

A SURVEY OF ARMED GROUPS IN IRAQ

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Ansar Al-Islam (Supporters of Islam). This is an extremist Kurdish group purportedly linked to Al-Qaeda. It is an offshoot of Jund al-Islam (Soldiers of Islam, a.k.a. Islamic Brigade) and has been engaged in fighting with the PUK since September 2001. Led by Mullah Krekar (a.k.a. Najm al-Din Faraj Ahmad), the military commander of Ansar al-Islam who is under house arrest in Norway. Krekar is the former military commander for the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan; he trained in Afghanistan. Krekar has denied any links to Osama bin Laden (see "RFE/RL Iraq Report," 29 August 2003) but bin Laden sent his greeting to the group in an audiotaped message in October 2003 (see "RFE/RL Iraq Report," 20 October 2003).

The group has been linked to the 19 August bombing of UN headquarters in Baghdad. Reports began surfacing in September 2003 that the group had split (see "RFE/RL Iraq Report," 4 and 15 September 2003). There were widespread reports that the leadership changed in late 2003 and is now headed by Abu Abdallah al-Shafi'i (a.k.a. Warba Holiri al-Kurdi) who reportedly said in September that the group would change its name -- but declined to announce the name, London's "Al-Hayat" reported on 5 September 2003 (see Ansar Al-Sunnah below).

Reportedly linked to the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG), led by Mullah Ali Bapir. Al-Shafi'i criticized the KIG in September 2003 for aiding U.S. forces in their attempt to crack down on Ansar militiamen. Al-Shafi'i added that other mujahedin groups inside Iraq had agreed to join up with Ansar Al-Islam.

The group claimed responsibility for the 1 February 2004 simultaneous attacks on Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) offices in Irbil, and the 17 March 2004 bombing of the Mount Lebanon Hotel in Baghdad. The group also claims to have participated in the April 2004 clashes against coalition forces in Al-Fallujah. The U.S. State Department designated the group a foreign terrorist organization in March (see "RFE/RL Iraq Report," 26 March 2004).

Ansar Al-Sunnah Army. Group formed in autumn 2003 by members of Ansar Al-Islam and other radical elements. Described itself in a statement to London-based "Al-Quds al-Arabi" published on 4 November 2003 as: "A group of mujahedin, people with knowledge, political shrewdness, and military expertise as well as those who have long experience and history in administering the Islamic ideological conflict against the infidels, brought several groups and various jihadist factions together." In a 21 February statement published in London's "Al-Quds al-Arabi," the group claims members from the ranks of clerics, tribal sheikhs, and the former Iraqi military. It claims to have fighters throughout Iraq "implementing a practical nonimported program, based on a clear view of the arena and the instructions of the true shari'a [Islamic law]." Claimed responsibility for the February 2004 simultaneous bombings of PUK and KDP headquarters in Irbil, the 14 October 2003 bombing of the Turkish Embassy in Baghdad, the 20 November 2003 bombing of the PUK office in Kirkuk, as well as numerous mortar attacks on coalition forces. Reportedly headed by Abu Abdallah al-Hasan bin Mahmud. Posts monthly lists of its attacks on coalition forces at <http://www.ansar-sonnah.8m.com>

Ansar Al-Sunnah purportedly posted a statement to the Global Islamic Media Center website on 22 March 2004 denying any link to the National Front for the Liberation of Iraq. The latter claimed that a number of groups had joined its umbrella organization for armed groups. Ansar Al-Sunnah said in its statement that it also doubted other Islamist groups in Iraq, namely Ansar Al-Islam and Muhammad's

Army support the National Front for the Liberation of Iraq, because it has made statements that appear contradictory to Islamic law.

Other groups that fall under the Ansar Al-Sunnah umbrella include the Al-Shahid Aziz Taha Squad, Al-Tawhid Battalion, Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas Group, Asad Al-Islam Brigade, the Hanifah Al-Nu'man Brigades, the Abdallah bin al-Zubayr Squad, the Mu'ad ibn Jabal Unit, and the Yasin al-Bahr regiment.

