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Iran-Backed Militia Claims Responsibility for Attack on Iraqi Camp

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BAGHDAD — A Shiite militia supported by Iran claimed responsibility on Friday for a rocket attack on a camp near Baghdad that killed 23 members of an Iranian opposition group and provoked condemnation by the United States.

In a [statement published](#) by the Iranian news agency Fars, the militia, the Mukhtar Army, threatened more strikes as long as members of the [opposition group, Mujahedeen Khalq](#), or People's Mujahedeen, remained in [Iraq](#).

About 2,200 people in the group, known as M.E.K., are housed in what is now called Camp Hurriya, a former United States military base near Baghdad international airport, according to the United Nations. Thirty members were wounded in Thursday's attack, according to the Iraqi police. Two Iraqi soldiers were also killed and 18 wounded, the police added.

"We have been in touch with senior Iraqi officials to ensure that the government of Iraq renders all possible medical and emergency assistance to the victims," Secretary of State [John Kerry](#) said in a statement. "We also urge the government of Iraq to provide additional security for the camp's residents and to find the perpetrators and hold them accountable for the attack." Members of the group have been living in [Iraq](#) for decades. The United States has been supporting efforts to relocate them outside the country. But those efforts have moved slowly, leaving residents of the camp, formerly known as Camp Liberty, in a kind of limbo and exposing them to periodic mortar and missile attacks.

Shahin Gobadi, a spokesman for the M.E.K., said his group held the government of Iraq and the United Nations responsible for the attack, as the United Nations had guaranteed that residents would be safe when they [moved to Camp Liberty from another camp](#). In an emailed statement, Mr. Gobadi said Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, the former Iraqi prime minister, and the Iranian government had used the "puppet" Mukhtar Army "as a cover for their crime and in order to hide the role of more prominent figures, such as Maliki himself."

The fraught situation of the M.E.K. reflects the persistent tensions between Iran and the United States even as Iranian and American diplomats participate in talks in Vienna on the Syrian crisis. While the United States and Iran are

supporting the Iraqis in their fight against the Islamic State terrorist group, there is no military cooperation or coordination between American and Iranian officials in Iraq.

Iraqi officials have tried to keep the efforts by the two sides separate. Iraqi Army units advised by American officials are encircling Ramadi in Anbar Province, west of Baghdad. Shiite militias supported by Iran are operating in and around Baiji, in northern Iraq.

The Iranian-backed militias have refrained from attacking American forces, officials say, and the United States has no interest in operating against Iranians in Iraq, signifying a cold peace between the two sides. The same, however, cannot be said of Shiite groups close to Iran that have periodically targeted the M.E.K.

The Iranian opposition group has numerous supporters in Congress, who expressed concern about their plight on Friday.

“With growing Iranian involvement in Iraq, the security situation around Camp Liberty is increasingly risky,” Representative Ed Royce, a California Republican who heads the House Foreign Affairs Committee, [said in a statement](#). “The Iraqi government made an international commitment to protect the camp’s residents. The U.S. and international community must demand accountability.”

Omar Al-Jawoshy reported from Baghdad, and Michael R. Gordon from Erbil, Iraq.