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Country Report on Terrorism 2021 - Chapter 5 - Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH)

Aka: AAH; Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq min Al-Iraq; Asaib al Haq; Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haqq; League of the Righteous; Khazali Network; Khazali Special Group; Qazali Network; the People of the Cave; Khazali Special Groups Network; Al-Tayar al-Risali; the Missionary Current

Description: Designated as an FTO on January 10, 2020, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) — led by Qays and Laith al-Khazali — is an Iran-backed, militant organization. AAH remains ideologically aligned with Iran and loyal to its supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The group seeks to promote Iran's political and religious influence in Iraq, maintain Shia control over Iraq, and expel any remaining western military forces from the country.

Activities: AAH has claimed responsibility for more than 6,000 attacks against U.S. and Defeat-ISIS Coalition forces since its creation in 2006. The group has carried out highly sophisticated operations, including mortar attacks on an American base, the downing of a British helicopter, and an attack on the Karbala Provincial Headquarters that resulted in the capture and murder of five U.S. soldiers.

In 2019, two 107-mm rockets were fired at the Taji military training complex, where U.S. personnel provide divisional training. Iraqi security forces arrested two individuals assessed to be members of AAH in connection with the attack.

Also in 2019, AAH members opened fire on a group of protestors trying to set fire to the group's office in the city of Nasiriya, killing at least six. In February 2021, AAH launched a major rocket attack on the U.S. base in Erbil, in Iraq's Kurdistan Region, followed by additional rocket attacks on Balad Air Base.

Strength: AAH membership is estimated at 10,000.

Location/Area of Operation: Iraq, Syria

Funding and External Aid: AAH receives funding, logistical support, training, and weapons from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) and Hizballah. AAH also receives funding through illicit activities such as kidnapping for ransom, smuggling, and "taxing"/extortion of economic activities in areas where the group is dominant.