRAPHS

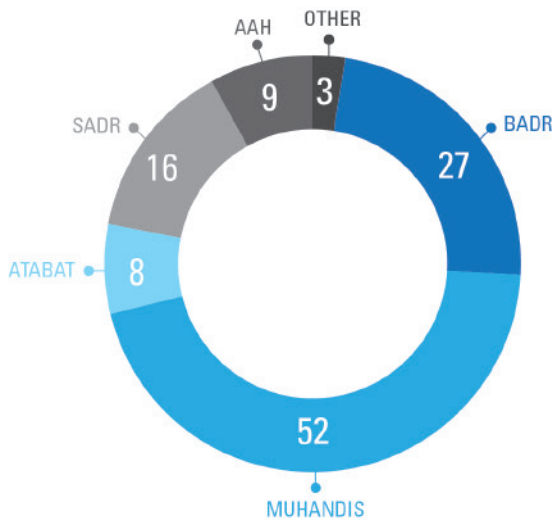


Note: The weighted value rating graph assigns a value to each major role in the Hashd, between 1 (lowest, lacking resources) and 5 (highest, a powerful role). It then calculates the aggregate factional values. Note also that “Muhandis” refers to the power base the Kataib Hezbollah leader built prior to his death in January 2020 that is now not up for grabs or cannibalization.

Indeed, the graphs probably understated the late Muhandis's influence because it was unclear whether all the directors listed as "other" were outside his influence. Muhandis and allied elements controlled the vice chairmanship, the Central Security Directorate, the intelligence arm, the Central Administration Directorate, the Religious Affairs Directorate, and the two most effective enabler units—missiles and antiarmor. Muhandis and his allies also controlled the three most important Hashd operations commands: the Northern Axis (Kirkuk), Nineveh, and Anbar.

Figure 7.2 shows a weighted value produced by valuing Hashd *combat* brigades between 1 (lowest) and 3 (highest), while weighting for unit size and separating Saraya al-Salam brigades under the 313 moniker, then aggregating the combat values. This figure underlines the domination of the Muhandis camp over the bulk of the Hashd numbered combat brigades' combat power at the time of his death in January 2020.

FIGURE 7.2.
WEIGHTED HASHD NUMBERED COMBAT VALUE



Set Up for Intense Factional Competition

At the time of his death, Muhandis was successfully suppressing other power bases within the Hashd, while cannibalizing parts of his old alma mater, the Badr Organization. Muhandis dominated the most significant roles, while all other factions in the Hashd were bought off with baubles and scraps. For instance, the Badr Organization had almost an equal number of slots in the Hashd Commission directorates and enabler units to those held by Muhandis's core, but they were mostly unimportant posts. Badr representation was also strong in the provinces, but was often exercised through depot offices that follow the line set by Muhandis's central leadership of the commission. In the year leading up to his death, Muhandis bought off the other factions with geographic cantons: Diyala for Badr, which the organization ran before 2014; Najaf, Karbala, and the Middle Euphrates Operations Command for the *ataba* shrine foundations; Samarra for the Sadrists; and a tiny portion of southern Salah al-Din for Asaib Ahl al-Haq—the movement's only role in the entire Hashd institution.

At the time of this writing, all of Muhandis's core is up for grabs. Contenders include the main power bases in Badr—Hadi al-Ameri, Abu Ali al-Basri, Abu Muntadher al-Husseini, Mohammed Salem al-Ghabban, and Qasim al-Araji—and also Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl a-Haq, Saraya Salam, and smaller Hashd factions. Badr elements will compete with one another and with upstart players like Asaib Ahl a-Haq to claw back from the Muhandis core control of Shia Turkmen militias in northern Iraq and strategic locations such as Kirkuk, northern Diyala, and Tal Afar. The Muhandis core, in essence, was a powerful center of gravity composed of a reliable and effective man (Muhandis), backed by the most dynamic player in Iran's system (Qasem Soleimani). Rebuilding this kind of center of gravity will not be easy or quick, and those who resented Muhandis's power will move rapidly to scavenge his power base. The only factor that may unite non-Sadrist players is the threat of Hashd demobilization, budget cuts, or regulation.

Partially Formed, with No Roles or Missions

A final impression of today's Hashd is that the institution may still be

malleable. Even five years into the Hashd's existence, it remains only partially formed. It has no defined core competencies or functions, and no defined roles or missions. It is not yet a permanently established ministry and receives funding on a budget-by-budget basis. Moreover, the Hashd has a budget that is quite small, owns practically no fixed infrastructure, and has made no major procurement decisions. The force has received almost no training and no equipment. The Hashd had had only one real leader by January 2020—Muhandis—and there is no knowing how the organization could develop under different leadership. Abu Ali al-Basri—a prominent potential successor to Muhandis—has no positive vision for the Hashd: all his comments thus far have been defensive, aimed at freezing the status quo and stressing continuity.

NARRATIVES CONCERNING THE HASHD

Alongside the reality of the Hashd, important narratives are at play within the dominant but fractured Shia community in Iraq, as well as elsewhere.

Popular Narratives from Shia Iraq

As noted earlier, nearly one million Iraqis directly depend on the Hashd for their livelihood. Hundreds of thousands more have an indirect but personal connection to the Hashd, and millions believe they owe the Hashd a debt of gratitude. Though opinion polling on a sensitive issue such as the Hashd is likely to reflect some bias toward positivity, a consistent and strong positive sentiment toward the Hashd nonetheless exists within Iraq. In National Democratic Institute polls from July 2019, respondents from predominantly Shia southern Iraq expressed the following:

- 92 percent confidence that the Hashd should provide border security
- 85 percent confidence that the Hashd should undertake counterterrorism activities

- 88 percent confidence that it should keep order within communities
- 4 percent confidence that it should police protests
- 85 percent confidence in its ability to provide disaster relief
- 80 percent confidence that it should undertake reconstruction efforts
- even 65 percent confidence that it should provide “moral policing”²

When polled in 2017 about the future of the Hashd, 40 percent of respondents from predominantly Shia southern Iraq expressed the belief that the Hashd should stay mobilized and not be reformed, versus only 15 percent of Sunnis and 5 percent of Kurds.

Despite such attitudes toward the Hashd, opinion polling has started to reflect growing disquiet about certain aspects of the phenomenon. In April 2017, 42 percent of respondents from southern Iraq said that the Hashd should be dissolved and reintegrated into the security forces. In 2018, southern Iraqis began to express more security concerns about the postwar actions of Hashd forces, with 22 percent of respondents in April rising to 34 percent by August. Though April 2019, polls showed that only 8 percent of respondents from southern Iraq hold a strongly negative view of the Hashd, markedly more respondents view individual Hashd factions as negative: 31 percent for Saraya al-Salam, 37 percent for Asaib Ahl al-Haq, and 42 percent for Kataib Hezbollah.³ When polls emerge in 2020, they may reflect a new level of concern based on the prominent Hashd role in suppressing Shia protestors in Baghdad and southern Iraq. The public is also unsettled by Hashd-related issues such as the unsafe storage of ammunition caches inside cities or the risk of drawing Iraq into a regional conflict, although Israel’s apparent airstrikes in Iraq could distract from the Hashd’s poor safety record. Outside the predominantly Shia community of southern Iraq, views of the Hashd have been far more negative, particularly among Kurds and Sunnis from the liberated areas. Sunnis have shown somewhat greater trust in Hashd forces from their own province, which are either Tribal Mobilization Forces or local Sunni auxiliaries attached to predominantly Shia militias.

Elite Narratives from Mainstream Shia Iraq

Iraqi Shia political and religious leaders have a complex view of the Hashd's future. As one senior leader told one of the authors, the Hashd is "a savior and a challenge."⁴ Some Iraqi leaders have a strong preference for the effective dissolution of the Hashd through the integration of its fighters into the conventional security forces. Muqtada al-Sadr is the most open proponent of this option, and his motivation appears to be a mix of pragmatism (concerning the military growth of the Muhandis core of the Hashd) and ideology (concerning the reinforcement of existing state structures and the partial disarmament and integration of militias into state agencies). The Shia religious establishment in Najaf and its *ataba* units also seem to favor integration, recalling that the June 2014 fatwa called only for volunteers to join the existing security forces.⁵ Those two main pro-integration powers are weakened by the political difficulty of approaching the Hashd demobilization issue; by Sadr's erratic political behavior and the religious establishment's risk aversion; and by the splintering of potential allies in the moderate, Sunni Arab, and Kurdish camps.

Other key factions within the Shia political leadership are even less inclined to do more than tinker mildly with the Hashd structure. One senior Iraqi leader reported the following:

With Daesh still fighting, it is hard to say the Hashd is no longer necessary. And the Hashd are now people, vested interests and salaries. Is the Hashd loyal to the Iraqi state and nothing else? No. But only a minority are bad or somewhat bad.⁶

In this vein, former prime minister Adil Abdulmahdi publicly stated that the Hashd was "a great reality that cannot be ignored...We will work together to find financial resources to support the Hashd...Preserving the Hashd is one of our greatest duties."⁷

Yet Iraqi leaders also see a need to make changes to the Hashd's structural framework and perhaps to its leadership. Former premier Abdulmahdi was not satisfied that the Hashd kept humiliating the government with incidents such as Kataib Hezbollah's May 14, 2019, drone attacks on Saudi Arabia or Muhandis's August 26, 2019, threats to target

U.S. personnel in Iraq.⁸ The Iraqi leadership is also aware of the religious establishment's growing disquiet with the current leadership of the Hashd. Another senior Iraqi leader explained as follows:

The Hashd is an emotional political issue but we must reorganize after a war. We have to deal with the Hashd in a sensitive way. No prime minister, no *hawza* [religious establishment], wants the Hashd out of control. [Adil Abdulmahdi] is keen to reflect the *hawza's* view, and the *hawza* wants to reorganize this power [the Hashd].⁹

Iran and the "Axis of Resistance"

The so-called axis of resistance—Iran, Lebanese Hezbollah, the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, and related Iran-backed militias and militants—is highly supportive of the Hashd phenomenon. This is unsurprising: the Hashd was built by Muhandis, one of the IRGC's longest-serving associates. Under Muhandis, the Hashd was used as a cover to finance a growing 60,000-strong corps of Iran-leaning militias under the Iraqi state payroll, as well as to facilitate a range of actions in support of Iranian foreign policy detailed in chapter 5. As long as the Hashd is dominated by Iran-backed leaders, the IRGC will be able to use Iraq as a power-projection hub in the following ways:

- to recruit Iraqi cannon fodder for IRGC campaigns
- to raise money for Iran's foreign wars
- to launch missiles and drones against regional states
- to strike U.S. and other international targets within Iraq
- to serve as a supply route to the Levant
- to train militants from the Persian Gulf

In addition to these reasons, another more interesting motive arguably underpins Iran's wholehearted support of a Muhandis-led Hashd. This is to diminish the U.S.-trained Iraqi army and CTS and to establish a counterweight to those forces. After the Iran-Iraq War of 1980–88,

Iran has never stopped fearing that Iraq could one day turn against it. Ongoing U.S. influence on the Iraqi army and CTS compounds this fear. During their interviews for this study, the authors realized that many Iraqi Shia leaders clearly share this outlook. Entities such as the Iraqi National Intelligence Service; CTS; Iraqi army; and Tribal Mobilization Forces, and their forerunner, the *sahwa*, are all viewed as American creations with sympathies for the former regime. U.S. acceptance of the Peshmerga is contrasted with its rejection of the Hashd. One very senior Iraqi leader explained the situation like this:

The army failed in 2014. We tried that. We need a new system that uses forces from the old opposition. We need something more popular. The army is full of old Baathist officers. It can't be the solution. It is not enough. Who will protect the post-2003 state if the Baath come back? CTS? It was not enough in 2014.¹⁰

Thus, many Iraqi Shia leaders share common concerns with the Iranians: namely, on how to preserve the post-2003 Shia-led order in Iraq, which Tehran presumes will pose no threat to Iran. In the view of many Iraqi leaders, this task requires duplication and a layering of revolutionary forces (who are loyal to the post-2003 Shia-led order) alongside conventional security forces (who will follow the state's orders, whatever they may be). As veteran Iraqi observer Hisham al-Hashimi noted, the pro-Muhandis Hashd was seen as "a nucleus of protection of the achievements of the [Shia] project in Iraq."¹¹ Iraqi Shia leaders are not necessarily allergic to the concept of an IRGC of Iraq, suggesting a widespread belief that the country's ethno-sectarian diversity is a sufficient check on the risk that such a guardian force could eclipse the state.

