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ISRAEL BRIEF

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Israel keeps enforcing across Gaza and Lebanon while Tehran blacks out its own country and searches for a pressure valve.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE The U.S. system is transactional by design, and Graham's reaction is the most American thing imaginable: "If you don't need it, I'll reallocate it." That doesn't mean the alliance collapses. At least not without more egregious political miscalculation on both sides: Israelis thinking aid phaseout buys goodwill from anti-Israel factions (it won't), and Americans thinking cutting aid reduces U.S. exposure (it might, but it also reduces leverage and shared capacity). Israel should treat this as a leverage redesign: keep the relationship anchored in joint programs, production lines, and operational value—because in Washington, love is fleeting; utility is durable.

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Flash Brief

- **Gaza:** IDF strikes Hamas command sites and launch infrastructure after another failed Gaza City launch. Hamas operatives approach troops in multiple incidents; IDF eliminates immediate threats.
- **Lebanon:** IAF strikes Hezbollah weapons storage, production, and launch infrastructure across south and Beqaa.
- **Syria:** IDF sustains Hermon summit posture and winter-capable forward defense under new doctrine.
- **Inside Israel:** Police seize illegal weapons in al-Eizariya wedding raid; Arab-sector killings surge.
- **Governance:** High Court freezes haredi education funds; draft sanctions politics keep stalling manpower math.
- **Iran:** Iran blackout persists as airlines suspend flights.
- **West:** Pro-Hamas synagogue protest rhetoric goes mainstream abroad.

The War Today

Gaza Governance Cosplay Meets Guns, Tunnels, and Hamas Payroll

The so-called next phase in Gaza is being packaged as “technocratic governance” while the ground truth stays stubbornly operational: Hamas is still armed, still rebuilding, still running coercion and cashflow, and still violating the ceasefire whenever it thinks the response will be containable. The U.S.-chaired “Board of Peace” framework is being operationalized with a director-general appointed to run the mechanism in Gaza. The plan on paper includes a technocratic Palestinian government, Hamas disarmament, an international stabilization force, additional Israeli pullbacks, and reconstruction. The newly tapped director-general is a former defense and foreign minister and former UN Middle East envoy, now based in the UAE running a diplomatic academy.

Meanwhile, reality keeps intruding. After a failed rocket launch from the Gaza City area toward Israel, Israel struck Hamas and other terror targets across the southern and northern Strip—hitting launch pits, tunnel/launch infrastructure, weapons production and storage sites, and a command-and-control compound used to store weapons and advance attack planning—including preparations for an imminent attack against forces in northern Gaza. Israel identified senior Hamas figures among those eliminated, including the head of Hamas’s anti-tank missile array, a key weapons-manufacturing workshop head, and, among others, a Nukhba infiltrator tied to October 7 (including the Nova massacre).

Ground forces continued dismantling terrorist infrastructure along the Yellow Line. Troops also found a rocket launcher in Jabaliya with two loaded rockets ready for launch. Additionally, Gaza saw multiple direct ceasefire violations at the tactical level: three terrorists crossed the Yellow Line in the

south, one tried to steal equipment and fled, and the air force struck to remove the threat; additional crossings and approach incidents in the north ended with two terrorists eliminated.

Parallel to all this “phase” theater, the IDF has reportedly formulated a renewed ground-operation option targeting Hamas-held areas, driven by intelligence assessments that Hamas is restoring tunnel infrastructure, re-training, advancing weapons production, and recruiting.

ASSESSMENT

The new “Board” appointment is being sold as credibility—someone everyone can “trust.” Fine. But trust doesn’t clear a tunnel shaft, confiscate an anti-tank array, or stop three armed men from walking up to your troops under a ceasefire and trying to steal gear like a clearance sale at Nordstrom. The international plan’s success hinges on one job: disarm Hamas. Hamas is rebuilding, and the only reliable enforcement arm in Gaza remains Israeli force.

