



Ali Mussa Daqduq (Abu Hussein Sajed): portrait of the commander of Hezbollah's military network in the Syrian Golan Heights ("the Golan Portfolio")

March 17, 2019

Overview

► The IDF spokesman recently exposed the existence of a military network which Hezbollah started to establish in the Syrian Golan Heights since the summer of 2018 (following the Syrian army's takeover of the Golan Heights from the rebels, with Hezbollah operatives alongside the Syrian army¹). The network includes dozens of operatives residing in the villages of the northern Golan Heights who are also equipped with weapons. The network structure, referred to as "the Golan Portfolio," is still at the first stages of establishing its presence near the Israeli border and has not yet reached operational capability. Its purpose is to allow Hezbollah to deal with Israel on the Golan Heights front in times of emergency. The network is supported by Hezbollah's "South Headquarters" in southern Syria, which assists it in various areas, such as fire support, logistics, and intelligence (IDF Spokesman's website, March 13, 2019).

► **The military network in the Syrian Golan Heights is headed by a senior Hezbollah operative, Ali Mussa Abbas Daqduq, codenamed Abu Hussein Sajed, from the village of Ayta al-Sha'ab in southern Lebanon. Starting in 1983, he held a series of operational positions in the fighting against the IDF in southern Lebanon and then in the security zone. In 1988-1990, he participated in the internal Lebanese power struggles. In 2006, he was sent to Iraq to assist the Shiite militias in their fighting against the US army and the coalition countries. He was captured by the Americans, imprisoned, handed over to the Iraqi administration, released and returned to Lebanon (where he returned to routine military activity in Hezbollah). According to the IDF spokesman's report, after his return, he was placed in charge of the training of Hezbollah's Special Forces until 2018, when he was appointed commander of the "Golan Portfolio."** He carries out his position as commander of the Hezbollah network in the Syrian Golan Heights **from Beirut while at the same time, an operational headquarters in Damascus handles the network operatives**

¹ See the ITIC's Information Bulletin from July 11, 2018: "Hezbollah and Iran-handled Shiite militias are integrated into the Syrian army in its campaign to take control of south Syria."

on the **Golan Heights front** mainly by intelligence collection (IDF Spokesman's website, March 13, 2019).



Right: Ali Mussa Daqduq (Abu Hussein Sajed), commander of Hezbollah's network in the Syrian Golan Heights (IDF Spokesman's website, March 13, 2019). Left: Poster about Ali Mussa Daqduq which appeared on the website of the American forces in Iraq following Daqduq's capture in 2007 (photo: www.usf_iraq.com)

Ali Mussa Daqduq, as well as other Hezbollah operatives, **were handled in Iraq by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Qods Force in missions of military support of the Shiite militias who carried out guerrilla warfare against the US army and the coalition countries.** As part of this activity, Daqduq assisted in establishing "special groups" of Shiite operatives who were trained by Iran in activating sophisticated IEDs which inflicted many losses on the American forces in Iraq. Ali Daqduq took part in the activity of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH, "the League of the Righteous"). Among other operations, he participated in an attack against a provincial headquarters in Karbala, **in which five American soldiers were killed.** Ali Daqduq was placed in charge of Hezbollah's military network in the Syrian Golan Heights not only because of his professional capabilities and his close relations with Hezbollah's leadership **but also due to the vast experience he acquired during his presence in Iraq.** This experience which, in the ITIC's assessment, Hezbollah seeks to duplicate against Israel, **finds its expression in his close relations with the Qods Force and its commander Qassem Soleimani and his handling local proxies to promote the interests of Iran and Hezbollah.**

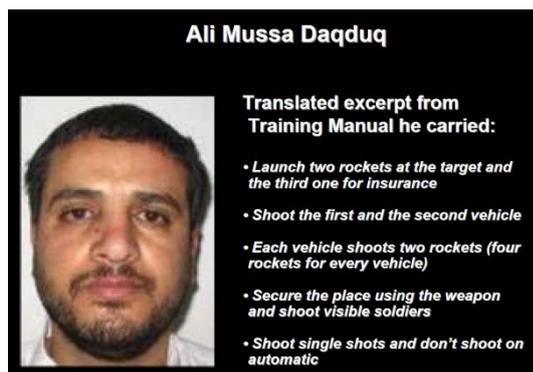
Handling Ali Daqduq in Iraq and the circumstances of his capture²