U.S. and Other International Views

The dominance of the pro-Iranian camp within the Hashd had a powerful influence on the views of the U.S. government. The role of the late Muhandis and Kataib Hezbollah was incendiary because both the man and the group are U.S.-designated terrorist entities; moreover, both actively conspired to kill scores, if not hundreds, of Americans before 2011. This role is an important point to focus on, because it holds

the promise that U.S. views on the Hashd might evolve considerably if the commission were run by someone with views and a background different from that of Muhandis. The United States is also especially concerned about the development of the Hashd because of the similarities it shares with other entities that blur state-militia boundaries, such as the IRGC, Basij, and Hezbollah. Though each case is unique, both Iran and Lebanon offer examples of parallel military forces that quickly outstripped the conventional security forces, expanded into politics and the economy, and became the dominant forces within their environment.

The broader international coalition to defeat the Islamic State—including the United States—also has concerns about the Hashd, and those concerns more closely mirror the ones of the Iraqi prime minister and other mainstream Iraqi political blocs. The coalition wants Iraq to be able to focus its limited financial, materiel, and human resources on its key security priorities. The creation and resourcing of a new security agency, the Hashd Commission, is not a welcome development because it promotes duplication and parallelism of functions.

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq and the coalition, which represents most of the G20 states and NATO, support a security-sector reform program that will increase stability in Iraq. Such a program would ensure that all Iraqi armed forces, especially the Hashd, are a net contributor of stability in the liberated areas, not a detractor or a distraction. The coalition members, along with most other international observers, want Iraq to be sovereign and neutral in the conflicts of the region so the country can recover from its disastrous past. Thus, coalition members and most internationals support some form of SSR process that will result in the Hashd's being more disciplined and accountable; being more professional and integrated into military operations; and having a defined set of core competencies, functions, roles, and missions.

FINDING CONSENSUS ON THE HASHD

All the views outlined thus far will shape the future of the Hashd and its resultant ripple effect on Iraq's foreign relations. Whether the United States likes it or not, all the narratives are important and constitute

part of a potential consensus solution to the risks posed by the Hashd to the stability of Iraq and the region. The narratives may even present opportunities to strengthen the Iraqi state. At present, while all the main domestic and international players are divided about the facts, implications, and options of the Hashd, the pro-IRGC camp can run riot, thereby consolidating power at a rapid rate.

Only greater consensus among all the key players can reduce the risks posed by the dominant pro-IRGC camp. Greater consensus may mobilize the risk-averse *hawza* to reform or partially demobilize the Hashd without risking a precedent-setting rejection of its writ. Likewise, greater consensus is required to identify a process by which the negatives of the Hashd phenomena can be gradually reduced and the positives accentuated. No solution can, at this stage, be imposed by diktat or by the pro-IRGC, reformist, or uncommitted camps, especially if their agenda is seen as foreign influenced.

Interviews with senior Iraqi government, political, and military figures have identified several issues in which there is already high, medium, or limited consensus regarding the future of the Hashd.

High-Consensus Issues

Most Iraqi leaders and seemingly segments of the public agree on the following aspects of a Hashd reform process:

- **DEMOBILIZATION IS NOT CURRENTLY POSSIBLE.** There is little support outside the Kurdish community for demobilization of the Hashd, and even Kurdish leaders are not cheering for demobilization because of efforts to rebuild ties with Iran and the Shia factions in Iraq. Because of co-optation and disunity, the Sunni community is muted on the issue of Hashd demobilization. Shia leaders and the public view demobilization as an indictment of the Hashd, particularly so soon after the end of major combat operations. The uncontrolled release of large numbers of unemployed fighters into society is viewed as folly. For this reason, in late January 2020, even Muqtada al-Sadr, while calling for the removal of U.S. forces from Iraq, publicly gave the Hashd leaders two options: demobilize into the army or come under tighter state regulation.¹²

- **MINISTERIAL STATUS IS NOT NECESSARY AT THIS STAGE.** At the other end of the institutional spectrum, clearly most Iraqi leaders do not currently envisage the elevation of the Hashd Commission to full ministerial status, which entails a permanent budget and a dedicated cabinet-level representative.
- **EVOLUTIONARY CHANGE IS NEEDED.** Most players agree that the Hashd cannot stay exactly as it was during the wartime period from 2014 to 2017, when it lacked regulation and discipline. Almost all players recognize that reform of the Hashd will be a gradual process that will unfold over a period of five to ten years. This is seen as a period when Hashd leaders and members can be separated along a spectrum, which will give members plenty of time and opportunities to accept greater government control and discipline or to be detached from the legitimacy of the state security forces. Even U.S. government hardliners on Iranian influence recognize that external players can accelerate the process of Hashd reform only to a degree.
- **HASHD PRESENCE IN THE CITIES IS UNNECESSARY.** Interviewees and even Hashd leaders regularly use the word unnecessary or unneeded to describe the presence of Hashd forces in urban areas where police forces are viewed as having primacy. Many Iraqi leaders view the presence of the Hashd in cities as problematic enough to encourage bad behavior and criminality, as well as to besmirch the good reputation of the Hashd even among southern Iraqis. The Hashd's role in repressing Shia civilian protestors in Baghdad and southern cities will sharpen this sensitivity.
- **HASHD LEADERS SHOULD RESPECT NATIONAL LEADERSHIP.** Iraqis widely recognize that Hashd leaders such as Muhandis have often been too brash in showing off their high level of autonomy—to the point of disrespecting the state and embarrassing the prime minister. Incidents such as the May 14, 2019

Kataib Hezbollah drone attacks on Saudi Arabia are deeply humiliating for senior Iraqi leaders, who have staked their personal credibility on assuring the international community of Iraq's desire to become a neutral player in the Middle East.

Nonconsensus Issues

The following issues are more contentious aspects of a notional Hashd reform process. These issues elicit strong views and will likely take longer to forge consensus on:

- **HASHD FORCES CANNOT YET BE RECALLED FROM KEY BATTLE-FIELDS.** Hashd forces clearly play a role in filling out a variety of subtheaters in Iraq, particularly in rural areas of northern Iraq and on the Syrian border. Some Hashd leaders believe the Hashd should also have a permanent garrison role in strategic areas such as Tikrit, which is the heartland of Saddam Hussein's family, and Samarra. Different views exist as to whether the deployments listed here should become the new normal or whether the Iraqi military, police, and border forces should reclaim the missions. Abu Ali al-Basri noted in January 2020 that "the Hashd will remain in the liberated areas so long as there are still remnants of the [Islamic State] gangs."¹³
- **GREATER TRANSPARENCY IS REQUIRED.** That the government should have oversight of the Hashd is uncontroversial; the subject of implementation, however, meets greater resistance. The independent audit of Hashd personnel; the move to fully electronic payment for troops with independent oversight; and the inventorying of Hashd bases, weapons, and equipment are all contentious issues in practice. The Hashd should also submit to a more transparent system of military justice, with an independent inspector general drawn from somewhere other than the main Hashd factions.

- **THE HASHD SHOULD BE “NORMALIZED.”** The Hashd’s unique culture is seen by many of its members as a strength and as an inevitable by-product of the “DNA” of its leaders and factions, many of whom are drawn from the armed groups that fought the Americans before 2011 and have traveled to Syria since 2012. Yet calls for the Hashd to be “normalized”—so that its appearance, culture, discipline, and proficiencies more closely resemble those of professional armed forces—are widespread, both inside and outside the Hashd. Such calls are an invitation to commence a professionalization program. Some aspects of a program, including additional resources and capabilities, will be viewed as welcome tradeoffs even by Hashd leaders who value the Hashd’s distinct culture.

- **LOCAL HASHD FORCES SHOULD REMAIN IN THE HASHD.** The TMF might logically be an easy candidate for integration into the non-Hashd forces, given that they are administered somewhat separately; they have more to do with the Ministry of Defense and the coalition than do other Hashd forces; and they are all deployed locally to their recruitment areas, which makes them a potential source of personnel for Local Police Service and Emergency Police units. This is also true for locally recruited Turkmen and Yazidi forces who protect their own communities. Detachment of these forces is opposed on two grounds. First, it would deprive the Hashd of some of its strength, which is bureaucratically opposed by some Hashd Commission leaders. Second, the removal of the TMF, Yazidis, and other local militias would remove most of the Sunni and micro-minority representation from the Hashd, thereby reducing its representativeness and making it an overtly Shia force. Thus, most players presently envisage that the local Hashd units will remain in the Hashd.

Controversial Issues

The following issues are the most controversial aspects of a Hashd reform process and are considered too touchy or difficult to immediately address:

- **HASHD FORCES SHOULD BE REDUCED IN SIZE.** In addition to the option of detaching certain Hashd forces wholesale, such as the TMF, one proposal suggests that the Iraqi state “purchase” the service of around 30,000 current Hashd members. This purchase would happen in the same manner that the Iraqi state offers its civil servants the option of five years’ pay if they accept immediate dismissal from their post, giving them a buffer period to find private-sector work. This arrangement would allow unqualified individuals to leave the Hashd while better-qualified or more-committed members stayed. The arrangement could also shuffle some of the 30,000 or so serving but unregistered members into paid roles while detaching others. Like any job-elimination scheme in Iraq, the idea has met with opposition, and Hashd leaders continue to lobby instead for an increase of the Hashd’s authorized strength to 160,000, in an effort to make all unregistered members permanent.

- **THE HASHD SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN INTO CANTONS.** The eventual redeployment of Hashd units to permanent cantons is a persistent topic when Iraqi leaders discuss Hashd reform. Almost all leaders give the following list of cantons as permanent or “steady” locations: Samarra; Diyala and the Baghdad–Kirkuk road; the southern Baghdad belts; the northern Baghdad belts; and the Karbala–Anbar border. These are logical locations where Shia communities need protection and where Hashd forces are arranged as a barrier between Shia and Sunni Iraq. Some Iraqi leaders state that, for at least some years, Nineveh and Anbar will also need to be “temporary” locations for a Hashd presence. Because of the localized nature of some Hashd units (e.g., the TMF and other Sunni units, plus Turkmen, Yazidis, and other

micro-minorities), it does not make sense for units to be redeployed away from their home districts. All those uncertainties make Iraqi leaders characterize the withdrawal to cantons as a slow process that will take five to ten years and that will require detailed consideration.

- **HEAVY WEAPONS SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN FROM THE HASHD.** Reformers believe the Hashd should be equipped, organized, and trained as a motorized light infantry force, somewhat akin to the National Guard concept (which was the original conception of Iraq's Federal Police) or the coalition's model for unified Peshmerga Regional Guard Brigades. This approach would require that certain types of weapons be inventoried and perhaps withdrawn to government-operated depots—for example, improvised rocket-assisted munitions, rocket artillery systems, tanks, tracked armored vehicles, anti-aircraft cannons, and anti-tank weapons. Many Hashd factions aligned with the pro-IRGC camp would be strongly opposed to such measures and would prefer either to retain their heavy weapons in Iraq and not declare or surrender them, or to store their heavy weapons just over the border in Syria or Iran.
- **HASHD LEADERSHIP NEEDS TO CHANGE.** Even before his death, numerous very senior leaders in Iraq wanted to see Muhandis removed from his dominant position in the Hashd and to see the broader Kataib Hezbollah cadre excised from key roles. Much could change in the Hashd, in Iraqi government–Hashd relations, and in Hashd relations with the international community if the late Muhandis's clique were further weakened. In practical terms, the continued leadership of pro-IRGC figures over the Hashd will be seen as a redline for Iran, which the IRGC would flex powerfully and perhaps violently to protect. Reshuffling the Hashd leadership would thus require brave leadership and acceptance of significant risk, which means such a process will either be gradual or not unfold at all.