Lebanon’s “Ceasefire Understandings” Keep Producing Targets

In response to Hezbollah’s continued violations of ceasefire understandings, Israel launched strikes on Hezbollah terror targets across Lebanon—described as routine enforcement rather than escalation—while northern municipalities reported explosions audible across Kiryat Shmona, the Galilee, and the northern Golan with no change in civilian instructions. The strike set reportedly included roughly 20 targets: Hezbollah weapons storage facilities, a weapons production site used for rehabilitation and military buildup, launch sites, rocket launchers, and additional military structures used to advance attacks against Israel and IDF forces.

ASSESSMENT

Lebanon keeps trying to pay off a weapons problem with press releases. Israel keeps paying it down with airstrikes. This isn’t complicated; it’s just embarrassing for the people whose entire strategy is to “declare progress” while the militia stocks rockets. The danger is familiar: international actors reading Lebanese declarations as “stabilization,” then leaning on Israel to stop striking—right as Hezbollah uses the lull to rebuild launch capacity and production.

Syria Talks Or Not, The Buffer Stays Israeli-Controlled

The defense minister stated that the IDF is operating deep throughout Syrian territory to prevent terrorist infiltration and to keep the border from becoming a launchpad for attacks, describing the policy as part of a post-October 7 defense doctrine. Israel is maintaining control of key areas, including the peak of Mount Hermon and the security zone, and is acting against global jihadist groups, Palestinian terror elements operating in Syria, and pro-Iranian forces. The Alpinist Reservist Unit completed its annual extreme-weather, mountain-terrain training on the Mount Hermon summit in Syria, then joined the 810th Brigade on a defensive mission at the summit—explicitly tied to enabling safe opening of the Mount Hermon site to visitors while maintaining ongoing defensive activity in the Golan. This all runs alongside U.S.-backed

talks resuming with Syrian counterparts seeking a return to earlier lines and frameworks.

ASSESSMENT

Syria's new political language is irrelevant if the ground remains porous. Israel learned—again, the hard way—that “demilitarized” on paper means “militarized later” when the state collapses and the border becomes a jihadist conveyor belt. Holding the Hermon peak and a security zone is basic common sense at this point.

Inside Israel

Guns Everywhere, Governance Nowhere

In al-Eizariya, near Ma'ale Adumim, police raided a wedding hall overnight after intelligence indicated illegal firearms on site. Police detained guests, seized three weapons (a Glock, a Jericho, and an M-16), and arrested six suspects—including a 22-year-old groom for illegal possession and his 42-year-old father (after an assault on an officer). Police described a video from the event showing a small child lifted onto an adult's shoulders while holding a handgun.

The wider Arab-sector violence profile is now openly described by Arab civic leaders as criminal gangs acting like the “new rulers,” with weapons saturating public space: the first week of the year saw 11 Arab residents killed in seven days; three men shot at a construction site in Shfaram, a 20-year-old medical student killed in Arara in the Negev, a father (39) and son (16) from Turan murdered in Nazareth, and a 30-year-old barber from Kafr Kara shot in his salon.

The “Wild West” pipeline is described as industrial scale: hundreds of thousands of weapons smuggled annually via the Egyptian and Jordanian borders using organized networks and drones, moving through mixed cities and into Judea and Samaria, blurring crime and terror. Published estimates cited ~160,000 weapons smuggled per year, with ~100,000 illegal weapons circulating in the Negev alone, and IDF acknowledgments that drone smuggling attempts occur nightly with interception rates described as partial at best.

Meanwhile, the state still has to clean up after itself: reports of vandalism at a school in Jalud and vehicle arson and property damage in Bizzariya attributed to Israeli civilians triggered IDF dispatches and investigations, with no suspects on scene—because nothing says “sovereignty” like letting idiots freelance violence and acting surprised when it boomerangs into strategic harm.

ASSESSMENT

This is what happens when you turn a blind eye to an internal weapons market. It metastasizes: a toddler with a handgun at a wedding, gangs running “arbitration courts,” mayors being bullied by men with rifles, and the state performing periodic raids like it’s trying to empty the sea with a spoon. The risk is not only Arab-sector murders—though that alone is a disgrace—it’s the conversion of “criminal” weapons flows into terror capability in Judea and Samaria and beyond. At least in Gaza you know where you are and where the enemy is. In Judea and Samaria you protect a quilt of communities and roads with response times that can be measured in long minutes you don’t have.