Faylaq Badr (Badr Corps). The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)'s armed wing. Hadi al-Amiri is the Faylaq Badr's secretary-general. The corps was reportedly founded in 1983, just one year after Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim established SCIRI. The corps was organized into units that included an infantry, armored, artillery, anti-aircraft, and commando units, according to the SCIRI website (<http://www.sciri.btinternet.co.uk>). SCIRI, supported and funded by Iran, used former Iraqi military officers and commanders to train its fighters and claimed to have some 10,000 militiamen inside Iraq on the eve of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) ordered all militias, except for the Kurdish peshmerga, to disband in spring 2003, but the militia remains armed by all accounts. SCIRI head and Iraqi Governing Council member Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, who took over the leadership following al-Hakim's assassination in August 2003, said that the Faylaq Badr would disarm and change its focus (see "RFE/RL Iraq Report," 21 September 2003). However, al-Hakim insisted that Badr could play a contributing role to the security of Iraq in November (see "RFE/RL Iraq Report," 20 November 2003). Media reports have since indicated that the Faylaq Badr is actively working with the Iraqi Interior Ministry to "track down terrorist elements" attempting to enter the country (see "RFE/RL Iraq Report," 27 March 2004). Meanwhile, U.S. military and civilian leaders in Iraq continue to call for the group to disband and join the regular Iraqi army (see "RFE/RL Iraq Report," 13 March 2004).

Shahid Al-Sadr Force. The armed wing of the Al-Da'wah party, this group is highly secretive and its membership is unknown. It is not thought to be currently militarily active. The force was established in 1979. Many militiamen were based in the southern Iraqi marshes, as well as in Iraqi Kurdistan and neighboring Iran, after Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein declared in March 1980 that membership in Al-Da'wah was punishable by death. Hussein led a massive crackdown on Al-Da'wah activists in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Al-Da'wah claims to have lost 77,000 members in fighting against the Hussein regime. Some 40,000 Shi'ites were deported by the Ba'athist regime beginning in the 1970s after being labeled "Iranians."

Islamic Movement of Kurdistan. Established in the mid-1980s and now led by Mullah Ali Abd al-Aziz Halabji, this group set up a governing body in the Halabja region of northern Iraq in 1998, but reportedly does not impose strict Islamic law. Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Rahim, a member of the group's consultative council, told London-based "Al-Sharq al-Awsat" in an interview published on 5 August 2003 that the movement's leader was unjustly arrested by U.S. forces in Halabjah. He claimed that Mullah Abd al-Aziz is a member of the former Iraqi opposition who has since called for "means other than weapons" to further the movement's agenda. Asked about reports of links to Ansar Al-Islam, Abd al-Rahim said, "The Ansar Al-Islam group members were not happy with our new [nonviolent] policy. They are vehemently opposed to the stand of [Abd al-Aziz] on cooperation with the provincial [Kurdistan] government and the movement's participation in municipal elections." Asked whether the movement will disarm its fighters, he said, "Every party in the world should reconsider its stands and policies every now and then, and this applies to us.... We believe that our priorities at this current stage are limited to preaching

and guidance. And I assure you that we have no training or other camps. All our activities are now confined to party organizational affairs." Has received aid from Iran, the United States (after 1998), and possibly Saudi Arabia.

Kurdistan Islamic Group. Established by Ali Bapir in May 2001. Bapir is a former member of the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan. The group reportedly receives funding from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. It has been linked to Ansar Al-Islam but released a statement on 11 October 2003 in "Komal" denying that any such links existed. Bapir was interviewed in "Komal" in January 2003. He said: "Our policy is that we enter into fraternity and cooperation with all Islamic groups. We seek such fraternal relations with Islamic parties and organizations, Islamist figures, and groups that follow a Salafi tradition or a Sufi or a scientific tradition. In the Islamic Group, we believe that the group must be open-minded and seek fraternity with all those who call or act for Islam. If we see a mistake, we will try to correct it through dialogue and by creating a fraternal atmosphere."

Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas. A group affiliated with Ansar Al-Sunnah. It tends to attack coalition vehicles in Baghdad.

Al-Mujahidin Brigades. Al-Taff is a reference to the battle in which Imam al-Husayn was killed. The group reportedly sent a videotape to Al-Jazeera television, broadcast on 10 May 2004, claiming that all those working for Arab and foreign companies in Al-Basrah, and specifically for Kuwaiti companies, would be targeted for kidnappings and killings.

Hizballah (Party of God). Shi'ite group not related to Lebanese Hizballah. Appears to have only a few hundred followers.

Imam Al-Mahdi Army. Armed group of radical Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's Jama'ah al-Sadr al-Thani (Al-Sadr Group II). The size of his "army" is estimated to range between 6,000 and 10,000 men, and the cleric claims that both Sunnis and Shi'a have joined his movement from all over Iraq. Most are young, disenfranchised Shi'ites who have no previous experience and are simply attracted by the cleric's charisma and firebrand style of preaching. Al-Sadr is the son of the late Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, who was gunned down, presumably by Saddam Hussein's men, along with Muqtada's two brothers, in 1999. It was recently reported in the Arab press that criminal elements and pro-regime fighters have joined al-Sadr's militia. The "army" is named after the 12th Shi'ite imam, Mahdi. Shi'ites await his return on judgment day.

Usbat Al-Huda (The daughter of Guidance). This group also issued a statement in the above-mentioned Usbat Al-Huda videotape. The group of women fighters pledges loyalty to Muqtada al-Sadr and threatens suicide attacks against the U.S. forces in Iraq.

Resistance Front. This group is opposed to the U.S.-led occupation and all laws, agreements, decisions, treaties, flags, and slogans resulting from it, according to a 9 May 2004 statement read on the Voice of Mujahedin Radio. The group also reportedly objects to the role of UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, but does not object to a role by the United Nations in preparing for general nationwide elections in Iraq. Claims the U.S. killed hundreds of Iraqis detained in the country.

Iraqi Organization of Liberation. London's "Al-Sharq al-Awsat" reported on 4 May

2004 that this is a phony group. The report says the group had offered \$2 million to whoever kills or arrests an Iraqi Governing Council member or a member of the interim government. The group also reportedly offered \$5 million to anyone who kills high-profile Iraqi leaders Mas'ud Barzani, Ahmad Chalabi, Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, Jalal Talabani, or Muhammad Bahr al-Ulum. The group also reportedly promised to send the perpetrator of the above-mentioned acts abroad with his family.

Kata'ib Al-Zilzal Al-Mujahidah (Jihadist Earthquake Brigades). No information available.

Kata'ib Salah Al-Din (Salah Al-Din Brigades). This group has claimed responsibility for attacks on at least seven Iraqi policemen in late January and early February 2004. Operates in the Al-Ramadi area.

Kata'ib Al-Mujahidin (Mujahidin Brigades). Operating in Kirkuk, this group held its first conference in late February. Threatened Iraqi police, Iraqi Civil Defense Forces, the Iraqi Army, and Kurdish parties of the dire consequences of hunting down the mujahedin and impeding their actions. Group has also threatened to target security checkpoints and to kill collaborators.

Jama'at Al-Tawhid wa Al-Jihad (Unification and Jihad Group). Reportedly led by fugitive Jordanian terrorist Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi. Often posts statements by al-Zarqawi on jihadist websites.

Jaysh Al-Mahdi (Imam Al-Mahdi Army). Armed wing of anti-U.S. Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's "Al-Sadr II Group." Estimated to have at least 6,000 members.

Jund Al-Sham. (God's Wrath). An anticoalition Shi'ite group based in Al-Basrah. Fought British troops in late March 2004.

