

1 Jun 17: US Secretary of State Holds Phone Call with Iraqi Foreign Minister. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo held a phone call with Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein to discuss the ongoing US-Iraqi Strategic Dialogue, according to an official readout from the State Department. Neither participant revealed any new initiatives, but Pompeo and Hussein agreed that the Strategic Dialogue, which began on June 11, presents an opportunity for the two countries to strengthen ties.

2 Jun 17-18: Turkish Military Launches Offensive "Operation Claw-Tiger" inside Northern Iraq. The Turkish National Defense Ministry announced the launch of "Operation Claw-Tiger" in northern Iraq targeting the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a US-designated terrorist organization. The PKK uses the Qandil Mountains in northernmost Iraq for sanctuary and planning. The Turkish military airlifted forces as far as 15 km across the northern Turkish-Iraqi border in Dohuk Province and mobilized additional fixed wing aircraft, helicopters, artillery, and armed and unarmed drones. The operation follows Operation Claw-Eagle, a major air operation targeting the PKK that started June 14. An anonymous Turkish official told Reuters on June 18 that Turkey intends to increase its presence by building small, temporary bases in rural mountainous terrain less than 15 km inside Iraq's northern border. Turkey already maintains 10 such bases in that area.

3 Jun 17-18: Iran and Turkey Continue Likely Coordinated Operation against Iraqi Kurdish Targets near Northeastern Iraqi Border. Turkish airstrikes and Iranian artillery struck PKK targets approximately 220 km east of the Turkish military's main effort for Operation Claw-Tiger in northern Iraq. Iranian artillery first started striking Kurdish militant sites near Haji Omeran, near the Iraq-Iranian border in Arbil Province, on June 16. The Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI), an Iranian Kurdistan separatist group based in Iraq, claimed Iranian artillery is targeting KDPI sites. The Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs separately summoned Iranian Ambassador Eraj Masjedi and Turkish Ambassador Fatih Yildiz in Baghdad on June 18. The Foreign Ministry presented each ambassador with formal notes condemning anti-PKK operations across northern Iraq as a violation of Iraqi sovereignty.

4 Jun 17: New Shi'a Militia Group Claims Responsibility for Spate of Recent Rocket Attacks on Camp Taji, the US Embassy, and Baghdad International Airport. Usbat al-Ha'iren, one of the seven new "shadow militias" that have emerged since the death of Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani, released a 3-minute video showing projectile strikes targeting US facilities in Iraq. The footage, all recorded at night, shows the rockets striking near Camp Taji on June 8, the US Embassy in Baghdad on June 11, and the Baghdad International Airport on June 16. The video also called the US Embassy the "den of espionage" and warned Iraqi security personnel to stay away from US persons.

5 Jun 17: Iranian Central Bank Delegation Secures Agreement to Purchase Non-sanctioned Goods inside Iraq. Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi received Iranian Central Bank Governor Abdul Nasser Hemmati in Baghdad to discuss financial and economic cooperation between Baghdad and Tehran. Hemmati also met with Iraqi Central Bank Governor Ali Mohsen al-Alaq as well as Iraqi Finance Minister and Kadhimi confidant Ali Allawi. Hemmati announced following the meetings that he reached an agreement with his Iraqi counterparts to reduce Iraqi energy debts to Iran in exchange for allowing Iran to purchase non-sanctioned food, medicine, and other basic goods inside Iraq. US-imposed maximum pressure sanctions prevent Iran from receiving foreign currency for gas and electricity, so Iran seeks to use its financial resources inside Iraq to purchase Iraqi goods in lieu of direct debt payments. The deal essentially allows Iran to bypass US sanctions, permitting Iraq to pay off energy debts by trading goods to Iran.

6 Jun 17: Outgoing Head of the Middle East Broadcasting Network Warns that Iraqi Communications and Media Commission Continues to Suppress Western Media. Alberto Fernandez, the outgoing head of the US-funded Middle East Broadcasting Network (MBN), warned via Twitter that the Iraqi Communications and Media Commission (CMC) had temporarily shut down MBN radio transmitters in Baghdad, Karbala, and Basra and is threatening to seize the US government-owned media equipment. Fernandez warned that many CMC employees are loyal to Iran. The CMC has repeatedly antagonized international outlets, including fining and suspending the media license of Reuters in May 2020 for reporting on Iraq's rising coronavirus case numbers.

7 Jun 17-23: Iraq Fails to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 as Cases Reach All-time Highs. COVID-19 cases have surged across Iraq with the number of positive cases increasing seven-fold since the end of Ramadan on May 23 and repeatedly setting single-day-outbreak records. The Iraqi Health Ministry blamed the spike on a "lack of public adherence." Iraqi doctors and medical professionals are experiencing the highest outbreak rate. Between June 10 and 19, the number of Iraqi doctors that tested positive for COVID-19 doubled, raising the total to 592 infected doctors according to the Washington Post. Anonymous medical professionals complained that those who experience COVID-19 symptoms are being "ordered back to work," ignoring the risk of spread. Iraqi Speaker of Parliament Mohammed al-Halbousi stated that 20 members of parliament contracted the disease and that Iraq's parliament, the Council of Representatives (CoR), may suspend sessions as a result.

