

## Air Strike

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11:31 UTC

### **Iraq Alert (UPDATE): OIR Spokesperson confirms UAV attack against Erbil Air Base on September 11; increases risk for retaliatory US strikes against Iran-backed factions**

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#### **Please be advised:**

- Operation Inherent Resolve's (OIR) Spokesperson, Wayne Marotto, confirmed that ariel defense systems were activated against two unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) amid an attack against the Erbil Air Base, at approximately 23:45 (local time) on September 11. One of the UAVs impacted outside the Air Base's perimeter and the other impacted within the base's perimeter.
- No casualties or damage were caused, as per the statement.
- The Erbil Air Base is located in the eastern part of Erbil International Airport.

#### **Assessments & Forecast:**

1. This attack represents the fourth UAV attack in Erbil Governorate targeting US-linked interests over the past six months and constitutes part of an overall [emerging trend](#) of these attacks in Iraq. This includes the Erbil Air Base. On April 14, an explosive-laden UAV hit a hanger that reportedly belonged to the CIA inside the compound. A similar attack on [June 26](#), at a different location in Erbil, prompted US retaliatory strikes against Iran-backed factions along the Iraq-Syria border area. Another attack targeted the Air Base itself on [July 6](#). While there was a two-month-long lull in such UAV attacks in Erbil, the current attack shows a remaining infrastructure and resolve to target US-linked interests in Erbil, and at its airport specifically, by Iran-backed militant factions. The triggering of aerial defense systems at the site also highlights the risk that these attacks pose to civilian flight operations in the area and at the airport.
2. The remarks made by OIR Spokesperson Marotto do not constitute an acknowledgment that the UAVs were intercepted and downed. If they were, it would point towards the US-led Coalition forces' elevated aerial defense capabilities which may have been bolstered in recent months following previous attacks on the site. With that being said, the acknowledgment that one of the UAVs impacted within the air base's perimeter highlights the challenge to aerial defense systems that suicide drones continue to pose and the potential that similar attacks may lead to casualties in the future.
3. The attack came hours before on September 12, Iraqi Prime Minister (PM) Mustafa al-Khadimi arrived at Tehran for a meeting with Iran's new president, Ebrahim Raisi, who is part of Iran's hardline camp. The two are set to discuss bilateral relations between Iran and Iraq. The timing of

the latest attack thus suggests that it may have been a symbolic operation by Iran-aligned militia factions in Iraq, aimed at sending a message to al-Kadhimi that relations with Iran are crucial for stability in Iraq. This, under the possible conviction that it may increase Iran's leverage during the talks. The timing is also significant given that some prominent Iran-backed militia factions' leaders, such as Hani al-Ameri from the Badr Organization, had reportedly pledged to cease such attacks until at least after the Iraqi legislative elections, slated for October 10. In this context, the current attack highlights that at least some Iran-backed militias are unwilling to abide by these terms. In any case, the attack highlights the tensions between the US and Iran's "axis of resistance" factions who are committed to pushing the US to withdraw all its forces from Iraq.

- 4. FORECAST:** Against this backdrop, further similar attacks may recur, particularly against Erbil International Airport which continues to be a focal point for aerial attacks against US interests. Despite not leading to casualties as per the time of writing, such attacks increase the potential for US retaliatory strikes against Iran-backed factions in Iraq, as well as the eastern border areas in Syria, over the coming days.

## Recommendations:

1. It is advised to avoid nonessential travel to Erbil, at this time due to the recent attack and the heightened risk of further security incidents over the coming days and weeks. Those operating in the country are advised to consult with us at [operations@max-security.com](mailto:operations@max-security.com).
2. Those remaining in Erbil are advised to maintain heightened vigilance and adhere to security precautions regarding the threat of militant attacks and civil unrest.
3. It is advised to defer all travel to Baghdad at this time due to the daily threat of militancy in the capital, violence in areas surrounding the city, and the risk of a broad deterioration of security conditions.
4. For those remaining in Baghdad, it is advised to restrict travel to the Green Zone and ensure that contingency and emergency evacuation plans are updated. Contact us for itinerary and contingency support options.
5. Travel to Anbar, Nineveh, Salahuddin, Kirkuk, and Diyala provinces should be avoided at this time due to ongoing counter-militancy operations and militant attacks. Those operating in these regions are advised to contact us for itinerary and contingency support measures, including evacuation options, given the deterioration in the security situation.
6. As a general precaution, it is advised that any travel, particularly in outlying areas, be conducted in armored vehicles, with proper security escorts and coordination with authorities.