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Iraq Struggles to Manage Militias Amid US-Iran Tensions

Iraqi Premier Adel Abdul-Mahdi's order for certain Shi'ite militias to integrate directly into the military by the end of July are almost certain to fail, with little sign any group will be even close to finished by then, and no suggestion Iraq intends to do anything about it.

This isn't the first time an Iraqi PM has made such an order, nor failed to deliver on it, as Iraq continues to struggle with managing substantial Shi'ite militia groups during times of US tensions with neighboring Iran.

Iran is generally on good terms with the Shi'ite militias, while the US generally doesn't trust them since Iran gets along with them. US officials have been pressing Abdul-Mahdi to crack down hard on the militias, while presenting them as a "threat" to US interests.

As a practical matter, the militias are part of Iraq's government, but not directly part of their military. The US brands them as Iranian proxies, though in reality the groups are active parts of Iraq's paramilitary forces.

Iraqi officials concede that any major changes to Iraq's militias is going to take a long time, and be difficult. The US is unlikely to be willing to wait, however, which means this will remain a source of tensions.