Overview

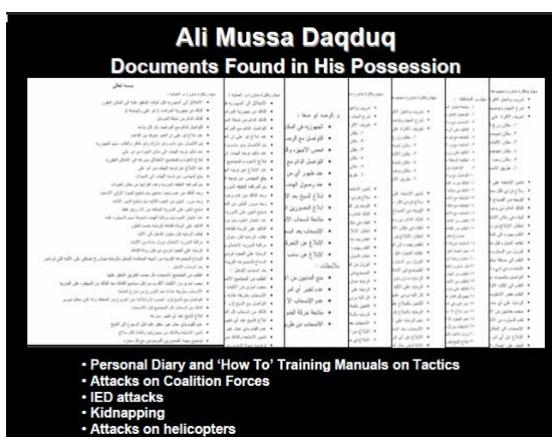
- ▶ In May 2006, Ali Mussa Daqduq was sent by the Hezbollah leadership to support the Qods Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC-QF). That was done by training, organizing and directing the attacks of Iraqi Shiite militias fighting against the United States and coalition forces. He and other Lebanese Hezbollah instructors **trained Iraqi Shiite operatives in Iran**. He was also **sent by the Qods Force on a mission to aid the Shiite militias in Iraq**, entering the country with forged documents.
- ▶ On one of his missions in Iraq, **Ali Daqduq acted as a consultant to Qais al-Khazali, the leader of a Shiite militia directed by the Qods Force in southern Iraq** (later on, this militia turned into a Shiite organization which was handled by the Qods Force against the US army and the coalition forces, under the name of **Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq³**). **Daqduq participated in their military operations, among them the January 20, 2007 attack on the Karbala Joint Provincial Coordination Center (KJPCC), during which five American soldiers were abducted and executed.**
- ▶ **Two months after the attack, on March 20, 2007, Ali Daqduq was captured by the coalition forces in Basra. Since then he had been held without trial by the American army.** Captured with him were the two brothers **Qais and Laith al-Khazali**, the two senior Shiite militia operatives who participated in the attack against the KJPCC. **In Ali Daqduq's possession were found a large number of documents, one of them a training manual which dealt with planning attacks against American and coalition forces.** It described, among other things, planting IEDs, carrying out abductions, and firing at helicopters. The important documents and information about Ali Daqduq were made public by the American forces in Iraq.

² For further details, see the ITIC's Information Bulletin from January 4, 2012: "Ali Daqduq, senior Lebanese Hezbollah operative handled by the Iranian Al-Quds Force to support Shiite militias in Iraq, was captured by the coalition and held by the Americans. He was recently handed over to the Iraqi administration, which may release him as it released Quds Force operatives captured in Iraq."

³ **Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, or the League of the Righteous**, is an Iraqi militia established by the Qods Force (2006) and handled by it. It was headed by **Qais al-Khazali**, a Shiite clergyman from southern Iraq, until he was captured (along with Ali Daqduq) by the coalition forces in 2007. After the US army's withdrawal from Iraq (2011), Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq did not lay down their weapons under the excuse of political instability in Iraq and the continuation of American influence in Baghdad. Today, they are one of the prominent Iraqi militias handled by the Iranian Qods Force.



Translated excerpts from Ali Daqduq's personal journal and the training manual found in his possession (from a briefing given by Brigadier General Kevin Bergner, spokesman for the American Army in Iraq, July 2, 2007, from the MNF-Iraq.com website)



Right: Forged documents used by Ali Daqduq. Left: Documents found in Ali Daqduq's possession indicating his intention to attack the coalition forces in Iraq, by methods including abductions and attacks on helicopters (photo: www.usf_iraq.com)

Handling Ali Daqduq and other Hezbollah operatives by the Qods Force in Iraq

- ▶ During the fighting against the US army and the coalition countries, the Lebanese Hezbollah was handled in the Iraqi arena, exploiting its proven capabilities in guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and subversion. The Iranians also took advantage of the sectarian-religious-cultural connections between the Iraqi Shiites and local Iraqi Shiites. In May 2006, **Hezbollah sent Ali Daqduq to Tehran**, accompanied by **Yusuf Hashem**, a high-ranking Hezbollah operative responsible for the organization's operations in Iraq. In Tehran, the two met with and received instructions from **Qods Force Qassem Soleimani and his deputy**. Ali Daqduq later participated in a **variety of missions assigned to Hezbollah operatives in Iran and Iraq by the Qods Force**.
- ▶ The Lebanese Hezbollah provided support for the Qods Force subversive campaign in Iraq **in the following areas:**

