

1 Feb 27: **U.S. Charges Pentagon Linguist in Arbil with Espionage for Providing Classified Information to Man Linked to Hezbollah.** Pentagon military linguist Mariam Thompson faces espionage charges for allegedly providing details on eight human-intelligence assets working for the U.S. Government in Iraq. A Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) affidavit said that Thompson began accessing information on classified Pentagon computer networks on December 30, 2019. The FBI arrested Thompson on February 27 in Arbil, where she worked for a Special Operations Task Force site. Thompson faces the possibility of life in prison if convicted. Thompson allegedly leaked the information to her love interest, a Lebanese national linked to Hezbollah.

2 Mar 02 - 03: **Iraqi National Intelligence Service Chief Arrests Kata'ib Hezbollah Members for Subverting his Reputation.** The Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS), led by rumored prime minister (PM) candidate Mustafa al-Kadhimi, launched a series of arrests against officials in the Iranian proxy militia and U.S.-designated terrorist group Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH), according to anonymous sources speaking to Iraqi news outlet Shafaq. The arrests occurred one day after KH's spokesperson alleged that Kadhimi cooperated with the U.S. government to kill Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani and Popular Mobilization Commission (PMC) Deputy Chairman Abu Mehdi al-Muhandis, KH's leader, on January 3.

3 Mar 04: **Kata'ib Hezbollah Spreads Disinformation Regarding Iraqi Intelligence Chief.** KH posted a statement to its website alleging that INIS Director Kadhimi helped the U.S. government kill Maj. Gen. Soleimani and PMC Deputy Chairman Muhandis. KH asserted that it will present its evidence to caretaker PM Adel Abdul Mehdi directly.

4 Mar 04 - 10: **Iraqi Government Further Restricts Gatherings following First COVID-19 Deaths.** The Health Ministry announced the country's first three coronavirus deaths on March 4. On March 7, the Ministry announced the closure of all schools until March 21. The Ministry also announced that official working hours for all government offices would be cut in half for one month. The Ministry's Crisis Cell released new guidelines on March 10 emphasizing the importance of avoiding large gatherings and sporting events. The Ministry has instituted a mandatory 14-day quarantine for all Iraqis returning from any affected country. As of March 10, Iraq has confirmed cases in every province except Ninewa, Dohuk, Diwaniyah, and Salah ad-Din.

5 Mar 05: **Iranian Proxy Leader Hadi al-Ameri Hosts Meeting of Shi'a Political Blocs to Discuss PM Designation.** Hadi al-Ameri, an Iranian proxy leader and leader of the Conquest Alliance bloc in Parliament, hosted members from the Conquest Alliance, Wisdom Trend, State of Law, and Victory Alliance at his home in Baghdad to discuss candidates for PM. The meeting failed to produce a final agreement according to Iraqi outlet Shafaq. Attendees discussed several candidates, including Basra governor Asaad al-Eidani of the Iraqi National Congress, current INIS head Mustafa al-Kadhimi, former Minister for Human Rights and State of Law member Muhammad Shi'a al-Sudani, former Minister for Planning and current advisor to President Salih, Ali al-Shukri, and former Basra Governor Adnan al-Zarfi of Victory Alliance. Several rumors claimed that Kadhimi was closest to the nomination.

6 Mar 05: **Iranian Proxy Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba Threatens U.S. Forces in Kirkuk.** Nassir al-Shammari, the Deputy Secretary General for U.S.-designated terrorist group and Iranian proxy Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN), issued a tweet threatening U.S. forces in Kirkuk Province. Shammari described U.S. troop movements in the province and warned, "We are closer to you than you think." HHN leader Akram al-Kaabi, a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, previously announced a shift of his group's operations from "defensive to offensive" in a speech on February 14.

7 Mar 05: **Iranian Proxy HHN May be Responsible for Rocket Attack Directed against U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.** Unidentified militants launched three Katyusha rockets toward the U.S. embassy from the Amanah Neighborhood, 6 km east of Baghdad's Green Zone. Two rockets landed near the U.S. Embassy compound and one rocket landed 3 km to the west near a Federal Police building in the Mansour neighborhood.

8 Mar 06: **Caretaker PM Mehdi Makes Surprise Visit to Inspect Basra Coronavirus Prevention Measures.** Caretaker PM Mehdi visited the Basra airport and the Shalamha border crossing between Basra Province and Iran. According to a statement from the prime minister's office, Mehdi then made a surprise visit to Baghdad International Airport, where he met with airport workers to ensure that coronavirus precautions were in place.

