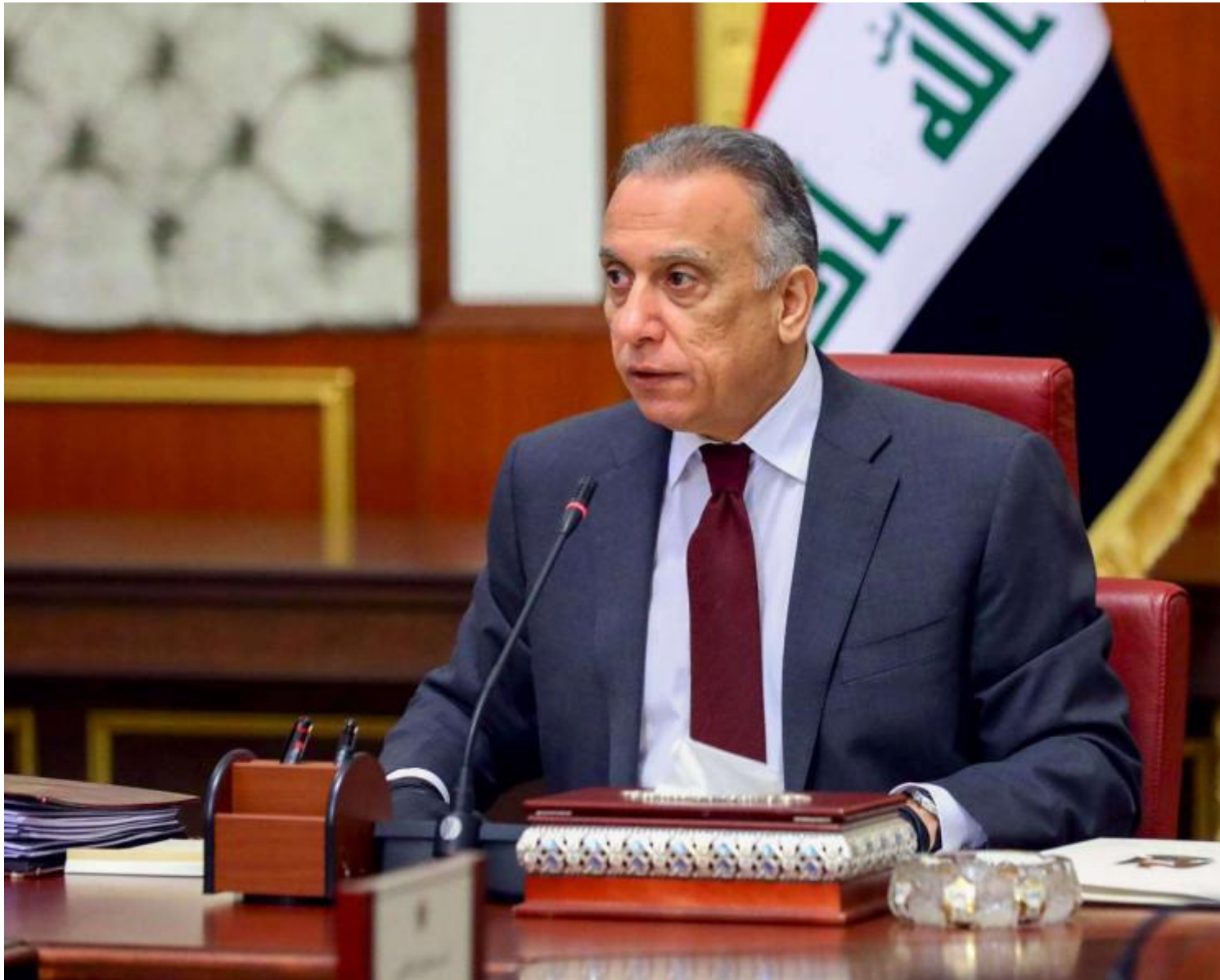


Iraq slams U.S. raids slammed as blatant violation of sovereignty



Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi has condemned the overnight U.S. air attack on Iran-backed armed groups in Iraq and Syria

Baghdad, June 28 (RHC)-- Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi has condemned the overnight U.S. air attack on Iran-backed armed groups in Iraq and Syria which a monitor said killed at least seven people.

In a statement on Sunday, the U.S. military claimed it targeted operational and weapons storage facilities at two locations in Syria and one location in Iraq in response to drone attacks against the US personnel and facilities in Iraq.

The attacks came at the direction of US President Joe Biden, the second time he has ordered retaliatory attacks against Iran-backed militia since taking office five months ago. "We condemn the US air attack that targeted a site last night on the Iraqi-Syrian border, which represents a blatant and unacceptable violation of Iraqi sovereignty and Iraqi national security," said a statement from the Iraqi PM's office.

John Kirby, a spokesman for the Pentagon, said in a statement that the Kataib Hezbollah and Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada military factions were among the "several Iran-backed militia groups" that had used the targeted facilities. "The United States took necessary, appropriate, and deliberate action designed to limit the risk of escalation – but also to send a clear and unambiguous deterrent message."

Syria's state-run SANA news agency said one child had been killed and at least three other people were wounded. And two Iraqi militia officials told The Associated Press news agency in Baghdad that four militiamen were killed in the air attacks near the border with Syria.

Armed groups aligned with Iran in a statement named four members of the Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada faction they said were killed in the attack on the Syria-Iraq border. They pledged to retaliate. "We will remain the shield defending our beloved nation, and we are fully ready ... to respond and take revenge," it said.

Since the start of the year, there have been more than 40 attacks against US interests in Iraq, where 2,500 American troops are deployed as part of an international coalition to fight the armed group ISIL (ISIS).

Saeed Khatibzadeh, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman, also reacted to the attacks. He said: "The U.S. still continues down the wrong path in the region. What we see today is not only the sanctions but also following the wrong policies of the previous administration with actions they carry out in the region."

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