◆ **Training Iraqi Shiite operatives in Iran:** At first, in 2006, training exercises were held in southern Iraq (east of Basra), but later on, after a major attack carried out by the American and Iraqi government armies, **the training camps were relocated to the region of Tehran.** Militia operatives captured in Iraq after their return from Iran told interrogators that they had undergone basic courses, courses for commanders, advanced courses for instructors in Iraq, and courses in specific military fields. They said they had been trained **by both Iranians and Hezbollah instructors.**

◆ **Training Iraqi Shiite operatives in Lebanon:** Interrogations of the operatives who were captured in Iraq revealed that not all the training was held in camps in Iran. **In some instances, the Iraqi operatives were flown to Damascus and then taken overland to Hezbollah training camps in Lebanon near the Syria-Lebanon border.** In Lebanon, they underwent **a three-week training course** conducted by Hezbollah instructors. They trained them in special weapons, including firing advanced anti-tank missiles and sniper rifles. They also acquired skills in commanding, directing, planning projects, supervising weapons depots, storing weapons, communications, security and techniques of collecting intelligence.⁴

◆ **Helping the Qods Force establish Shiite militias in southern Iraq and participation in their operational activities:**

- Ali Daqduq did not only train Iraqi recruits in Iranian training camps, **he was also sent by the Qods Force on four operational missions in Iraq.** On his return to Iran after the fourth mission, he was instructed by his Iranian handlers to establish **"special groups" of Shiite operatives in Iraq using the model of Hezbollah in Lebanon.** According to a 2007 briefing given by Brigadier General Kevin Bergner, United States Army spokesman in Iraq, Iran financed the special groups, giving them between **\$750,000 and \$3 million every month.** He said that Iran also **trained them in the use of sophisticated roadside bombs** (explosively formed projectiles, EFPs, more powerful and deadly than ordinary IEDs) **which caused many casualties among the American and Iraqi forces.**
- At the time of his capture in Basra, **Ali Daqduq served as an adviser to Qais al-Khazali,** leader of one of the militias directed by the Qods Force (which

⁴ Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, Joseph Felter, Brian Fishman: **"Iranian Strategy in Iraq, Politics and Other Means"** (October 13, 2008), pp. 67-70.

subsequently became **Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq**). Ali Daqduq **participated in their military actions against the coalition forces**. According to the Americans, he was also involved in the special groups' **attack on the KJPCC, which resulted in the deaths of five American soldiers**. US Army Spokesman Kevin Bergner stated that **American satellite photos revealed that the Iranians had constructed a mockup of the Karbala facility** for Al-Khazali's militia operatives to use in simulated attacks.

The release of Ali Daqduq and his return to Lebanon

► In the period prior to the US Army's withdrawal from Iraq, **the American administration debated how to deal with the case of Ali Daqduq**. There were Republican senators who demanded that he be sent to the detention camp in Guantánamo Bay, while the Obama administration examined the possibility of trying him by an American military tribunal. Finally, **the Americans handed him over to the Iraqi government**, under the terms of the 2008 security agreement, stipulating that all US troops had to leave Iraq by December 31, 2011, and hand over all their detainees to the Iraqi government (The Washington Post, December 16, 2011).

► **On December 16, 2011**, sources in the American and Iraqi administrations announced that **Ali Daqduq had been handed over to the Iraqi government**. According to Tommy Vietor, spokesman for the National Security Council in Washington, his transfer had been effected after the Obama administration had sought and **received assurances from the Iraqi administration that Daqduq would be tried for his crimes** (The Washington Post, December 16, 2011). However, the Iraqi administration released Ali Daqduq on the pretext that the Iraqi government did not have a legal basis to continue to hold him. On November 16, 2012, **Ali Daqduq returned to Lebanon, where he resumed his activity in Hezbollah**.

► **US Department of State Spokesperson Victoria Nuland** commented on the release of Daqduq in contravention of the United States' demand as follows (The New York Times, November 16, 2012): "We didn't want it to happen, and we were concerned about it...We said that to the Iraqis. They have said back to us that they didn't have a legal basis to continue to hold him. Let me add to that, **as with other terrorists who we believe have committed crimes against Americans, we are going to continue to pursue all legal means to see that Daqduq sees justice for the crimes of which he is accused.**"