- **THE HASHD SHOULD ENTER THE ECONOMY.** Mainstream government, political, and military leaders are highly suspicious of the expansion of the Hashd into nonsecurity sectors, military industries, and privatized security. Yet Many Hashd leaders who reflect on the IRGC model in Iran do not view the redeployment of Hashd personnel and equipment into civilian sectors in a negative light. Because of these divergent views, the Hashd is likely to make numerous forays and test runs at expanding into civil works, industry, and private security.

- **THE HASHD SHOULD ENTER POLITICS AND CULTURE.** The Iraqi constitution, laws, cabinet decrees, and executive orders clearly state that the Hashd, both as an institution and as individual members, must not operate in the political sphere. However, the background of the Hashd leadership and the Hashd's founding culture has, from the outset, made it a political-military entity. Many Hashd leaders speak of the Hashd as a social, political, and cultural phenomenon—a movement akin to the Islamic Revolution in Iran or the Islamic Resistance of Lebanese Hezbollah. The Hashd has a Religious Affairs Directorate that undertakes indoctrination of Iraqi citizens regarding the Iranian velayat-e faqih model of religious jurisprudence, which is unconstitutional in democratic Iraq. The role of the Hashd in politics and culture is surely not a resolved issue.

SSR PRIORITIES REGARDING THE HASHD

The previous sections suggest that the time is decidedly not right to pursue sudden or complete demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration approaches regarding the Hashd. In time, the resources and roles currently allocated to the Hashd may be rationalized and redistributed, but Iraq has to pass through a number of interim stages first. Eventually, the Hashd may be the right size, may surrender some or all of its heavy weapons, and may redeploy from the Syrian border and other hot areas in predominantly Sunni Iraq, but those are five- to ten-year propositions, not imminent prospects.

Supporting Iraq's Initial Efforts

For now, the first priority of the international community is to reinforce the more commendable instincts of the Iraqi government regarding the Hashd. First, the Iraqi government is right to freeze the Hashd Commission, leaving it as a subministerial entity without dedicated cabinet representation or a permanent budget. Maintenance of the status quo should be job number one for all Iraq's coalition partners, in an effort to prevent further, nearly irreversible steps from being taken. The formal authorized personnel of the Hashd should not exceed the current 135,000, and its budget should not exceed the current \$2.16 billion (2.57 trillion dinars). As many as 30,000 largely Sunni forces could be transferred usefully to the Local Police Service, border forces, and army. New expansion of personnel or missions should be resisted, as should diversion of government funding to support off-budget Hashd procurement spending. With the end of major combat operations against the Islamic State, the Hashd's military role is clearly not expanding, and its resources should likewise be kept in check.

As major donors of security assistance to Iraq, the coalition is well positioned to lobby for no further duplicative parallel development of security agencies in Iraq. Another sound instinct shown by the Iraqi government was the July 1, 2019, directive to remove Hashd offices from the cities. This directive should signal the leading edge of the removal of Hashd forces from all urban districts, where Local Police Service units should have primacy. Ongoing coalition support for the Ministry of Interior and its Local Police Service is the best means for international partners to help rein in crimes in cities committed by Hashd elements. In an ideal world, the death of Muhandis would jump-start the Hashd reform process, which would underline the beginning of a new era and a more balanced factional distribution of the key roles within the Hashd Commission. The first step is unrelenting international focus on the issue. Every time the Hashd exceeds its authority, the prime minister should be urged to push back. If evidence can be shared regarding gross violations, such as the unauthorized May 14, 2019, drone attacks on Saudi Arabia, this evidence should be promptly provided to the Iraqi prime minister to strengthen his hand in internal discussions.

Coalition partners should encourage Iraq to appoint a powerful independent, non-IRGC-backed individual as either the Hashd chief of

staff or the Hashd president under the new titles of Executive Order 331 of 2019. The chief of staff should be a professional military officer, ideally appointed with the support of the Shia religious establishment. The counterweight to the pro-IRGC camp—a Hashd reform champion—should have responsibility for executing the Hashd reform agenda. Recalling the rapid intimidation of the last vice chair, Mohsen al-Kaabi, one would concur that the incoming individual would need to be brave, popular, and “untouchable”—someone like a figure close to Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

“Normalizing” the Hashd Through SSR

Iraq’s leaders are right that normalizing the Hashd will take five to ten years, during which time various of its elements will self-identify as either capable of professionalizing and coming under state control or not. The pro-IRGC camp will seek to dominate and shape any SSR process to consolidate their power and blunt any real efforts to defang their grip on the Hashd. This approach was evident in the stewardship of the emerging Hashd reform process under (then) prime minister’s chief of staff, Mohammed al-Hashimi—a figure known as Abu Jihad—who is very close to the late Muhandis and Iran. Because of such attempts to dominate the SSR process, it is very important for the international community, including multinational actors such as NATO and the European Union, to play a proactive role in driving the SSR process directly with the prime minister’s office, the national security advisor’s office, and the national defense universities. A deeply troubled and troubling security institution, the Hashd should not be left to reform itself.

International players in the coalition need not only to offer their assistance directly to the Hashd reform process, but also to keep pushing forward other SSR processes in the conventional security forces. As long as the permanent Iraqi security ministries are held to low standards of professionalism and probity, so too will the Hashd. The better the Iraqi security forces become, the better the Hashd will have to be to avoid unfavorable comparisons. Peer pressure and insistent international nagging can have significant effect in Iraq: successive prime ministers Abadi and Abdulmahdi were both sensitive to criticism and to having their limited control made too apparent in conversations with international

partners. This provided a spur for Iraqi government actions.

In a conversation with one of the authors, Ameri displayed a very keen understanding of the practical issues that will constitute the SSR of the Hashd. Ameri has undertaken this process once before, in a fashion. In 2003–05, he incorporated parts of his Badr military wing—in essence, a light infantry division built by Iran—into the Iraqi military. The mixing was called *dimaj* (amalgamation or, literally, direct accession), a controversial process that reintegrated militiamen but only by injecting them into the military alongside, or often above, college-trained staff Iraqi soldiers.¹⁴ (This is exactly what Abu Ali al-Basri, assistant to the Hashd vice chair, is now calling for once again in 2020.¹⁵)

Though it might appear that a new *dimaj* process could be used to amalgamate Hashd forces into the regular ISF, Ameri explained that conditions are different now. First, the United States is not bankrolling, administering, and requiring the process, as was the case in 2003–05. Second, even with the incorporation of former guerrillas, 2003-era Badr forces were closer to Iraqi military standards than are today's Hashd members. Thus, Ameri explained, rapid amalgamation “would destroy both the army and the Hashd.” The key difference is cultural, with Ameri explaining as follows:

“The way the Hashd fights is different from the military. If I don't live with my soldiers, they will not follow my orders. The leaders and the soldiers live together, eat together. The discipline is different, based on brotherhood and spiritualism.” Amalgamation would only be possible, he concluded, “maybe after a couple of years of training.”

The idea of incrementally normalizing the Hashd has significant traction across the Iraqi political elite. Even advocates of the Hashd, such as Ameri and Abu Jihad, venture that there must be limits on all of Iraq's armed forces. The Hashd law and the growing body of cabinet decrees and executive orders lay out this aspiration for equivalence to the rest of the ISF in the rights and privileges of Hashd members, as well as their duties and responsibilities. Implementation of the Hashd law, decrees, and executive orders has been demanded from the highest levels of the religious establishment. On September 13, 2019, a representative of Grand Ayatollah Sistani, Hamid al-Khafaf, issued a strong statement on

the *hawza*'s behalf that challenged the government to apply the law. If rolled out as a complete package, internationally backed SSR will have significant upsides for Hashd members, such as professional military education, improved living conditions, life support, improved survivability through lifesaving medical support, better equipment, and improved training. As a quid pro quo, Hashd members need to observe their obligations more closely, including meeting the age and fitness conditions of service, as well as abiding by rules and regulations regarding leave, uniforms and identification, weapons handling, and political and economic activity. Most important, Hashd members must submit to national commands issued by the prime minister, not exceed their authorities, observe human rights, and submit to the military code of discipline and justice.

Those issues are touched upon in framework documents such as the Hashd law, Executive Order 85 of 2018, and Executive Order 237 of 2019, but only vaguely. The July 28, 2019, letter from Fayyad to the prime minister hints at a more detailed set of implementation annexes that are not public, which makes it impossible to monitor, guide, or support the detailed elements of the normalization effort. An internationally backed SSR program involving the Hashd would give the process support but also an impetus and transparency. Key focus areas would be as follows:

- **AVOID SURPRISES.** At present, when a new Hashd reform document such as Executive Order 331 is released, the U.S.-led coalition first learns of its contents at the same time as Reuters and millions of other people do. Yet the IRGC, another foreign player, will have reviewed the draft days or weeks beforehand. As the most prolific providers of gratis security cooperation to Iraq, the U.S.-led coalition has every right to expect that Iraq will provide the coalition with a draft of new Hashd legislation, executive orders, and cabinet decrees so that the coalition, like Iran, can signal any concerns that could affect security cooperation.
- **BEGIN WITH COSMETIC EFFORTS.** The first steps, which are largely cosmetic, involve changing the external branding of the Hashd. Such steps include the retirement of unit names, as well as the consolidation and reduction of Hashd offices and

properties into a defined and approved set of locations; this is the main thrust of Executive Order 237. An international program could help draw the details of the reform process into a more transparent setting.

- **EMPOWER A REFORM CHAMPION BACKED BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE *HAWZA*.** This declaration and auditing phase could be aided by the appointment of an empowered second vice chair of the Hashd whom the prime minister deputizes to execute the Hashd reform program. As noted earlier, the person chosen for the job should be rendered untouchable by his popularity, bravery, and perhaps connection to the religious establishment.
- **PROFESSIONALIZE HASHD TACTICAL UNITS.** The real work of SSR will include the design of a single pattern of organization for Hashd tactical units; the consolidation of large and small Hashd units into the new model, light infantry formations; and the consolidation of heavy weapons into enabler units that have dedicated, secure storage depots. Because some Hashd units are required to perform frontline duties and because the SSR program will not have the capacity to professionalize numerous units simultaneously, the ideal process would include a test-run with one or more trial units. Coalition experiences, both positive and negative, from the effort to create integrated, defactionalized Peshmerga Regional Guard Brigades should be reviewed.

Internationally backed SSR that supports professionalization for power consolidation is necessary to guard against the Iranian-backed camp within the Hashd. In 2018–19, the main drafter and negotiator of the Hashd reform process was Abu Jihad, whose placement in the role did not send the right message because it appeared to favor Iran’s influence over the SSR effort. The best way to structure and condition such SSR assistance to the Iraqi government is to link international political and material support to the appointment of the aforementioned neutral reform champion backed by Iraq’s prime minister and the *hawza*, as well as to a more transparent reform process.

Defining Roles and Missions

Establishment of the enduring roles and missions of the Hashd in the next two to five years will be important for informing the decades-spanning SSR program. The broader Iraqi SSR process being undertaken by the EU, NATO, and coalition needs to help Iraq reach conclusions about the future structure of its security sector and, hence, the role of the Hashd and its members within that sector. A focus on the Hashd's core competencies and functions, as well as its roles and missions, offers a less confrontational way to approach the issue of whether an independent Hashd Commission adds value to Iraq or merely duplicates the efforts of other agencies for no purpose. This approach would set the scene for Iraqi policymaking on whether the Hashd would continue in its current form toward the end of the five- to ten-year timeframe envisaged for the Hashd reform process. Making the big decisions on the Hashd over five to ten years is far preferable to doing so in the next one to two years or even three to five years, when attitudes toward the Hashd will likely remain raw and emotional and when Israel-Iraq and U.S.-Iran tensions will likely remain high.

The Iraqi army is likely to be progressively removed from urban areas and refocused on national defense, border security, and rural counterinsurgency in the worst hot areas. The Federal Police and Emergency Police are likely, in time, to refocus on rural counterinsurgency and to provide backup to Urban Local Police Service branches. The CTS has a clear set of roles and missions, as do the Department of Border Enforcement, Facilities Protection Service, and Oil Field Police. A special forces division protects the government center.

The roles and missions of the conventional pre-2014 security forces are reasonably clear and leave no gaps that require a new 160,000-person-strong force. Thus, a study should be made of the concept and implementation of a reserve forces model, with permanent cadres and reservist cadres capable of boosting the personnel of the pre-2014 security services when mobilized during national emergencies. This option, though politically unpalatable now, may be more acceptable in five to ten years. Alternatively, if a good argument exists for a shrine protection force or a parallel national force akin to Iran's Basij that is either partially

or fully mobilized at all times, it will still be a good idea in ten years. There is no need to rush.

