Al-Ashtar Brigades (AAB)

OVERVIEW

AS OF AUGUST 2026

Al-Ashtar Brigades (AAB) is an Iran-backed Bahraini Shia militant group that has committed terrorist attacks against the Bahraini Government. The group emerged in 2013, when it split from Bahrain's oldest Iran-aligned Shia militia, the 14 February Youth Coalition. AAB's primary goal is to undermine the Sunni-led monarchy in Bahrain on behalf of the country's majority Shia population.

Operating Area

Based in Bahrain; its leaders and some members are located in surrounding countries, including Iran

Members

Unknown

Tactics And Targets

AAB mostly targets Bahraini police and security forces using explosive devices and small arms. Since its formation, AAB has received weapons, other materiel, and training on explosives from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. In addition to this support, AAB has allied itself with Iranian-backed Iraqi Shia militants and Lebanese Hizballah, all of which also give AAB financial and logistic support. In 2019, AAB released a video statement in which it threatened to attack US and UK interests in Bahrain. In 2024, AAB made unsubstantiated claims that it had carried out two attacks against Israel in response to the Israel-HAMAS conflict.

Terrorist Group Designation

The State Department designated AAB as a foreign terrorist organization in July 2018 after designating two of its Iran-based leaders—Alsayed Murtadha Majeed Ramadhan Alawi and Ahmad Hasan Yusuf—as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) in March 2017. In 2024, the Treasury Department sanctioned four Iran-based AAB operatives and financial facilitators as SDGTs.

KEY LEADERS

Alsayed Murtadha Majeed Ramadhan Alawi
Iran-based leader

Al-Ashtar Brigades (AAB) *(continued)*

KEY LEADERS *(continued)*

Ahmad Hasan Yusuf
Iran-based leader involved in training and supplying AAB members with explosives, funds, and weapons to conduct attacks

NOTABLE ATTACKS

3 March 2014
Daih, Bahrain
AAB militants detonate a bomb that kills three police officers and injures seven additional people.