8 Jun 18: Militants Target US Embassy with Fifth Rocket Attack in Ten Days. Unidentified militants, likely Iranian proxy militias, fired four Katyusha rockets toward the US Embassy in Baghdad's Green Zone. The attack caused no damage or injuries. An unidentified unit of the Iraqi Security Forces later discovered a launch platform 10 km to the southeast near the al-Rashid Base. Kadhimi issued a statement via Twitter calling such attacks "unacceptable" and warned against militant groups trying to undermine the stability and future of Iraq.

9 Jun 20: US-designated Terror Group Condemns US-Iraqi Dialogue and Issues Set of Demands to Remove US Troops. Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba (HHN), a US-designated terrorist organization and Iranian proxy militia, issued a detailed statement condemning the US-Iraqi Strategic Dialogue. HHN argued that Iraqi negotiators are weak and submissive to the will of the United States. HHN issued a set of demands that include the formation of a monitoring and evaluation committee to observe the Strategic Dialogue by the Council of Representatives, a "deterrent action" against Turkey for violating Iraqi sovereignty by Prime Minister Kadhimi, and the rapid removal of all foreign forces from Iraqi territory by executive order.

10 Jun 20: US-designated Terrorist Accuses the US of Trying to Spark an Iraqi Civil War. Qais al-Khazali, a US-designated terrorist and leader of the US-designated terrorist group Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq issued an official statement accusing the US of trying to foment civil conflict. Khazali argued that the US is trying to replace Iraqi officials under the guise of an anti-corruption drive to replace them with officials responsible for "rampant sectarianism." Khazali alleges the US is taking steps to restart an Iraqi civil war.

11 Jun 22: Militants Fire Single Rocket North of Baghdad toward US Personnel. Unidentified militants, likely Iranian proxy militias, fired one Katyusha rocket, north of Abu Ghraib in western Baghdad targeting US personnel near the Baghdad International Airport. An unidentified Iraqi Security Forces unit discovered a wooden platform at the launch site. The attack caused no injuries or damage.

12 Jun 22: Prime Minister's Office Announces Plan for Marginal Salary Reform.

The Iraqi Prime Minister's Office (PMO) released copies of a memo ordering the end to duplicated pensions paid out to former political prisoners and Saddam-era refugees. Kadhimi stipulated that pensions can only be paid to those who reside in Iraq, head a household, and do not exceed a 1 million-dinar income. It remains to be seen if this memo will be enforced. Kadhimi further promised to reduce bloated public salary funds but received pushback from other elected officials and has yet to implement such reforms.

13 Jun 17-23: Iranian Military Attaché Stresses Benefit of Intelligence Sharing Apparatus Composed of US Rivals. The Iranian military attaché to Iraq, Brigadier General Mostafa Moradian, met with Lieutenant General Abdul Amir Rashid Yarallah, the Chief of Staff of the Iraqi Army, in Baghdad on June 23. Moradian pledged to support the Iraqi military in the fight against ISIS and to continue to develop the Intelligence Quartet- an intelligence sharing partnership based in Baghdad consisting of Iran, Iraq, Russia, and Syria founded in 2015. Yarallah is under pressure to maintain relationships between Iranian forces and US forces and last spoke by phone with the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley on June 17.

14 Jun 22- 23: New Shi'a Militia Group Issues Warnings and Claims it Will Shoot Down US Aircraft. Ashab al-Kahf, an Iraqi Shi'a militia group that emerged following the death of IRGC Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani issued a series of messages on Telegram. In one post, the group threatened to launch shoulder-fired, surface-to-air missiles at US military aircraft in Iraq. The group also claimed it had aborted an attack on convoy carrying supplies for US personnel in Iraq because it learned the convoy had a connection to a Shi'a company supported by the Iranian proxy Badr Organization.



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

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Key Takeaway: Converging challenges to the Iraqi state threaten to deny Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi the political support he needs to improve Iraq's security and economy. Kadhimi must improve domestic stability in areas like service provision, fiscal policy, and security in order to secure leverage for the second round of the US-Iraq Strategic Dialogue scheduled for July 2020. Kadhimi is facing increasing anti-US attacks by Iran's Iraqi proxies, a surge of COVID-19 cases, and increasing opposition to the financial reforms necessary to keep the Iraqi economy afloat. Iranian officials are pressuring Kadhimi in high level meetings to accept key Iranian demands that support Iran's objectives in Iraq, such as purchasing essential goods inside Iraq with foreign currency to circumvent the US-imposed maximum pressure sanctions.

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