For those local Hashd forces that are willing to serve only in defense of their local areas, the options appear limited to integration into pre-2014 local forces (i.e., the Local Police and Emergency Police), a civil service corps, or some form of provincial-level national guard akin to the Peshmerga Regional Guard Brigades. Some of the concepts from the draft National Guard Law and the “Defense” Hashd may be applicable.

One motive for keeping a separate parallel military is regime security. Although Iraqi Shia leaders may have some doubts about whether the forces are committed to the post-2003 Shia-led order, rather than simply to the government of the day, there is no shortage of security forces in Iraq to offset and deter each other during political crises. The international community needs to more explicitly reassure Iraqi leaders that they are protected, that no political action by conventional security forces will be tolerated, and that the leaders do not require a new regime security corps akin to the IRGC. Elite paranoia about Western plotting seems to have peaked around the October 2019–January 2020 anti-government protests, but this episode is replete with warnings for the Hashd about functioning as the security mechanism for unpopular Iraqi governments.

Discussion of redeployment and the development of canton areas should flow from this debate about roles and missions, rather than precede it. In any case, redeployment from hot areas is unlikely in the next one to five years. For example, disarmament initiatives that require the permanent surrender of missile, artillery, and armor systems should also logically follow a definition of roles and missions. Localized command-and-control arrangements will also flow from the definition of the lead—as opposed to the supporting—security agencies in each mission area and geography.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This monograph has made three basic points:

First, despite the danger that negative aspects of the Hashd may develop too quickly to be reversed by a gradual security-sector reform process, the reality is that there is no politically viable alternative to an evolutionary, patient, but determined approach. International policy on Iraq should be based on reality.

Second, now is not the right time—not for U.S. interests, or Iraqi interests, or coalition interests—to try to resolve the big issues surrounding the Hashd or to make key decisions. More time needs to pass to allow these issues to become less sensitive and to encourage a logical debate about the future of the Hashd. At this point, the Hashd is limited in personnel, budget, and institutional infrastructure, and the priority should be to freeze it at that level to maintain Iraq's options throughout a five- to ten-year SSR process.

Third, it is important for a majority of the Iraqi and international players to come to consensus on the two key issues facing the Hashd. One is the longer-term issue of core competencies and functions and of roles and missions, from which the force can be normalized, professionalized, and rationalized. The second issue, equally important, is the power grab that befell the Hashd in 2014–19, led by Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, Kataib Hezbollah, and their Iranian backers. This situation is reversible if the Iraqi government, the *hawza*, and international players work together to empower, protect, and resource a champion palatable to the various political actors to lead the Hashd reform project.

NOTES

1. See Robert Tollast, Yesar Al-Maleki, and Harry Istepanian, "Iraq's 2019 Draft Budget Law: A Turning Point in Iraq's Reconstruction?" Iraq Energy Institute, October 29, 2018, <https://iraqenergy.org/2018/10/29/iraqs-2019-draft-budget-law-analysis/>.
2. "Iraq Post-Daesh: Improved Social Cohesion, but Iraqis Remain Dissatisfied with Government," National Survey Findings, National Democratic Institute, July 2019, 42, <http://bit.ly/33MWhe6>.
3. Munqith Dagher, "Iraq 16 Years Later," Al-Mustakella for Research (IIASS), April 2019, 21.
4. Michael Knights, interview with senior Iraqi leader; name, place, and date withheld at interviewee's request.
5. For a statement on the *hawza's* views on Hashd integration, see the original 2014 fatwa calling volunteers to serve in the existing security forces, or view the September 12, 2019, statement by Haj Hamid al-Khafaf, director of the Office of Ali al-Sistani in Lebanon, available in Annex M of this study.
6. Hisham al-Hashimi, interview by Michael Knights, May 12, 2018.
7. "Abd al-Mahdi: The Hashd Is a Historical Fact and It Is Remaining and I Will Support Its Presence by Force," *Elaph*, November 5, 2018, <https://elaph.com/Web/News/2018/11/1225906.html>.
8. "Iraqi Militia Leader Says Statements Blaming U.S., Israel for Recent Attacks 'Incorrect,'" Kurdistan 24, August 22, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/15dd6ca8-97f0-406c-99ec-92db4599dec7>.
9. Knights, interview with senior Iraqi leader.
10. Ibid.
11. Knights, interview with Hisham al-Hashimi.
12. "Sadr Suspends the Work of the 'Resistance' and Demands the Merger of the 'Hashd' with the Interior and Defense Ministries...and 'Hezbollah' Insinuates a Military Escalation," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, January 24, 2020, <http://bit.ly/32cbqGs>.
13. National Iraqi News Agency, "Abu Ali al-Basri Reveals the Priorities of the Hashd Shabi Leadership for the Next Stage," January 30, 2020, <http://bit.ly/38rczfU>.
14. Between 2003 and 2005, 16,000 Shia militia personnel were incorporated into the nascent ISF. The so-called *dimaj* (direct accession) personnel lacked any formal professional education as soldiers or police. The Badr Organization provided the lion's share of recruits, who were largely Iraqi Shia. The recruits had lived in exile in Iran throughout the 1980s and 1990s, fought on the Iranian side during the Iran-Iraq War, and have dual Iraqi-Iranian citizenship or were born in Iran and received their Iraqi citizenship only after 2003. The Badr recruits were often assigned to Iraqi army intelligence; Ministry of Interior special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams; and the ministry's National Information and Investigation Agency, Iraq's equivalent of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation. Michael Eisenstadt and Michael Knights, "Mini-Hizballahs, Revolutionary Guard Knock-Offs, and the Future of Iran's Militant Proxies in Iraq," *War on the Rocks*, May 9, 2017, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/05/mini-hizballahs-revolutionary-guard-knock-offs-and-the-future-of-irans-militant-proxies-in-iraq/>.
15. National Iraqi News Agency, "Abu Ali al-Basri Reveals," January 30, 2020, <http://bit.ly/38rczfU>.

Annexes

ANNEX A: CABINET DECREE 301, JUNE 10, 2014

Decree

Council of Ministers

Number (301) of the year 2014

The council of ministers has agreed on the following during their twenty-third regular meeting, held on 10 June 2014:

1. The authorization of the Prime Minister or his nominee—who will both be exempted from the procedures of implementing government contracts—to discharge the requisite funds to cover all expenditures that are related to counter- ing and combating terrorism as well as any other procedures required by the demands of national security such as purchasing weapons and military and security equipment and organizing the ranks of volunteers and paying their salaries and the salaries of the members of the Sahwat forces.

2. The Ministry of Finance is to cover the expenditures mentioned above and record them in advance to be dealt with in accordance with project law (draft) of the general federal budget law for the 2015 fiscal year.

Ali Mohsen Ismail

General Secretary of the Council of Ministers

ANNEX B: NATIONAL GUARD LAW (DRAFT) OF FEBRUARY 3, 2015

President of the Republic

Based off of what the Parliament has decided/decreed and what the President of the Republic has approved, based on the provisions in the (third) clause from article (73) of the constitution.

The following law has been released:

Number () of the year 2015

Ruling

The National Guard

Article 1

The following terms are intended for the purpose of release of these rulings, whose meanings are shown as the following:

I – The National Guard Forces:

Military forces are made up of members of the provinces that are out of order in the region to contribute in the fight against terrorism and ensure peace.

The modification: I – The National Guard Forces:

Security forces are made up of members of the provinces that are out of order in the region to contribute in the fight against terrorism and ensure peace.

II – The Sons of Iraq: The individuals who are in a contract with the Iraqi government to fight for the country and fight against terrorism (work in counter-terrorism).

III – The Popular Mobilization Forces: Those individuals who are volunteers or are in contract with the Popular Mobilization Forces to support the armed forces in defending the country and combating terrorism.

IV – The leadership: Leadership of the National Guard Forces

V – The leader: The leader of the National Guard

VI – The Commander-in-chief: The Commander-in-Chief of the National Guard.

VII – The officers: The officers of the National Guard.

VIII – The officer on secondment: The officer on secondment from working in the National Guard Forces.

IX – Permanent formations: Forms which are made up of permanent members from the National Guard.

X – Reserve formations: The structural formation for the National Guard is fully functional when its personnel are summoned from the fighters of the National Guard Reserve.

Article 2

This law aims to:

I – To contribute effectively in facing and fighting against the dangers of terrorism and maintain peace in the provinces that are not under the control [of the Iraqi government] in the region. This will be done through the formation of military forces from members of those provinces and will become part of the armed forces.

The modification:

I – To contribute effectively in facing and fighting against the dangers of terrorism and maintain peace in the provinces that are not under the control [of the Iraqi government] in the region. This will be done through the formation of security forces from members of those provinces and will become part of the armed forces.

II – To combine the fighters of the Popular Mobilization Forces and the Sons of Iraq who have fought against terrorism, of those who are not members of the Ministries of Interior and Defense, with the National Guard.

The modification:

II – To absorb the fighters of the Popular Mobilization Forces and the Sons of Iraq and clan members who have fought against terrorism (and of those who are not members of the Ministries of Interior and Defense), into the National Guard.

Article 3

I – A – In accordance to the previsions in this law, the National Guard Forces shall take form, and shall have a command called (National Guard Command/leadership).

B – The National Guard command/leadership [position] enjoys moral personality and financial and administrative independence and is associated with the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and is represented by its commanders and those who empower it.

II – The National Guard Forces are more heavily armed than the police and less armed than the general army, with what is appropriate for the tasks and specific duties for the National Guard Forces in this ruling/law.

III – It shall take effect on the National Guard in the provinces which make up the legal provisions in law number (21) of the year 2018, addressing the provinces that are not in order [control] in the region and are in relations with the police in the province.

Article 4

The National Guard shall have the following functions:

I – Contribute to counter-terrorism.

II – Contribute to maintaining peace in the province.

III – Support the police in the enforcement of the rules of the law and the protection of the infrastructure in cases beyond their capability.

IV – Provide backup and support in emergency situations or natural disasters.

V – Provide assistance and help in maintaining security to the other provinces upon the request of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

VI – Coordinate and cooperate information with the security and strategic agencies as instructed by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

Article 5

I – The National Guard Command consists of the following formations:

- a. Chief of Staff of the National Guard
- b. Administrative Department
- c. Al Meera Department
- d. Operations Service
- e. Intelligence Service
- f. Training Service
- g. Inspection Service
- h. Mobilization and Doctrine Service
- i. The Chamber of Accounts
- j. Media and Public Relations Service

II – A – The Chief of Staff of the National Guard shall be headed by lieutenant-ranked officer, provided for in paragraph (A) of section (I) of this article.

The modification – A – The Chief of Staff of the National Guard shall be headed by an officer who is at least at the rank of major general, provided for in paragraph (A) of section (I) of this article.

B – The services provided for in paragraph (I) from this article will be run by a general officer or an officer entitled director-general.

The modification – B – The services provided for in paragraph (I) from this article will be run by an officer with the rank of admiral at least, or an employee with the title of director-general.

III – Defining the functions' structures provided for in paragraph (I) from this article and distributing it; the functions of these distributions in the internal system will be issued by the Commander of the National Guard.

Article 6

The National Guard will take over the following functions:

I – The Department of the National Guard.

II – Secure the equipment and the weapons and other necessities that are needed by the National Guard to carry out its functions in accordance with the law.

III – Prepare an annual orientation program for the development and rehabilitate the formations of the National Guard.

IV – Request the placement of a number of professional officers to work in the formations of the National Guard, as needed.

The modification – IV – Request the assignment or relocation of a number of professional officers to work in the formations of the National Guard, depending on the personnel available.

V – Organize the National Guard forces in formations or in units of light infantry in keeping with its structure and order and arrangement of the Iraqi armed forces.

VI – The development of the educational structure and the National Guard Forces' personnel with the Ministry of Finance; and it is ratified by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

VII – The issuing of controls for the preparation and qualification of officers from their affiliates in accordance with criteria adopted by the Iraqi armed forces.

