



One Killed in Explosion at Iraqi Base

Description

US : One Iraqi militia fighter was killed and eight others injured after a large explosion rocked a military base south of Baghdad, Iraqi officials said. Both Israel and the United States denied involvement in the incident.

The blast erupted early on Saturday at the Kalsu base in Babil province, some 30 miles south of the Iraqi capital, the military's Security Media Cell confirmed in a statement.

The explosion resulted in "the martyrdom of a member of the Popular Mobilization Forces and the injury of eight others," the statement said, noting that one of the wounded was a member of Iraq's military.

Previously serving as a US forward operating base, the Kalsu facility is now the headquarters for Iraq's army and national police force, as well as the PMF – a network of Shia militia groups which operate as quasi-official security forces in coordination with Baghdad.

The cause of the explosion remains unclear, and the Iraqi statement said a probe into the incident was underway. The military noted that no drones or aircraft were [detected over the](#) area at the time of the incident.

US Central Command was quick to deny earlier reports that American forces were behind the blast, saying "Those reports are not true. The United States has not conducted airstrikes in Iraq today."

An unnamed Israeli official also denied involvement in comments to CNN. A PMF source had previously described the incident as "American aggression," according to Al Jazeera.

Washington has acknowledged a number of previous strikes on PMF fighters, including a drone bombing in February which killed militia commander Wisam Mohammed Saber al-Saedi.

[Baghdad also condemned](#) another US strike on a PMF base last December, which reportedly left one person dead and at least 20 others wounded. The Pentagon maintained that both operations were retaliation to rocket attacks on US forces by Iraqi militia groups.

The latest blast came amid soaring regional tensions in the wake of an Israeli attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus, Syria earlier this month, which killed several members of Tehran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), including two high-ranking commanders.

Iran responded with a barrage of missiles and drones fired toward Israeli territory, which resulted in damage to a major IDF airbase, though most of the projectiles were reportedly intercepted by US, UK, Jordanian and Israeli forces.

by Will Porter

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