

**1** Mar 11: **Iran's Proxy Kata'ib Hezbollah Militants Fire 30 Rockets at Camp Taji, Killing Two Americans.** Iranian proxy and U.S.-designated terrorist organization Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) fired approximately 30 Katyusha rockets at Camp Taji, 30 km northwest of Baghdad, from the Rashidiyah area. The attack killed two Americans and one British soldier and wounded at least a dozen coalition troops. The attack was likely a symbolic commemoration of deceased Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) – Quds Force leader Qassem Soleimani, whose birthday is March 11.

**2** Mar 11-17: **Iraq Widens COVID-19 Shutdowns.** Provincial governments imposed curfews in Baghdad from March 17-24, in Basra Province from March 15-22, in Karbala Province from March 17-20, and in Dhi Qar Province from March 15-17. Iraq's parliament also postponed its March 11 session for two weeks to prevent parliamentary exposure. The Iraqi government halted all international and domestic flights from March 17-24. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) ordered Arbil and Sulaymaniyah provinces into lockdown on March 13 and extended the curfew through March 17. The KRG implemented a 14-day travel ban between all Kurdish provinces from March 14-28.

**3** Mar 11-16: **Iraqi Sunni Endowment Suspends Friday Prayers, Closes All Sunni Mosques.** The Sunni Endowment of Iraq released an advisory ruling on March 11 stating that the suspension of Friday prayers is acceptable to avoid the spread of COVID-19. The Endowment issued another statement on March 16 closing all Sunni mosques until further notice. Iraq's highest Shi'a religious authority, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, cancelled Friday prayers indefinitely on March 10, but the Shi'a Endowment has not yet closed all facilities.

**4** Mar 12: **ISIS Likely Responsible for Wave of Six IEDs in Baghdad.** Six IEDs detonated in the northern neighborhoods of Gherai'at and Hurriyah, the eastern neighborhoods of Sadr City and Ubaidi, and the southern neighborhoods of Ghadeer and the 5th Police District. ISIS has not claimed the attacks, which injured seven civilians, but is likely responsible. The exact targets of the bombs are unclear. A similar wave of attacks included seven IEDs in different neighborhoods of Baghdad on February 22.

**5** Mar 12: **Iranian Proxy Militias Celebrate Taji Rocket Attack.** Iranian proxy militia Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) released a statement congratulating the attackers responsible for the March 11 rocket attack on Camp Taji and called on all militias to continue attacks on American forces to drive them out of Iraq. Iranian proxy militia Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba also released a statement praising the attack and condemning the continued U.S. presence in Iraq.

**6** Mar 12: **U.S. Retaliatory Strikes Target Five Kata'ib Hezbollah Positions in Babil and Karbala Provinces.** U.S. strikes targeted five KH weapons facilities around Baghdad in response to the March 11 rocket attack on Camp Taji. The strikes hit a conventional weapons storage facility near the Karbala airport, a weapons storage site in al-Musayyib, Babil province, a rocket storage site in Nawar Ahmad, Babil province, and two weapons depots in Jurf al-Sakhr, Babil province. The U.S. strikes killed 11 members of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), likely all KH militants, as well as three soldiers in the 19th Iraqi Army Division, two soldiers in the 3rd Babil Emergency Police Regiment, and one civilian cook. The Iraqi Joint Operations Command stated that such strikes are not part of their partnership with the United States and do not respect the sovereignty of Iraq.

**7** Mar 14: **Second Rocket Attack Targets Camp Taji, Wounding Three Americans.** Unidentified militants fired approximately 33 Katyusha rockets targeting Camp Taji at approximately 11:00 am local time from concealed launch pads hidden in an industrial garage in the Abu Adham area. Iraqi security forces discovered 24 additional unfired rockets at the launch site. The attack wounded three U.S. soldiers and two Iraqi air defense personnel.

**8** Mar 15: **New Shi'a Militia Claims Responsibility for Attacks on Camp Taji.** A new Iraqi Shi'a militia group calling itself Usbat al-Thairen, the "League of Revolutionaries," claimed responsibility for the March 11 and March 14 attacks on Camp Taji. The group said the attacks were revenge for the January 3 U.S. strike that killed IRGC - Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani and Deputy PMF Chairman Abu Mehdi al-Muhandis. The group's imagery and messaging are similar to that of other Iranian proxies. Reuters reported on January 3 that Qassem Soleimani was working to establish new proxy militias to attack US forces before his death in a US strike. Usbat al-Thairen may be the result of Soleimani's efforts.

**9** Mar 15: **U.S. Military Plans to Draw Down from Three Iraqi Bases.** The U.S. began to remove forces from Iraqi bases at al-Qaim near the Syrian border, Qayyarah Airfield West south of Mosul, and K-1 Airbase in Kirkuk. A spokesperson for Operation Inherent Resolve stated that the "Coalition is repositioning troops from a few smaller bases" due to the success of Iraqi Security Forces in the fight against ISIS.