Article 7

I – The Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces would nominate three candidates to be appointed as commanders of the National Guard; the Council of Ministers will later choose one of them to be sent to the Chamber of Deputies for approval.

II – They will be the commander of the National Guard in a special ranking.

Modification – II – The commander and deputy commander of the National Guard are required as follows:

- a. He and his parents must be Iraqi.
- b. He must be a graduate from the Iraqi Military School.
- c. He must be a graduate from the Iraqi Officer School.
- d. He must have [graduated] at a MINIMUM lieutenant officer rank.

III – The commander of the National Guard will have a deputy who will act in the commander's place during the commander's absent, for any reason.

Modification – 3 – The commander of the National Guard will have a deputy officer in the ranks of a lieutenant, who is appointed in the same manner as the Commander, and will act in the commander's place during the commander's absent, for any reason.

IV – The commander of the National Guard can delegate some of his duties to his deputy or commanders or the directors general.

Article 8

The commander of the National Guard will take over the following responsibilities:

I – Administration and supervision of the National Guard's formations.

II – Provide advice and recommendations to the extent of his knowledge to the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

III – Provide the enforcement of anything that relates to the commander in regards to national security strategy aspects, as well as the other aspects of security strategies.

IV – Provide recommendation to the general commander of the armed forces in appointed the deputy commander, commanders, lieutenants, and general directors. Modification – IV – Provide recommendation to the general commander of the armed forces in appointing the chief, commanders, lieutenants, and general directors.

V – Propose a draft of the annual budget for the National Guard Forces and present it to the General Commander of the Armed Forces.

VI – Invite affiliates of the backup units of the National Guard to attend yearly for training purposes. The enrollment period will be for a length of (1) month, and they will be released immediately after the end of their training period.

VII – Summon a formation or multiple formations of the National Guard in the province or more [provinces] after they coordinate with each other, to get distributed out of their own provinces, in accordance to the approval or order of the general commander of the armed forces.

Article 9

Serving in the National Guard will take place in two ways/forms, as follows:

I – Permanent/full-time service: Those who work in the stations of leadership and administration and the stations which require accumulation of experience and for the fighters will make up a certain number [of workers].

II – Backup service: Those who volunteer for serving in the backup service must agree to the contract for five years, accepting any revisions. The backup volunteer pledges to attend annually a one-month training.

Article 10

Permanent and backup affiliating formations of the National Guard will be members from the provinces that they are going to serve.

Article 11

The Commander of the National Guard will appoint the chief of police in the provinces in the same mechanism as the ones provided in the laws of the provinces that are out of order in the region, as stated in number (21) of the year 2008, in association with the ratification of the appointed General Commander of the Armed Forces.

Article 12

The instructions from the General Commander of the Armed Forces will determine the following:

I – The length of service of the officers, lieutenants, commander in the units, their positions, and their movements.

II – Special uniforms of the individuals in the National Guard and their ranks in accordance with the hierarchy of the other Iraqi armed forces.

Modification of Article 12 to follow the following structure:

Article – 12 – The length of service of the officers, lieutenants, and commanders in the units; their positions; and their movements are in accordance to the law of service and military retirement number 3 of 2010, which was modified and is in line with the hierarchy in the rest of the Iraqi forces.

Article 13

I – Those who volunteer for National Guard service must meet the following criteria:

- A. That they are Iraqi and from two Iraqi parents.
- B. That they are not younger than 18 years old or older than 35 for those part of the permanent forces, and 45 years at most for those part of the reserve forces.
- C. That they are certified fit to serve following an examination of a specialized medical committee.
- D. That they are not convicted of a nonpolitical crime or a misdemeanor of honor.
- E. That they have a good reputation and exemplary behavior.
- F. That they at least possess an elementary level of education.
- G. That they are from the governorate in which the National Guard Forces are being formed.
- H. That they do not belong to any political party.

II – A. The age and educational diploma preconditions are waived for those who have fought against terror as part of the PMF, of the Sons of Iraq, and of tribal forces.
B. Those who receive these waivers for educational diplomas will be introduced to literacy classes in coordination with local government in the governorates and Ministry of Education.

III – Security audits for volunteers will occur in accordance with the standards of the Ministry of Defense.

Article 14

I – Those who join the National Guard as permanent members will receive the same wages and benefits as their peers in the Ministry of Defense.

II – The government circles shall pay the wages of its reserve affiliates (those who join) in National Guard when they are called into action, and they shall return to their jobs after they are released from service.

III – The leadership of the National Guard shall take upon itself to pay the wages of affiliates that are working in the private sector, and their employers have a period of 10 days to reinstate them to their positions after they are released from service.

IV – The affiliates of the National Guard who are called to action for reserve work shall receive the same food and safety appropriations as their peers in the Ministry of Defense.

V – The length of the reserve service in the National Guard shall be calculated as an extended service (multiplied) for the purposes of allowances, promotion, and retirement.

Article 15

I – the General Commander of the Armed Forces shall order a part of or the entirety of the affiliates of the National Guard Reserves to join their formations in the following cases:

A – In the case of security deteriorations or threats that the permanent national guard forces alone cannot address.

B – In the case of the outbreak of war or the possibility of the outbreak of war.

C – In the case of emergencies or disasters.

II – The National Guard affiliate reservists who are called into service in accordance with the summons of the General Commander of the Armed Forces shall be released in accordance with his orders.

Article 16

The affiliates of the Armed Forces, internal security forces, intelligence services, and security agencies shall not be allowed into the forces of the National Guard in accordance with sections (1/Eighth) and (6/Fourth) of this law

Article 17

Universities, educational establishments, military and security academies, and training facilities operated by the Ministries of Defense and Interior shall accept a number of affiliates of the National Guard for training and education under the supervision of the Commander of the National Guard and the competent ministers.

Article 18

Governors, in accordance with the recommendations of the security establishments in the governorate, can request all of or some of the forces of the National

Guard Reserves from the General Commander of the Armed Forces in the case of security threats or disasters that cannot be contained by the forces of internal security or the permanent national guard in the governorate. The General Commander of the Armed Forces can choose to dispatch all of the reservists that the governor called for or to dispatch a smaller number and can also fulfill the governor's request by calling on the National Guards of other governorates after having evaluated the security situation.

The Commander of the Armed Forces can also deny the request for the following reasons:

In consideration of the current security situation in Iraq following brutal terrorist attacks and in the hopes of organizing the Iraqi people's forces who have countered this attack as part of forces that operate in accordance with the structure of the Iraqi Armed Forces and in the hopes of granting these forces the rights and benefits that can match their efforts and sacrifices.

The text of the law is available at <http://bit.ly/2v1irOf>.

ANNEX C: SAHWA LAW (DRAFT) OF 2018

In the name of the people.

The Presidency of the Republic

In accordance with the decisions of the Council of Ministers that were approved by the President and Article 61, Section 1, and Article 73, Section 3, of the constitution:

SAHWA OF THE SONS OF IRAQ (AL-SAHWAT)

Article 1

First—The Sahwa of Iraqis (al-Sahwat), which has been restructured according to the order of the Diwan number 9S that was issued on April 23, 2014, is a legitimate formation that operates under the leadership of the head of the armed forces.

Second—The formation of the Sons of Iraq Sahwa forces (al-Sahwat) by law in the following way:

1. The formation is composed of operations command, governorate brigades, and fighting battalions.
2. These formations are bound by existing military laws.
3. Existing military regulations and procedures will apply to the leadership and heads of these formations with regards to military ranks, positions, duties, and rights in the same that these procedures are applied to their peers in the military establishment.
4. Members of the Sons of Iraq forces (al-Sahwat) who join this formation will need to end their membership in the office of the Sons of Iraq (al-Sahwat)—the committee for national reconciliation/the Prime Minister's office—and they will not be permitted to partake in any political or partisan activities.
5. The forces of the sons of Iraq Sahwa (al-Sahwat), with all of its leadership, brigades, battalions, and affiliates, will be subject to the above-mentioned descriptions and this for a period of 3 months.
6. The relevant authorities will implement these provisions.

Third—The Sahwa forces of the Sons of Iraq (al-Sahwat) are composed of volunteers of the Sahwat of the sons of these governorates (Baghdad, Anbar, Diyala, Salah al-Din, Nineveh, Kirkuk, Northern Babil).

Fourth—The redeployment and distribution of the forces in the governorate (or provinces) shall reside exclusively on the authority of the Armed Forces' Commander-in-Chief

Article 2

The Commander of the Sons of Iraq (al-Sahwat) would be appointed by the recommendation of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and with the approval from the House of Representatives based on Article 61/V (5th) /C from the constitution.

Article 3

Members of the Sons of Iraq, whether they be martyrs or those injured, shall enjoy the benefits and privileges of retirement, which is granted by the services and retirement laws from the Iraqi Military Forces.

Article 4

The (financial) budget of the Sons of Iraq (Sahawat) forces shall have a separate budget from the Popular Mobilization Forces. The allocated funds will be transferred to the special budget of the Sons of Iraq (Sahawat) in accordance to article (50) from the Federal Budget Law of 2017.

Article 5

The stipulations of the law shall be applied to the active members of the force starting from the publication of the presidential order (188) of the year 2008.

LEGISLATIVE BASES

In honor of all of those who volunteered to carry arms to defend Iraq and all of Iraq's institutions and who have faced the terrorist organization al-Qaeda and its affiliating terrorist organization since 2005 and even until now—making sacrifices and shedding their own brave blood and baring great difficulties and dangers to maintain our security by supporting the Armed Forces and helping stabilize their governorates, and who also aim to limit the [amount of] weapons outside the hands of the state and to strengthen its prestige.

ANNEX D: EXECUTIVE ORDER 91, FEBRUARY 24, 2016

In accordance with the provisions of Article 78 of the Constitution, and in response to the dictates of the common good, and in order to restructure and reorganize the Popular Mobilization Commission and the forces subordinate to it, we have decided as follows:

1. The Hashd shall be an independent military formation and an element of the Iraqi armed forces, and it shall be tied to the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.
2. This formation shall operate on a model similar to that of the Counter-Terrorism Service as far as its organization and its place in the chain of command.
3. The formation shall be made up of a command, a staff commission, service directorates, and combat brigades.
4. This formation and its personnel shall be subject to all existing military regulations.
5. The personnel, officials, and commanders of this formation shall be provided with all ranks, pay, financial allowances, rights, and obligations in accordance with the standard military practice and procedure.
6. Any connection between personnel of the Popular Mobilization Commission and any political, partisan, or social organization shall be severed, and no political activity shall be permitted within its ranks.
7. The military formation shall be drawn up from those of the Popular Mobilization Commission's staff, brigades, and personnel who submit to the framework of the formation as outlined above, within a period of three months.
8. The relevant authorities shall undertake the implementation of this order's provisions.

ANNEX E: POPULAR MOBILIZATION COMMISSION LAW OF 2016

Firstly, the Popular Mobilization Commission re-formed by Executive Decree No. 91 of Feb. 24, 2016, shall be a formation with corporate legal status and shall be a part of the Iraqi armed forces, subordinate to the commander in chief of the armed forces.¹

Secondly, the contents of Executive Decree No. 91 shall be part of this law, namely:

1. The Popular Mobilization shall be an independent military formation and part of the Iraqi armed forces, subordinate to the commander in chief of the armed forces.

2. The formation shall be made up of a command, a staff commission, military branches, and combat brigades.

3. This formation shall be subject to existing military regulations in all respects except with regard to age and education requirements.

4. The members, administrators, and commanders of this formation shall have their affairs arranged in accordance with military procedures regarding ranks, pay, allowances, and all other rights and obligations.

5. Members who join the Popular Mobilization Commission formation shall have all of their connections to political, partisan, or social structures severed. Political activism within the formation's ranks is prohibited.

6. The Popular Mobilization Commission's military formation shall be organized into staff elements and brigades made up of those of its personnel who obey the regulations stated above, within a period of three months.

7. The relevant authorities shall undertake the implementation.

Thirdly, The Popular Mobilization force will be made up of the components of the Iraqi people in a manner that conforms to article (9) of the constitution.

Fourthly, The redeployment and redistribution of forces among the provinces shall be the sole prerogative of the commander in chief of the armed forces.

B. Division commanders shall be appointed by approval of Parliament in accordance with article (61-G) of the Constitution.

