

# [***Member of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units killed in blast at base, Iraqi army says***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BV5-3S81-JBSS-S007-00000-00&context=1516831)

CNN Wire

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; The Iraqi army said on Saturday that a command post at Kalsu military base, south of the capital Baghdad, had been hit by an explosion overnight, killing one member of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) and injuring eight other people.

The PMU, also known as the Popular Mobilization Forces, is a predominantly Shiite Iranian-backed paramilitary force [*based in Iraq*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/03/middleeast/us-strikes-iraq-syria-what-we-know-intl/index.html). The PMU are responsible for the site where the explosion struck, according to Muhannad al-Anazi, a member of the Security Committee in Babylon Governorate.

The cause of the blast is still unknown. Israeli and US officials said neither was involved in the explosion, which came a day after a [*military strike on Iran*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/18/middleeast/isfahan-iran-explosion-intl-hnk/index.html) that has been attributed to Israel.

The explosion and fire occurred at 1 a.m. local time at Kalsu base, which also serves as a headquarters for the Iraqi army and police, according to the military's statement. A member of the army was among those injured, the statement said.

The Iraqi army said no drones or planes were in the air at the time. "There was no drone or fighter aircraft in the airspace of Babylon [Governorate] before and during the explosion." It added that it would create a committee to investigate.

The PMU said the blast happened "at the Kalsu military base in the Al-Mashrou district on the highway, north of the Babylon Governorate." Investigators are currently at the site of the explosion, which also caused material losses, the PMU added.

"We will provide you with the details once the preliminary investigation is completed," it said.

Unlike other Iran-backed groups around the region, the PMU is tied to the local government, and is closely linked to Iran-aligned Shiite blocs that have dominated ***politics*** in Iraq for years.

The blast comes at a time of high tension in the Middle East, as Israel wages war against Hamas in Gaza, after the Iran-backed Palestinian militant group launched a deadly incursion into southern Israel in October.

Tit-for-tat strikes this month have also brought a decades-long shadow war between Israel and Iran out in the open.

Israel carried out a [*military strike on Iran*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/18/middleeast/isfahan-iran-explosion-intl-hnk/index.html) early Friday, a US official told CNN, in a potentially dangerous escalation. Israel has [*not commented*](https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-hamas-war-gaza-news-04-18-24/h_de4b078288862b3845cd890b97046b6a) and Iran has not identified the source of the attack, while no major damage was reported.

After the Iraq blast, an Israeli official told CNN that it was not involved.

Meanwhile US Central Command posted on social media: "We are aware of reports claiming that the United States conducted airstrikes in Iraq today. Those reports are not true. The United States has not conducted air strikes in Iraq today."

In 2016, the Iraqi parliament passed a bill recognizing the PMU as a government entity operating alongside the Iraqi military. The organization is an umbrella group, with several forces operating underneath its wing - including Iraq's powerful Kataib Hezbollah.

By Aqeel Najim and Hamdi Alkhshali, CNN

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