Tha'r Allah (Vengeance Detachments). An armed group operating in Baghdad and Tikrit. Claimed in a 1 November 2003 statement that it was hunting down and killing supporters of the Saddam Hussein regime, specifically those who worked in the security and intelligence services "who are still free and who are doing as they like in all areas of Iraq." Membership reportedly comes from "all the factions" of Iraqi people and the "sons of the mass graves." Criticized the coalition and Iraqi Governing Council for not bringing former regime members to justice. "Everybody was busy with the spoils and forgot that there are thousands of criminals and killers who were behind the assassination of Ayatollah al-Hakim...and Aqilah al-Hashimi, member of the Governing Council."

Mafariz Al-Intiqam (Martyrs Brigades of the Hamas Movement). Reportedly not active in Iraq, though at least one leaflet attributed to the group circulated in the Iraqi capital in April and May 2004. The leaflet sent greetings to the Iraqis from "your faithful mujahedin brothers" in Palestine, London's "Al-Sharq al-Awsat" reported on 1 May. The leaflet said in part: "Be informed that our martyrdom-seeking brigades will return the favors [unspecified] to the sons of this dear country and that, God willing, victory is our ally."

Sarkhi Hassani. A Shi'ite cleric who claims to have an armed group. The number of members is unknown.

Mujahedin Allahu Akbar (God is Great Fighters). This group distributed leaflets in

Al-Fallujah in early March 2004 claiming that suspected Al-Qaeda terrorist Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi was killed in the northern Iraqi mountains near Al-Sulaymaniyah during a U.S. raid in the area last year, AP reported on 4 March. While the leaflet did not provide the specific date for the alleged U.S. raid or for al-Zarqawi's purported death, it is presumably referring to the March bombings of an Ansar Al-Islam stronghold in northern Iraq just days into Operation Iraqi Freedom (see "RFE/RL Iraq Report," 25 March 2003). The leaflets further claimed that a letter held by coalition officials in Iraq and purportedly written by al-Zarqawi (see "RFE/RL Iraq Report," 12 February 2004) is a fake.

Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party. This group supports former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. The Political and Publishing Information Organ of the party Issued a statement published in Amman's "Al-Majd" on 3 May 2004 warning the coalition against adopting regional and tribal security formulas based on assimilating and employing military commanders from the "disbanded" Iraqi Army to lead segments of the "new army." The statement warns that any former Iraqi officer that works with the coalition places himself on the list of legitimate targets for the Iraqi resistance. Also claims to have issued a death sentence on Iraqi Governing Council members to be carried out even if they resign after 30 June 2004 for being "traitors of the nation and the people."

Fedayeen Saddam (Saddam's Martyrs). A paramilitary group founded by Saddam Hussein's son Uday in 1995. Uday briefly lost control of the organization to his younger brother, Qusay, after he transferred vast amounts of weapons to the Fedayeen without the knowledge of their father. The punishment did not last long, however, and control was soon passed back to Uday. The Fedayeen operated completely outside the law under Hussein's regime. A prewar estimate by globalsecurity.org set its membership at 18,000-40,000 troops, including a notorious death squad known to have publicly beheaded female family members of those opposed to the regime. The Fedayeen vowed to avenge the deaths of Uday and Qusay at the hands of coalition forces and are suspected of joining up with a number of Iraqi militant groups to launch attacks on Iraqi and coalition forces in recent months. French journalist Alexandre Jordanov said that he was taken hostage by Fedayeen Saddam militiamen (see "RFE/RL Newsline," 15 April 2004).

Al-Qiyadah Al-Amah li Jaysh Al-Iraq (General Command of the Iraqi Army). This group is led by Major General "Qaysar Jasim Hamid Ajjaj al-Qaysi," who hails from Al-Miqdadiyah and is a 1963 graduate of the Military College. He is also reportedly a leader in the National Salvation Movement.

London-based "Al-Zaman" reported on 16 February 2004 that the group has declared itself the nucleus of an Iraqi army. The group claims to have reorganized the Iraqi army that served under Saddam Hussein and works to defend the Iraqi peoples' rights and the country's unity. It supports human rights, democracy, and free elections, and calls for strong relations with the Arab states.