C. The provisions of this law shall apply to the formation's personnel starting from the date of Cabinet Decision (307) of November 6, 2014.

This text is translated in "Vague Hashd Law Preserves Existing Ambiguities," *Inside Iraqi Politics* 144, 5.

ANNEX F: ADVICE AND GUIDELINES TO THE FIGHTERS IN THE ARENA OF JIHAD, MAY 26, 2016

Posted by Iraqi Thoughts, May 26, 2016, Society of Politics
Ayatollah Sistani's Code of Conduct to Iraqi Fighters
[Translated by Dr. Ahab Bdaiwi]

God has called for Jihad and has privileged the warriors. It is necessary, then, to learn these conditions and etiquettes of Jihad thoroughly.

Do not indulge in acts of extremism; do not disrespect dead corpses; do not resort to deceit; do not kill an elder, a child, a woman.

Pay heed to the example of Imam Ali and follow his path. He said, "Set your sights on the Family of the Prophet. Make them proud."

Be attentive to the sanctity of the human souls! Never should you do to them something that God has not deemed permissible.

Be attentive to the sanctity of the lives of those who do not fight: the weak, children, women—even the families of those who fight you.

Do not condemn others to heresy. Do not accuse them of blasphemy that could then lead to their death. Do not imitate the Kharijites.

Never inflict harm on non-Muslims, regardless of their religion and sect. The non-Muslims are under the protection of the Muslims. In fact, the Muslim must protect his non-Muslim neighbors in the same manner and vigor as he would when he protects his own family.

Do not steal the money of others. Those who steal from others will find themselves seated in the flames of the fires of hell.

Do not disrespect the corpses of the dead, and if you defeat the men of your enemies, do not violate the sanctity of their women and houses. Do not enter their [defeated enemies'] homes. Do not take anything from their houses. Take only what you find in their military encampments. Do not verbally abuse their women. Do not insult their honor, even if your enemies abuse your women and insult your honor.

Do not deprive any people, who do not fight you, of their rights.

Know that most of those who fight you are victims who have been led astray by others. Let your righteous actions, your just conduct, and your sound admonition serve as an example for them. Do not resort to oppression.

Corruption can be cured only by justice.

Note: It may be the case that when you adhere to good conduct and discipline you suffer losses. This, nevertheless, is more spiritually rewarding.

Be the guardians and admonishers of those who accept you, so that in the end they will support you against your enemies. Help the weak among them however you can. They are your brothers and your family. Show compassion toward them like you do with your own.

Do not let anything take precedence over your obligatory prayers. Prayer is the means through which man humbles himself before God.

Remember God at all times. Recite passages from the Quran. Remember that one day you will stand before Him.

Strive to act in the same righteous manner as the Prophet and his progeny, peace be upon them, in times of war and peace. Be the good example that Islam deserves. This is the religion that was built on illumination, reason, and good manners.

Do not be hasty in situations where caution is required. Do not undertake an action that will be the cause of your spiritual perdition.

Advise each other. You will not find better advice than that which you offer each other. Unite, come together, and overlook your differences.

Everyone must let go of sentiments that carry hatred and bigotry. Follow the noble manners. Do not be overcome by narrow-minded views.

ANNEX G: EXECUTIVE ORDER 85, INSTRUCTIONS ON HASHD FIGHTERS AFFAIRS, MARCH 7, 2018

Respectfully commemorating the Jihad Fatwa, pronounced by the supreme religious leadership, represented by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani in his Friday sermon of 14 Shaaban 1435 (June 13, 2014), and in accordance with the provisions of the Hashd Commission Law No. 40 of 2016 and of Executive Decree No. 91 of 2016, we have decided on the following instructions:

Article 1 Definitions:

First, the Commission is the Hashd Commission.

Second, the Hashd Commission Chairman is the Supreme Chairman of the Hashd Commission.

Third, fighter is a person who enjoys the employment benefits of a pay scale rank equivalent to that of officers of the rank of lieutenant and above and is entrusted with performing duties and discharging responsibilities as determined by law and by Cabinet Decision No. 177 of 2010.

Fourth, volunteer is a person who enjoys the employment benefits of a pay scale rank equivalent to that of enlisted personnel of the rank of soldier or NCO and is entrusted with performing duties and discharging responsibilities as determined by law and by Cabinet Decision No. 177 of 2010.

Article 2

First, the organizational structure of the Commission shall be made up as follows: (a) The two deputy chairs of the Commission; (b) commanders of regions; (c) commanders of formations; (d) commanders of fighting forces; (e) commanders of combat groups; (f) commanders of combat detachments; (g) commanders of combat subgroups; and (h) volunteers, civilian employees, and religious chaplains.

Second, identifying insignia in distinctive colors shall be defined for the positions defined above in article 2 of these regulations and shall be worn on the right side of the chest. The shapes and colors of these insignia shall be determined by the Chairman of the Commission, with the approval of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

Third, (a) Hashd Commission personnel shall be placed in the positions defined above in accordance with the organizational structure. Those deserving retirement shall be retired in accordance with the applicable laws. (b) Hashd personnel's employment shall be confirmed by an executive decree issued by the Commander-in-Chief. He may exempt from the relevant legal conditions those fighters who have participated in combat against Daesh for at least one year.

Fourth, volunteers for service in the Hashd must meet the following conditions: (a) must be Iraqi; (b) must be between the ages of 18 and 25 for service in technical branches, or 18 and 30 for service in other branches; (c) must possess good character and sound reputation; (d) must meet the conditions of physical fitness and health; (e) must not be convicted of any felony, dishonorable misdemeanor, terrorism offense, or crime against the state's domestic or foreign security; and (f) must possess at least an elementary school education.

Article 3

Those who do not meet the conditions for service as fighters or volunteers shall be absorbed as civilian employees of the Hashd Commission and shall be subject to the rules of the Civil Service Law No. 24 of 1960 (amended), the State and Public Sector Employees Law No. 22 of 2008 (amended), and the State Employees Discipline Law No. 14 of 1991 (amended).

Article 4

First, volunteer fighters shall be promoted in accordance with the procedure defined by the Military Service and Retirement Law No. 3 of 2010 (amended).

Second, personnel of the Hashd Commission as defined in Article 1 shall receive financial compensation equal to that of their equivalents in the Defense Ministry according to relevant laws.

Third, personnel of the Hashd shall be accepted to the military colleges and academies in accordance with those institutions' procedures. The Hashd's proportion of those accepted shall be determined in coordination with the Ministry of Defense and based on the Hashd Commission's needs.

Fourth, commanders at the formation level and above must be graduates of the Defense Ministry's Command College or the Staff College. Those posts may not be filled without the approval of the Commander-in-Chief. He may make exceptions to these conditions, on the recommendation of the Hashd Chairman, for those who have practical experience and proven battlefield skills.

Article 5

First, the Prime Minister may delegate to the Commission Chairman such prerogatives as are necessary to completing the Commission's tasks, inasmuch as this accords with the law.

Second, the Commission Chairman may delegate some of his prerogatives as described by law to his two deputies or to one of them, except for his exclusive prerogatives as defined by relevant military laws.

Third, the Commission Chairman may issue additional instructions to ease the implementation of the relevant laws after receiving the approval of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, inasmuch as this accords with the law.

Article 6

The following shall apply inasmuch as they are not contradicted by any text in these instructions: the Military Service and Retirement Law No. 3 of 2010, the Military Penal Code Law No. 19 of 2007, the Military Penal Trials Law No. 22 of 2016, the Civil Service Law No. 24 of 1960 (amended), the Unified Retirement Law No. 9 of 2014, and the State and Public Sector Employees Salaries Law No. 22 of 2008 (amended).

Article 7

These instructions shall take effect from the date of their being issued.

ANNEX H: ORDER TO CANCEL OPERATIONS COMMANDS, AUGUST 2, 2018

To: Western Nineveh Operations Command, Office of the Commander
 Eastern Nineveh Operations Command, Office of the Commander
 Bayji Operations Command, Office of the Commander

Order to Cancel Operations Commands

Salam Alaykum...

Given the stability of the security situation in Nineveh area and directions of the Prime Minister, General Commander of the Armed Forces decided what follows:

1. Cancel Western Nineveh, Eastern Nineveh, and Bayji Operations Commands, forming one headquarters for a command covering Nineveh commanded by the good brother Ali Kazem.
2. Western Nineveh Command completely absorbs the staff and capabilities of the directorate of operations.
3. Brigade 40 is to be fully transferred from Northern Sinjar Area to the original headquarters at Base Speicher and will hand over responsibility of the area to Army Joint Operations Command in Nineveh.
4. The border in Western Nineveh is to be completely transferred to Nineveh Operations Command (the army) gradually and under the supervision of the directorate of operations and through understanding and coordination with Joint Operations Command.
5. Brigade 14 to completely transfer to rear camp outside Nineveh province.
6. Local PMUs from Brigade 30 and Brigade 5 Christians and Brigade 52 Turkmen and the Yazidi PMF will connect to Nineveh Operations Command administratively and operationally with sufficient temporary reserve forces, and depending on the Directorate of Administration and Finance, immediately these forces will be transferred administratively and financially to Nineveh Operations Command.
7. Emphasize our previous order to evacuate the city of Mosul of any forces belonging to the PMF and the present PMF headquarters is the Nineveh Command headquarters.

With appreciation,
 Jamal Jaafar Muhammed Ali al-Ibrahimi
 Vice Chairman of the Hashd al-Shabi
 2018

ANNEX I: STATEMENT BY THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES, JUNE 18, 2019

In the name of Allah the Merciful

Statement by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces

During the past, the country went through complex conditions of internal and external wars, dissolution of the army, imposition of occupation on Iraq, presence of foreign forces, foreign interference, and formation of armed groups or the use of Iraqi territory for armed actions against targets and states and forces outside the will of the Iraqi state. The country also suffered from subversive activities and terrorist acts, especially al-Qaeda and Daesh, and its occupation of large areas of Iraqi territory, which were confronted by the armed forces of all types, including the army, police, popular mobilization forces, tribes, Peshmerga, and volunteers. The support of countries of the Alliance and friendly and neighboring countries added to that the reality of the regional and international level. This reality has produced a lot of manifestations and occurrences and behaviors that are not controlled and that require today—after the process of liberation and great victory achieved on Daesh and after the large indicators that indicate that the state regained the prestige and strength and absolute control over its territory and achieved independence and sovereignty—to end all the illegal and sovereign anomalies. We therefore reiterate:

1. Any foreign force shall be prohibited from acting or moving on Iraqi soil without the permission, agreement, and control of the Iraqi government.
2. Any state from the province or outside shall be prevented from being present on Iraqi soil and exercising its activities against any other party—whether it is another neighboring state or any foreign presence inside or outside Iraq—without an agreement with the Iraqi government.
3. The actions of any Iraqi or non-Iraqi armed forces outside the framework of the Iraqi Armed Forces or outside the command and the supervision of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces shall be prohibited.
4. Any armed force operating within the framework of the Iraqi Armed Forces and under the command of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces shall be prohibited from having movement, operations, stores, or industries outside the knowledge, administration, and control of the Iraqi Armed Forces and under the supervision of the Commander-in-Chief.

We know that successful implementation may take some time. Complexities and sensitivities are many and multiple. There are quite a number of violations. However, since we assumed responsibility, we have begun to promote the positive steps of our predecessors to achieve these trends on the one hand. And on the

other hand, we seek to overcome some of the negatives and develop new plans to achieve full control of the state to achieve the above points, to perpetuate the battle against terrorism and Daesh, to achieve the security of Iraq and its people and independence, and to secure the unity of the country and its full sovereignty in all fields.