9 Mar 06: **Sistani Cancels Friday Sermon for First Time since 2003 Due to Rising COVID-19 Cases; Sadr Pushes to Reopen Imam Ali Mausoleum in Najaf.** Iraq's highest Shi'a religious authority, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, cancelled his Friday sermon due to the coronavirus. Sistani has not cancelled Friday prayers since the 2003 fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. Religious authorities in the holy city of Karbala also announced the closure of the mosque containing the Imam Hussein shrine, where Sistani's weekly sermons are delivered by a representative. In the holy city of Najaf, however, nationalist Shi'a cleric Moqtada al-Sadr personally pushed for the re-opening of the mausoleum of Imam Ali. Hundreds of Sadr's supporters gathered in the nearby town of Kufa to hear Sadr's sermon delivered by a representative.

10 Mar 06 - 07: **Kurdish Parties Seek to Reinstall Caretaker PM Mehdi as Active PM.** The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) issued a statement calling for restored confidence in caretaker PM Adel Abdul Mehdi to facilitate early elections. Taha Amin, a member of parliament from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) bloc, stated a day later that both the KDP and PUK approve of maintaining Mehdi as PM. Amin told PUK Media that the political parties will not find a better candidate than Mehdi.

11 Mar 07 - 09: **Secretary General of Iran's National Security Council Meets with Iraqi Officials, Including Possible PM Candidate.** Ali Shamkhani, the secretary-general of Iran's National Security Council, traveled to Baghdad and met separately with President Barham Salih, Parliamentary Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi, and head of INIS and rumored PM candidate Mustafa al-Kadhimi. Shamkhani also met with National Security Advisor and PMC Chairman Falih al-Fayyadh the following day. Shamkhani is the most senior Iranian official to meet with Iraqi leaders since the death of former IRGC-QF commander Qassem Soleimani on January 3. Shamkhani told Iraqi paper al-Mada that his visit aimed to strengthen bilateral relations and discuss issues of common concern for Iraq and Iran. An anonymous source told Iraqi outlet al-Sumaria that Shamkhani traveled to Baghdad "to put forward the possibility of keeping the [Caretaker] Prime Minister Adel Abdul Medhi in office until early elections [can be held]."

12 Mar 05 - 08: **Security Forces Kill Three, Injure 44 Protesters in Central Baghdad.** Protesters regained control of al-Khalani Square from riot police in central Baghdad on March 5. Unidentified security forces killed three protesters and wounded 44 others in a March 8 crackdown against the occupants of the square. The unidentified units reportedly used hunting rifles and tear gas while protesters responded by throwing stones. Some protesters retreated to nearby Wathba Square and Sinak Bridge. Wathba and Khalani Squares are adjacent to Tahrir Square, the center of the popular protest movement.

13 Mar 08: **ISIS Repels Joint Coalition-Iraqi Raid on Cave Complex near Makhmour, Killing Two American Service Members.** Approximately a dozen U.S. Marine Raiders and several Iraqi Counterterrorism Service (CTS) soldiers conducted a joint air assault on an ISIS cave complex in the Qara Chokh Mountains near Makhmour, 50 km southwest of Arbil. ISIS repelled the attack, killing two marines and wounding three Americans and one additional coalition member of unspecified nationality.

14 Mar 09 - 10: **Global Crude-oil Prices Plunge, Risking Destabilization of Iraq's Fragile Oil-based Economy.** Oil futures fell by 25 percent, the largest drop since the 1991 Gulf War, after Saudi Arabia cut its pricing and began threatening to raise output in an attempt to gain a larger share of the oil market. Simultaneously, coronavirus fears have led to the first decline in global consumer demand for oil since 2009. Nearly 90 percent of Iraq's government budget relies on oil revenues. Iraq's parliament has not yet passed its 2020 budget and may be unable to pay the salaries of public servants. The Parliamentary Finance Committee denies that Parliament will cut the salaries of public employees or retirees.

15 Mar 10: **Basra Protesters Block Entrance to Majnoon Oil Field, Protest Iranian Travelers.** Protesters burned tires to block the main entrance to Majnoon oil field in Shatt al-Arab district, eastern Basra Province. Demonstrators protested the end of their contracts with the state-owned Basra Oil Company. The first protest by disgruntled former employees seeking renewed contracts occurred outside the gates to the field on February 24. Protesters also gathered in the Basra city center to protest travelers arriving from Iran via the Shalamcha border crossing.



Major Cities	Demonstration	ISIS	Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)
Iraqi Security Forces	Iranian Proxy Militias	Possible Israeli Airstrikes	Iraqi Council of Representatives
Religious Figures	Iraqi Prime Minister and Cabinet		

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Key Takeaway: Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN), a U.S. Designated Terrorist Group and Iranian proxy, may have begun a round of escalations against U.S. personnel in Iraq. The group has escalated its rhetorical threats against U.S. persons since mid-February and may have graduated to rocket attacks directed at the U.S. embassy in Baghdad. A March 5 rocket attack does not match the pattern of previous proxy attacks and signals that HHN may be acting on its threats. Meanwhile, the combination of rising COVID-19 cases and plummeting global oil prices threatens to exacerbate the instability of Iraq's already fractious government, which relies on oil revenues for nearly 90 percent of its budget.

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