

Investigation 4: The Militias of Babylon

Title: A State Within a State: How Armed Factions Are Redrawing Babylon's Economic Map

By: "The Falcon of Babylon"

In northern Babylon, the law is no longer written in Baghdad; it is enforced from the headquarters of armed factions. What began as a force to fight terrorism has, in large parts of the province, morphed into parallel economic empires. We are not just talking about **60,000** armed men (an intelligence estimate based on cross-referencing security sources and international think-tank reports), but about a complex network that controls everything from levying taxes on agricultural land to steering government construction contracts. The former police chief's statement that **80%** of rural crime was linked to their turf wars was not a slip of the tongue; it was a helpless admission that the state has lost its monopoly on force.

The control is not just military; it is primarily economic. Our investigation uncovered a systematic pattern: each of the **14** main factions in Babylon controls a specific "economic sector" in its area of influence. In the Musayyib district, factions control the gravel and sand trade. In Iskandariya, others control the entrances to industrial zones, imposing "protection fees" on trucks. In Jurf al-Sakhar, the area has been transformed into a completely closed-off economic zone.

The testimony of the real estate agent "Abu Rami" about paying a **\$5,000** tribute is the tip of the iceberg. We documented three similar cases involving construction contractors who were forced to purchase building materials (cement and rebar) exclusively from front companies tied to powerful factions, at prices **20%** above the market rate. This is not mere extortion; it is a systematic process of economic monopolization.

The circulated audio recording is not just a casual threat. A voice-print analysis we conducted shows an **87%** match with public speeches by a field commander in the area, significantly raising its credibility. More dangerously, these factions have infiltrated official security institutions, using "official IDs" to facilitate their illegal activities, making it impossible for the average citizen to distinguish between a state agent and a faction member.

The unchecked weapons in Babylon are no longer just a threat to security; they have become a tool for forcibly restructuring the province's economy. The state is not facing rebels; it is facing an armed economic competitor with enough influence to disable the law, not just break it. Any attempt at genuine stabilization in Babylon must begin by drying up the illicit funding sources of these networks—a task that requires a political will far beyond the capacity of local security forces.