Adil Abdulmahdi

ANNEX J: EXECUTIVE ORDER 237, JULY 1, 2019

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Republic of Iraq
PM's Office
No. m.r.w d6/59/10040
Date: July 1, 2019

Diwan Order 237

According to the requirements of the general interest and relying on the competencies accorded to us under the Constitution, and believing in the great role that the fighters of the Hashd al-Shabi undertake, and to ensure the strengthening of its forces internally and externally, the following is decided in order to streamline the work of those forces:

1. All al-Hashd al-Shabi forces are to work as an indivisible part of the armed forces, with the application upon them of all that is applied to the armed forces except for what is brought by special stipulation. And these forces are to work under the command of the general commander of the armed forces and in accordance with their law legislated by the Parliament and the regulations and instructions issued in accordance with it. And the head of the al-Hashd al-Shabi Commission will be responsible for them. He is appointed by the general commander of the armed forces and all the formations of the Hashd al-Shabi are connected with him.
2. All names by which the factions of the al-Hashd al-Shabi have operated in the battles of heroism to destroy the terrorist Daesh entity are to be definitively abandoned and to be replaced with military names (division, brigade, regiment, etc.), and that includes the tribal Hashd or any other local formations or at the national level. Also their members are to bear military ranks as applied in the armed forces.
3. These units in members and formations are to cut any political or command tie from the organizations referred to in clause 2 above.
4. The factions that do not join the armed forces can become political organizations subject to the law of parties and the ruling laws and regulations of political parties, and it is forbidden for them to bear arms except by permit and for requirements of protecting their civilian bases and leadership as is the case with the rest of the political organizations.
5. Camps that bring together the forces of the al-Hashd al-Shabi are to be specified exactly as they are specified for the rest of the armed forces, and the fields of the presence of the Hashd are to be subjected to the order of battle as is established in accordance with the contexts implemented in the armed forces.

6. All bases that bear the name of one of the factions of the al-Hashd al-Shabi are to be closed whether in the cities or outside them.
7. The existence of any armed faction operating secretly or openly outside these instructions is forbidden, and it is to be considered outside the law and accordingly prosecuted.
8. All economic offices or checkpoints or presences or interests established outside the new framework are to be closed, for the work and formations of the al-Hashd al-Shabi as a foundation are to be considered a part of the armed forces.
9. July 31, 2019, is defined as a final date to put in place the definitive arrangements to complete the process of operating in accordance with these regulations.
10. Orders will be subsequently issued for the framework of the al-Hashd al-Shabi Commission and its formations.

Adil Abdulmahdi
PM and General Commander of the Armed Forces
June 2019

ANNEX K: MEMO FROM PMC CHAIRMAN REGARDING EXECUTIVE ORDER 237, JULY 29, 2019

Memo from PMC Chairman
To PM AAM
Regarding Diwan Order (EO) 237

In implementation of EO 237 issued July 1, 2019, the PMC has implemented the following:

1. The structural committee in harmony with the above-mentioned EO has accomplished the general objectives of the committee as an independent military entity directly affiliated with the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and subject to military laws. The structural committee attained your approval and has been effectuated as shown in attachment #1; the work of the new structure necessitated the implementation of the following:

a. Abolishing the PMC's offices in all the provinces and transferring its personnel and assets to the pertinent party in the PMC as shown in attachment #2.

b. Abolishing the mobilization directorate and its branches in all the provinces and transferring its personnel and assets as shown in the aforementioned paragraph A, attachment B.

c. Started the reconceptualization of the directorates and departments and their functions specifically the newly created ones that mimic the model of MOD and CTS.

2. Service and retirement instructions for the members of the PMC have been completed which were ratified according to your letter # 2245 on July 8, 2019, as in attachment #4.

3. The bulk work of removing the unauthorized nomenclatures has been completed according to the EO and the remainder part needs to merge the battalions and brigades in accordance to the structure; this has begun.

4. Disciplining regulations have been issued to shutter any presence in the cities under any economical nomenclature that potential can be tied to the PMC, and this has been done. We shall continue to follow up on any news that the PMC receives in this matter and to take proper deterring legal measures against those claiming or impersonating the PMC membership with our omnipotent. We have a detailed account on this matter.

5. Within the context of removing all nomenclatures outside the context of the above-mentioned EO, including the TMF nomenclature, and unifying the procedures. To achieve homogeneity among all our formations, we need a specified period not to exceed two months to achieve the final merge and homogeneity.

6. The garrisons have been identified to house the troops of the PMF and also the suggested garrisons to house all the forces which require your orders to allocate them to the PMC as shown in attachment #5.

7. The PMC has embarked on remedying the referred grievances received from previous members or those who claim previous membership of the PMC according to the law and regulations. Also we have begun the preparation for candidates to fill in the billets allocated to the PMC from the locals of the liberated areas in accordance to the federal budget law of 2019 and to give priority to the volunteers who participated in the liberation operations—taking into consideration the application in various areas as needed.

8. The PMC completed inventory of the military positions which are supposed to be filled by officers. The PMC has begun to prepare the required legal mechanism to return the former officers and to identify a mechanism for granting ranks (for those who are eligible based on the officers regulations) according to due process and in cooperation and coordination with the National Defense University as well as the regulations to grant ranks for the martyred commanders based on the details mentioned in the ratified service and retirement regulations

Faleh al-Fayyad
July 29, 2019

ANNEX L: NSC DIRECTIVE, AUGUST 15, 2019

The PM chaired a meeting of the National Security Council on Wednesday, August 14, and directed the following:

1. Carry out a joint comprehensive investigation involving all the relevant authorities to investigate the incident of the explosion of the ammunition depots in al-Saqr camp, and refer a report within a week from this date.
2. Complete the comprehensive plans to move the depots and camps affiliated with the Interior and Defense Ministries and the al-Hashd al-Shabi and tribal Hashd and other factions that participated in the battles against Daesh to outside the towns on the basis of issuing the definitive orders for implementation before the end of the present month so that the final dates can be set to make the towns free of the likes of these camps and stores. All is in accordance with the frameworks of due process for the armed forces.
3. Consider as an illegal presence, any military camps or ammunition depots outside the plan and outside decreed agreements. Such will be dealt with according to the law and system.
4. Cancel all special flight permissions in Iraqi skies (reconnaissance, armed reconnaissance, helicopters, drones in all their types) for all Iraqi and non-Iraqi parties. Permissions for such flights are to be issued exclusively by the Commander-in-Chief or whomever he duly authorizes. All parties must completely comply with this directive. Any flight contrary to that will be dealt with as enemy aircraft and immediately by our aerial defense forces.
5. Provide compensation to citizens who suffered human and material losses as a result of the incident according to the law.

Joint Ops Command
Baghdad
August 15, 2019

ANNEX M: STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF GRAND AYATOLLAH ALI AL-SISTANI, SEPTEMBER 12, 2019

Director of the Office of Ali al-Sistani in Lebanon, Haj Hamid al-Khafaf, in a dialogue on the role of the reference in the religious and political scene

There has been a lot of talk about the PMF's formation of a number of armed factions and a large number of volunteers who joined to fight on the fronts against ISIS following the fatwa by the higher religious leader; what is the vision of reference about the future of this force?

There is a law that was passed in the Council of Representatives that regulates the operations of these forces. Section V of paragraph II of the article stipulates the need. Members of the PMF who join this group are to be disassociated from all political, party, and social frameworks, and they are forbidden any political action in its ranks.

There is an executive order issued by the president of the council of representatives in regards to the structure of the force in which authorities are waiting for this executive order to be enforced.

The executive order affirms its main position that the arms of the state should be confined to the hands of the state. It forbids the possession of medium or heavy artillery weapons by any party or group or clan or others heavy under any pretext or title outside of the official armed forces on the ground in Iraq.

The federal state must recognize that it cannot enforce these rules and fight against corruption in a comprehensive manner while maintaining the preservation of public and private freedom. No less than the Constitution determines what the executive order calls for on gun ownership and its spread outside of formal legal manners.

Source: <https://lebanon.shafaqna.com/news/176230>.

ANNEX N: EXECUTIVE ORDER 328, SEPTEMBER 14, 2019

In accordance with the Executive Order 75 from 2017 and in reference to the powers accorded to us from Article 78 of the Constitution, the following has been decided:

1. The joint operations will be restructured in accordance with the above-mentioned order and our powers. Lieutenant General Abdul-Amir Rashid Yarallah, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, will be Deputy Head of the Joint Operations. The membership of the representatives mentioned below cannot be lower than Major General, Brigadier General (Liwa Roken) or General Director.

- A. Ministry of Defense
- B. Ministry of Interior
- C. Counterterrorism body
- D. National Security body
- E. National Intelligence body
- F. Leadership of the ground forces
- G. Leadership of air defense
- H. Leadership of army aviation
- I. Leadership of the air force
- J. Popular Mobilization Forces
- K. Peshmerga Ministry

2. The joint operations will have the following responsibilities:

- A. Leading and administrating joint operations on the strategic and operations levels by using all of the security capabilities of the state, overseeing such capabilities, and countering any domestic or foreign threats or dangers throughout Iraq in accordance with the orders of the General Commander of the Armed Forces.
- B. Providing counsel with regards to strategic military and security doctrine.
- C. Leading and controlling all formations mentioned under section 1.
- D. Directing and coordinating all intelligence efforts for all intelligence and security bodies and agencies.
- E. Coordinating with ministries and relevant government entities to profit from their resources and to support operations during catastrophes and emergencies.
- F. Coordinating with international entities that support the Iraqi forces in training, logistics, and air support and ensuring that they also provide their areas of presence, their number of troops, their movements, and their objectives.

3. The joint operations leadership will be attached to the general commander of the armed forces on the operations side and with the military and security bodies mentioned above under section 1 on the technical and administrative side.

4. It is possible to transfer the authorities pertaining to the leadership of the joint operations to the deputy of operations depending on the exigencies of operations and planning.

5. All orders of appointments, transfers, and rotations for positions in (the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of the Interior, the counter-terrorism body, the Iraqi national intelligence body, the Iraqi national security body, the PMF body)—which are described later—(brigade commander, leader of the police, division leader, operations leaders, general director, deputy minister or equivalent in military rank of brigade and above, exclusively with our consent).

6. Relevant authorities will undertake the implementation of the provisions.

Adil Abdulmahdi
Prime Minister
General Commander of the Armed Forces

ANNEX O: EXECUTIVE ORDER 331, SEPTEMBER 17, 2019

Date: September 17, 2019
Order #331

In consideration of the exigencies of the public's interest, and in accordance with what was offered by the Committee of the Hashd in its publication on August 26, 2019, and the powers given to us from the Constitution, we have decided the following:

First: Approval of the special organizational structure for the PMF (attached).

Second: Elimination of all titles and positions that contradict with the titles present in the aforementioned structure.

Third: Giving the head of the PMF deputy appointment powers for leadership positions in the PMF. These nominations will then need to be approved by us.

Fourth: The order will go into execution as soon as it released.

Adil Abdulmahdi
9/2019

To all the directorates and formations of the PMF
Order #331

Greetings,
We have attached the order 331 that has been sent to us from the office of the prime minister on September 17, 2019.

Let it be implemented from its date of release...with respect,

Faleh al-Fayyad
President of the PMC

TABLE A.1.
HASHD COMMISSION STRUCTURE DECREED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER 331 (IN ARABIC)

ANNEX P: HASHD BRIGADE INDEX

By Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, <http://www.aymennjawad.org>

1st Brigade: Badr. An affiliate called Liwa al-Imam Muhammad al-Jawad.

2nd Brigade: Imam Ali Combat Division. It is affiliated with the Imam Ali shrine in Najaf.

3rd Brigade: Badr. Tashkil Asad Amerli. Subsequently merged into the 5th Brigade as of 2019.

4th Brigade: Badr.

5th Brigade: Badr. The Tashkil al-Karar unit. Notable because its former commander—Abu Dergham al-Maturi—is now deputy commander of the Interior Ministry-affiliated federal police. Note that he was also in the federal police during his time as commander of Badr's 5th Brigade.

6th Brigade: Kataib Jund al-Imam (affiliated with the Iranian-aligned "Islamic Movement in Iraq," set up in 1991). The leader, Ahmed al-Asadi, was a spokesman for the Hashd Commission from 2014 to 2019.

7th Brigade: Liwa al-Muntazir, led by Dagher al-Musawi. Originally part of the Iranian-aligned Jihad and Development Movement that was under the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) umbrella. Liwa al-Muntazir has formally split off from the Jihad and Development Movement.

8th Brigade: Saraya Ashura. A militia affiliated with Ammar al-Hakim, who led ISCI. He has evolved into more of a nationalist figure over time and set up his own political movement for the upcoming parliamentary elections in 2018.

9th Brigade: Liwa Karbala. Affiliated with Badr.

