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December 14, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to express our concerns over the recent drone strike against the Green Zone in Baghdad on November 6, 2021, targeting the residence of Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi. While the Prime Minister survived the assassination attempt, seven of his staff were reportedly injured.¹ When Kadhimi appeared on television for the first time to address the nation after the attack, his left hand was shown as bandaged.² At the time of this writing, the State Department, and in particular its press release in the immediate aftermath of the attack, failed to mention by name the actor(s) with the known capabilities, intentions, and motivations to carry out this operation: the Islamic Republic of Iran and/or its network of Shiite militias in Iraq.³

Reports indicate that Kataib Hezbollah and Asaib Ahl al-Haq had jointly carried out the strike on Kadhimi's residence.⁴ Kataib Hezbollah and Asaib Ahl al-Haq are both on the U.S. Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) list maintained by the State Department.⁵ Both retain ties to Tehran, and both groups were affiliated with the pro-Iran "Fatah alliance" which was founded in 2018⁶ and underperformed in the October Iraqi elections.⁷

The day after the strike, the Commander of Iran's sanctioned Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds-Force (IRGC-QF), General Esmail Qa'ani, travelled to Baghdad.⁸ Iran continues to support Iraqi Shiite militias as part of its quest to puncture, subvert, and dominate the Iraqi state and export its Islamic Revolution. The U.S. government has previously sanctioned and exposed Iran's tentacles in Iraq, including its weapons smuggling and money laundering operations and should continue to do so.⁹

American passivity and indifference to an assassination attempt by Iranian proxies is exceptionally troubling and will only lead to greater escalation in the future. Tehran and its militias in Iraq possess significant drone capabilities,¹⁰ capabilities that need to be addressed and countered regardless of the administration's quest to return to talks and re-enter what we believe to be a flawed nuclear agreement with Tehran. Already in 2021, Iran-backed forces in Iraq have been behind an uptick of drone attacks against positions associated with the U.S. or coalition forces in Iraq. These include a strike against an alleged CIA hanger in Erbil, Iraq in April and the Baghdad airport this June.¹¹

¹ <https://www.npr.org/2021/11/06/1053277516/iraq-prime-minister-assassination-attempt>

² <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2021/11/6/22767683/iraq-attack-prime-minister-mustafa-al-kadhimi-survives-assassination-attempt>

³ <https://www.state.gov/condemning-the-reported-attack-targeting-the-residence-of-prime-minister-kadhimi/>

⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-backed-militia-behind-attack-iraqi-pm-sources-2021-11-08/>

⁵ <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

⁶ <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/01/iranian-backed-iraqi-militias-form-coalition-ahead-of-parliamentary-elections.php>

⁷ <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iraq-elections-fatah-iran-ally-blow-power>

⁸ <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2021/11/08/Iran-Quds-Force-chief-meets-Iraqi-PM-in-Baghdad-after-assassination-attempt-Report>

⁹ <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2020/03/30/treasury%20sanctions-quds%20force-fronts-in-iraq%20>

¹⁰ <https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/iraqi-militias-parade-iranian-uav>

¹¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/28/politics/us-airstrikes-new-iran-drone-attacks-avoid-surveillance/index.html>

We ask that your administration respond to the following questions.

1. What Iran-backed groups, militias, and organizations exist in Iraq that have not yet been subject to sanctions?
2. What is the Biden administration's policy towards countering Iran in the region and how does Iraq fit into that strategy?
3. Will you help the Iraqi government work toward attribution of the attack, and will you make the evidence and conclusions from any investigations available to the public?
4. If Iran or its network of proxy militias are involved, what sort of punitive action will you pursue?
5. What steps is the administration taking to counter the drone armies of Iran and the Iraqi Shiite militias?

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



BRYAN STEIL
Member of Congress



JOE WILSON
Member of Congress



BRIAN BABIN, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



ANDREW S. CLYDE
Member of Congress