**10** Mar 16: **ISIS Detonates Motorcycle-borne IED in Tuz Khurmatu.** Likely ISIS militants detonated a motorcycle-borne IED (MBIED) in a market in Tuz Khurmatu, Salah ad-Din Province, injuring six people. ISIS last detonated a suicide vehicle-borne IED (SVBIED) in Tuz Khurmatu in November 2017, that attack killed 23 people.

**11** Mar 16: **Rocket Attack Targets Basmaya Base South of Baghdad.** Unidentified militants fired two rockets at Basmaya, an Iraqi base 45 km south of Baghdad, from an agricultural area in Nahrwan. Basmaya hosts at least 350 Spanish members of the U.S.-led anti-ISIS Coalition.

**12** Mar 17: **President Salih Unilaterally Designates Former Najaf Governor as New Prime Minister.** President Barham Salih unilaterally designated U.S. citizen and former Najaf Governor Adnan Al-Zurfi as prime minister (PM) after parliamentary blocs failed to nominate a consensus candidate within the constitutionally mandated 15-day period. Zurfi is a member of former Iraqi PM Haider al-Abadi's Victory Alliance and must now obtain approval from an absolute majority of Parliament for his cabinet within 30 days per the Iraqi constitution. If Zurfi fails, Salih must again identify a new PM within 15 days.

**13** Mar 17: **Two Rockets Land near Iraqi Presidential Compound and U.S. Embassy.** Iraq's Security Media Cell reported that unidentified militants launched two rockets from the Arab Jabour neighborhood toward the Jadriyah neighborhood. The unidentified militants fired two rockets from the Arab Jabour neighborhood, one landed in the Tigris River and one hit an abandoned building just across the river from the U.S. Embassy and Iraq's presidential compound.

**14** Mar 17: **Iranian Proxy AAH and Conquest Alliance Oppose Adnan Al-Zurfi as PM.** Asa'ib Ahl Haq (AAH) spokesperson Jawad al-Talibawi announced that the selection of Adnan Al-Zurfi as prime minister-designate is a "betrayal of the blood of the martyrs and the sacrifices of the Muhahideen," and that AAH would not support Zurfi's government formation. Talibawi signed his statement "Mujahideen of the Islamic Resistance," framing opposition to Zurfi as an element of Iran's axis of resistance. The Conquest Alliance parliamentary bloc, led by Iranian proxy leader Hadi al-Ameri, also announced that it would oppose any government formed by Zurfi because President Salih's appointed him unilaterally. The Conquest Alliance added that they "hold the President fully responsible...and [they] will take all measures to prevent this disregard for the law and the constitution."

**15** Mar 17: **Sistani Issues Fatwa Mandating Government Response to COVID-19.** Iraq's highest Shi'a religious authority, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, issued a compulsory religious ruling ordering the government to provide "all necessary supplies to protect doctors and workers who care for coronavirus patients." This ruling is equivalent in religious significance to the 2014 ruling in which Sistani called on Iraqis to mobilize against ISIS, which led to the creation of the Popular Mobilization Forces. Sistani also praised medical teams treating and fighting the spread of COVID-19, adding that anyone who gives their life in this fight is considered a martyr. Sistani's comparison of medical professionals to martyrs and his use of such an important religious ruling demonstrates that Sistani views COVID-19 as a threat to Iraq on par with that posed by ISIS when it seized Iraqi cities in 2014.

**16** Mar 17: **U.S. Provides Cautious Support to PM-Designate Zurfi.** U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tweeted support for PM-designate Adnan al-Zurfi. Pompeo wrote that Iraqis want sovereignty, basic needs, human rights, and a non-corrupt government and that Zurfi will have U.S. and international support if he pursues these goals.

**17** Mar 17: **New Iranian Proxy Militia Usbat al-Thairen Claims Basmaya Rocket Attack.** Usbat al-Thairen published a second video claiming responsibility for the March 16 attack on Basmaya Base. The militants threatened to continue attacks against the U.S. to force them to leave "horizontally" from Iraq if they do not choose to leave "vertically." The militants signaled their intention to kill U.S. forces if they do not withdraw entirely. The video claimed that the attacks on Camp Taji and Basmaya displayed the minimum of their capabilities, stating that the group has an arsenal of "long-range weapons."



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

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**Key Takeaway:** The U.S. began a planned drawdown from three Iraqi bases after Iran's proxy network in Iraq intensified its campaign of rocket attacks against U.S.-led Coalition forces. A new Shi'a militia group, likely spawned from the Iranian proxy network and calling itself Usbat al-Thairen, claimed the attacks. Iran's proxies will likely frame the U.S. drawdown as a victory in their campaign to expel U.S. forces from Iraq and may seek to gain access to these bases. Meanwhile, Iraq's president unilaterally designated a new prime minister, former Najaf Governor Adnan al-Zurfi, but may be unable to form a government due to open opposition from the Iranian proxy-led Conquest Alliance. Widening government shutdowns due to COVID-19 may further elongate the government formation process.

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