10th Brigade: Badr.

11th Brigade: Liwa Ali al-Akbar. Affiliated with the Imam Hussein shrine in Karbala.

12th Brigade: Harakat al-Nujaba, an Iranian-aligned group that has been very vocal about its deployments to Syria. Its leader Akram al-Kaabi was in Asaib Ahl al-Haq, which originated in the Sadrist movement, receives support from Iran and broadly aligns with Iran even as its leader Qais al-Khazali does not necessarily identify with Iran's ideological governing system.

13th Brigade: Liwa al-Tafuf. Affiliated with the Imam Hussein shrine in Karbala. The leader Qasim Muslih was originally in Liwa Ali al-Akbar. Despite Qasim Muslih's separation from Liwa Ali al-Akbar, both brigades are affiliated with the same shrine

and are acknowledged by it. The matter is therefore an internal one for the shrine, rather than a case analogous to Sadrist splinters encouraged by Iran. Another line of interpretation claims a deliberate conspiracy by Iran acting through Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis [treated “Muhandis” in the main text] to undermine Liwa Ali al-Akbar, though the account seems somewhat hyperbolic.

14th Brigade: Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada. Iranian-aligned group. Like Harakat al-Nujaba, it emerged in 2013 and is very vocal about its deployments to Syria.

15th Brigade: Quwat al-Shaheed al-Sadr (aka National Defense Brigades). Affiliated with the original Dawa Party. Kataib al-Fatah al-Mubin, a lesser-known Iranian-aligned militia, appears to have had a commander in the ranks of this brigade.

16th Brigade: The Turkmen Brigade. Badr affiliate. Active in the Tuz Khormatu and Kirkuk areas, dubbed the “northern front [axis].”

17th Brigade: Saraya al-Jihad. Armed wing of the Jihad and Development Movement, which separated from ISCI and Ammar al-Hakim. The group has more recently deployed to Syria.

18th Brigade: Saraya Talia al-Khurasani, an Iranian-aligned group with origins going back to the 1990s. First made more of a public impact through advertising its deployments to Syria on social media in 2013.

19th Brigade: Ansar Allah al-Awfiya and Tashkil al-Hussein al-Thair. The former is a clearly Iranian-aligned group that has openly advertised deploying to Syria. Within Iraq, the group has a notable affiliate in the west Anbar desert near the border with Syria (Quwat al-Buraq). Tashkil al-Hussein al-Thair is best described as a Sadrist splinter. There are longstanding references to one of its leaders—Abd al-Zahra al-Sweidi—as an associate of Muqtada al-Sadr in Baghdad. A query put in 2015 to Muqtada al-Sadr asserted that most of the group’s members, from officials to ordinary rank-and-file personnel, were in Muqtada’s Saraya al-Salam militia (the reconstituted Mahdi Army). In response, Sadr denied that the group is part of Saraya al-Salam. It would appear that Tashkil al-Hussein al-Thair was merged into Ansar Allah al-Awfiya.

20th Brigade: Liwa al-Taff. Its leader, Hashim Ahmad al-Tamimi, was originally in the al-Abbas Combat Division. According to a member of the formation, Liwa al-Taff is independent, though he did not profess to know the exact reason for the original split from the al-Abbas Combat Division. The matter thus differs somewhat from the formation of Liwa al-Taff, which is shrine-affiliated even as its commander was originally in Liwa Ali al-Akbar. In any case, this member of Liwa al-Taff did affirm that the leadership and fighters are Sistani loyalists. Some social media output from Liwa al-Taff shows Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis meeting with the group and praising its efforts.

21st Brigade: Badr.

22nd Brigade: Badr, led by Abu Kawthar al-Muhammadawi, Badr official for May-san province in the southeast of Iraq.

23rd Brigade: Badr. Unit primarily operating to maintain internal security in Diyala, whose current governor is affiliated with Badr.

24th Brigade: Badr. Unit primarily operating to maintain internal security in Diyala.

25th Brigade: Quwat al-Shaheed al-Sadr al-Awal. Appears to be linked to Nouri al-Maliki and his wing of the Dawa Party, as illustrated by frequent embeds for Maliki's TV channel Afaq with the group. A deputy commander of this group—Jaafar al-Banadawi (aka Abu Kawthar)—was involved in Kataib al-Imam Ali's efforts in Syria.

26th Brigade: al-Abbas Combat Division. Affiliated with the al-Abbas Shrine in Karbala. The group has links with the Defense Ministry, with one of its regiments joining the ministry in July 2017.

27th Brigade: Badr: Quwat al-Shaheed al-Qaid Abu Muntadher al-Muhammadawi.

28th Brigade: Saraya Ansar al-Aqeeda. Led by Jalal al-Din al-Saghir who has been part of the ISCI umbrella and became closer to Iran over time. First emerged as a force fighting in Syria.

29th Brigade: Kataib Ansar al-Hujja. Led by one Ahmad al-Farji, who had previously fought against the U.S. occupation. The group is officially supposed to be independent but is close to Abu Mahdi al-Mohandis, according to its media spokesman. It should not be confused with the Kataib Ansar al-Hujja of Muhammad al-Kinani, which features in the list of groups condemned as fake Hashd.

30th Brigade: Liwa al-Shabak/Quwat Sahl Nineveh. Recruiting among the Shabak minority in the Nineveh plains. Linked to Badr despite claims of being independent.

31st Brigade: Risaliyun (Kataib al-Tayyar al-Risali). Sadrist splinter in origin (cf. here). The leader is Adnan al-Shahmani, an MP who ran for election in 2014 within the State of Law bloc and set up his own "Sacrifice for the Resistance" bloc within the State of Law bloc in September of that year. Shahmani is close to Nouri al-Maliki and other Iranian-aligned figures such as Badr leader Hadi al-Amiri.

33rd Brigade: Quwat Waad Allah (aka Liwa al-Shabab al-Risali). Linked to the Fad-hila Party of the Sadrist trend.

35th Brigade: Quwat al-Shaheed al-Sadr, affiliated with the Dawa Party—Iraq Organization, an Iranian-aligned splinter from the original Dawa Party.

36th Brigade: Apparently, the Lalish Regiment, which has recruited Yezidis. The Lalish Regiment is tied to Liwa al-Hussein (53rd Brigade), which is a unit that recruited from Shia from Tel Afar and is affiliated with Badr.

39th Brigade: Harakat al-Abdal, an Iranian-aligned militia that is vocal about its efforts in Syria. Members of this group have formed another Iranian-aligned militia fighting in Syria: Kataib Safin.

40th Brigade: Kataib al-Imam Ali, affiliated with the Islamic Movement of Iraq (not to be confused with the Islamic Movement in Iraq associated with Kataib Jund al-Imam). Led by Shabal al-Zaidi, who was once a notorious Mahdi Army commander. The group is clearly aligned with Iran and has deployed to Syria.

41st Brigade: Asaib Ahl al-Haq.

42nd Brigade: Asaib Ahl al-Haq: Quwat/Liwa [al-Shaheed] al-Qaid Abu Mousa al-Amiri.

43rd Brigade: Asaib Ahl al-Haq: Saba al-Dujail.

44th Brigade: Liwa Ansar al-Marjaiyya. Led by Hamid al-Yasiri, who is a representative of Ayatollah Sistani in the southern province of al-Muthanna.

45th Brigade: Kataib Hezbollah.

46th Brigade: Saraya al-Difa al-Shabi, a Kataib Hezbollah affiliate.

47th Brigade: Saraya al-Difa al-Shabi. As above.

50th Brigade: Kataib Babiliyoun, led by Rayan al-Kaldani, a Chaldean Christian. The group has at least some Christian members and has been closely intertwined with Liwa al-Shabak/Quwat Sahl Nineveh. It is aligned with Iran politically. The brigade seems to be expanding recruitment among minorities, as news recently came that a Kakai unit is to be part of the brigade. In Nineveh, Kataib Babiliyoun has been at odds with the Assyrian identity-oriented Nineveh Plains Protection Units, which is also supposed to be affiliated with the Hashd Shabi Commission.

51st Brigade: Salah al-Din Brigade. It is a Sunni Hashd unit based in the al-Shirqat area. The group has received support from Iran and is close to Abu Mahdi al-Mo-handis. See this report for more details.

52nd Brigade: Badr's Fawj Amerli. A Turkmen unit led by Mahdi Taqi al-Amerli, a Badr member of the Salah al-Din provincial council.

53rd Brigade: Liwa al-Hussein (cf. entry on Fawj Lalish). Led by one Mukhtar al-Musawi and affiliated with Badr.

55th Brigade: Badr: Tashkil Malik al-Ashtar. Subsequently merged into the 27th Brigade.

56th Brigade: Kirkuk Hashd/Hawija area (aka Liwa Hashd Shuhada Kirkuk). A Sunni Hashd group led by one Hussein Ali Najm al-Juburi, who has a Sunni Sahwa back-

ground. The initial foundations of the 56th Brigade trace back to efforts by Faleh al-Fayyad and the Union of National Forces Party MP Muhammad Tamim. It appears that there are friendly relations between the 56th Brigade and the Kirkuk Hashd groups affiliated with Quwat Ahrar al-Iraq, which was set up in June 2014 as the military wing of the Iraqi Dar al-Ifta under Mahdi al-Sumaidai, a Sunni cleric who has been associated with support for the government for a long time. Quwat Ahrar al-Iraq is also officially affiliated with the Hashd Shabi Commission.

66th Brigade: Saraya Ansar al-Aqeeda, though this appears to be a former number for the group not going beyond 2016, similar to the 77th brigade once being a number for Liwa al-Hussein.

86th Brigade: Quwat Ahrar al-Iraq.

88th Brigade: A Sunni Hashd unit based in al-Alam in Salah al-Din province. The leader Sheikh Wanas al-Jabara has a Sunni Sahwa background. The group was formed earlier this year with the help of Abu Mahdi al-Mohandis.

90th Brigade: Fursan al-Jabbour. A Sunni Hashd unit affiliated with MP Ahmed al-Jabbouri, who was elected in 2014 as an ally of Nouri al-Maliki. Based in Nineveh province. For the 2018 elections, Jabbouri will be in the Civilization Alliance. As of April 2019, the unit has been rebranded as the 48th regiment. But a Hashd 90th Brigade continues to exist south of Mosul under the leadership of one Aziz Sinjar.

91st Brigade: Nawader al-Shammar: A Sunni Hashd unit affiliated with Nineveh MP Abd al-Rahim al-Shammari. In the 2018 elections, Shammari participated in Abadi's Victory Alliance. As of April 2019, the unit comprises the 69th and 70th regiments.

92nd Brigade: Sunni Hashd unit affiliated with Nineveh MP Abd al-Rahman al-Luwaizi, who withdrew from Abadi's Victory Alliance and joined the Hashd-led Fatah Alliance. Another designation for this unit is the 65th regiment.

99th Brigade: Jaysh al-Muammal. Founded by Saad Sawar, who was originally a Mahdi Army commander and subsequently became involved in militia efforts in Syria. The group receives support from Iran and is another Sadrist splinter. In February 2019, however, Saad Sawar was reportedly sentenced to two years in prison (a month and a half after his arrest), with Jaysh al-Muammal dissolved and the 99th brigade cancelled. Badr official Karim al-Nouri affirmed in a discussion on Dijlah TV in February 2019 that Sawar had been arrested—something he affirmed to Aharq al-Awsat in February 2019, as he said at the time that Saad had been arrested a month ago by the Hashd. On April 29, 2019, Ahmad Abu Haqi confirmed that Saad Sawar was out of prison but that Jaysh al-Muammal had been dissolved by order of the Hashd more than two months ago.

110th Brigade: Fayli Kurdish Badr unit, operating in Diyala.

201st Brigade: Nineveh Guards, affiliated with Atheel al-Nujaifi and linked to Turkey. The Nineveh Guards was initially not considered a part of the Hashd Shabi but has now attained recognition with salaries distributed for its members, despite tensions with other Hashd factions such as Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada. As of late 2019, it appears to have been rebranded as the 57th Brigade.

313th Brigade: Saraya al-Salam. Its most notable area of operations is the Samarra area.

314th Brigade: Saraya al-Salam.

315th Brigade: Saraya al-Salam.

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