Islamic Jihad Brigades of Muhammad's Army. An apparent umbrella organization for the following groups: The Abdallah bin Iyad Brigade; the Al-Husayn Brigade; the Al-Abbas Brigade, the Bani-Hashim Moon; the Abdallah bin Jahsh bin Rikab Al-Asadi Brigade; the Al-Walid bin Al-Mughirah Brigade; the Umar Al-Faruq Brigade; the Al-Mahdi Al-Muntazar Brigade; and the Ja'far Al-Tayyar Brigade.

This group claimed responsibility for the 19 August bombing of UN headquarters in Baghdad and for shelling coalition positions, including the Republican Palace compound where the CPA is headquartered. Wants the coalition to withdraw from

Iraq and leave the fate of the country to Iraqis. Has accused the coalition of trying to drive a wedge between Sunnis and Shi'a.

It also issued a videotaped message in late August to Beirut's LBC satellite television warning all Islamic and neighboring countries against interfering in Iraq's internal affairs. "The Islamic Jihad Brigades of Muhammad's Army has decided to send you a warning through the destruction of your embassies in Iraq [if] you send any military or civilian forces to loot the resources of our great country," the speaker in the videotape said. The group also vowed to avenge for the 29 August 2003 assassination of Shi'ite Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim. The speaker in the videotape also outlined "instructions" of the group's higher command, led by a person identified only as Abu Islam (father of Islam). The instructions assigned responsibilities to two Islamic militant groups: The Al-Husayn Brigade was assigned the task of protecting the Al-Hawzah Shi'ite seminary in Al-Najaf as well as the holy shrines in that city and in Karbala. The Al-Walid bin Mughirah Brigade was assigned "the honor" of destroying embassies of coalition forces in Iraq. The statement refers to the U.S. as the "Disunited States of America" and the "enemy of God and humanity."

It also claimed in a February 2004 leaflet that it will set up governing councils and hold elections once the coalition withdraws from Iraq. Also threatened to kill any looters in Al-Fallujah and said Iraqis cooperating with the coalition should leave Iraq or face arrest by the group.

Eighteen resistance groups signed a joint statement published in London's "Quds Press" on 2 May 2004 calling on U.S. forces to withdraw from Al-Fallujah within 48 hours or face attack by force. The statement claimed to have killed 3,000 occupation forces in April and to have destroyed 30 planes, dozens of tanks, and other military vehicles. The statement also claimed that the coalition is attempting to hide its losses from the media, contending that some 25,000 coalition troops have been killed since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The statement also criticized the Iraqi Governing Council and threatened to punish its members, singling out Ahmad Chalabi and Muwaffaq al-Rubay'i. The signatories to the statement were: The Patriotic Army for the Liberation of Iraq; The God is Great Forces; The forces of Muhammad, Messenger of God (Sunni Arab fighters); the Asad Allah Forces; the Iraqi Islamic Resistance Battalions; The Salafi Mujahedin Group Battalions; the Battalions of the Clans of the Iraqi People; the Iraqi Islamic Army; the Ajnad Al-Islam Group Battalions; the Victorious Sect Army; the Ansar Al-Sunnah Army; Al-Qari'ah Organization Battalions; the Free Men of Iraq Army; the Abd Al-Qadir Al-Kilani Army; the Victor Salah Al-Din Battalions; the Black Banners Army; the Ababil Army; and the Martyr Ahmad Yasin Brigades.

On 28 February 2004, London's "Al-Hayat" reported that the Salah Al-Din Brigades and the Jihadist Earthquake Brigades had issued leaflets in Al-Ramadi and pasted the leaflets to the city's mosque claiming responsibility for killing two Iraqi informers and threatening to kill anyone who provided U.S. forces with information on resistance groups way out of the current situation," "Kommersant-Daily" reported on 29 May.