Air Force Doctrine Shifts From “Strike” To “Campaign”

Senior defense officials convened a key discussion chaired by the Defense Ministry director-general where the IDF presented recommendations for a multiyear plan with earmarks roughly 350 billion shekels over the next decade for force buildup, with the IDF expected to generate around 100 billion shekels through efficiency measures. The procurement plan spans Arrow interceptors, fighter jets, Apache attack helicopters, aerial refueling aircraft, and large munitions stockpiles (amid global price inflation and production constraints).

The centerpiece dilemma is fighter mix: a fourth squadron of F-35 stealth aircraft (valued for stealth and intelligence—target location, air-defense exposure, real-time data sharing—especially in an opening phase against a heavily defended adversary) versus more F-15I heavy strike aircraft (long-range, large payload, including bunker-busting munitions, repeat sorties—described as a sustained-firepower workhorse reliant on intelligence from stealth platforms and other systems).

ASSESSMENT

Israel is pricing the real constraint—tempo. Stealth wins the opening move. Payload wins the month after. Refueling wins the operational reach. Stockpiles win the second week of a multi-front exchange when everyone else discovers that “global supply chains” are not a war plan. Though none of this will matter if domestic governance keeps sabotaging manpower and cohesion. You can buy squadrons of planes and still have to look around for readiness like Mr. Magoo if you can’t enforce shared burden, control illegal weapons inside the borders, and maintain public trust. Hardware is necessary. Coherence is decisive.

Israel and the World**Tehran Goes Dark, Blames Everyone Else**

After nationwide demonstrations and a communications shutdown that drove connectivity to near-flatline levels, Iran’s foreign minister—speaking while visiting Lebanon—accused the United States and Israel of “directly intervening” in the protests and of trying to convert “peaceful protests” into “divisive and violent” unrest—while dismissing the likelihood of foreign military intervention as low and claiming prior attempts were “total failures.”

Iran's Supreme Leader reinforced his position: no retreat "even a millimeter" from principles and told President Trump to focus on America's problems. Trump publicly warned that if Iran's leadership starts "shooting" unarmed protesters, the U.S. will "hit them very hard," describing regime patterns of machine-gunning crowds and then disappearing people into prisons. Though, it appears he must have had a very long blink—because the regime is doing exactly what he warned against.

Starlink has been enabled in Iran. But, Starlink's relevance is not quite straightforward here. Satellite internet can bypass state throttling, but requires access hardware, which Tehran has warned against and polices aggressively. Additionally, multiple airlines have suspended or cancelled flights to Iran.

ASSESSMENT

Iran's leadership is trying to seize the narrative with one hand and seize the throat with the other. The blackout isn't a "communications disruption." It's a license for brutality—less video, fewer witnesses, fewer coordination channels, more bodies. When a regime needs the internet off to "keep order," it's confessing that order can't survive sunlight. Unfortunately, a cornered regime doesn't become reasonable. We should expect proxy activation, external intimidation, and "manageable" escalations designed to change the subject.

NYC "We Support Hamas" Chants, UK Celebrity Islamism, Pakistan's Kidnap Talk

In New York City, an anti-Israel protest outside a synagogue in Kew Gardens Hills featured chants including "Globalize the intifada" and "Say it loud, say it clear, we support Hamas here," prompting nearby Jewish institutions to shut down activity out of safety concerns. The NYPD maintained a buffer zone and no major violence was reported, but the atmosphere was intimidating—and the newly inaugurated mayor remained silent while state and federal figures condemned the spectacle. It wasn't a generic rally, it targeted a house of worship in a Jewish neighborhood with pro-terror rhetoric.

In the UK media ecosystem, footage surfaced of Tony Blair's sister-in-law—born British, converted to Islam after a trip to Iran, now living in Istanbul, previously affiliated with Iranian state broadcasting, and reportedly once issued a "VIP" Palestinian Authority passport by Ismail Haniyeh—describing October 7 as "legendary" for Muslims and claiming people would pick up the Koran because of Gaza's "steadfastness."

Pakistan's defense minister called on the United States to "kidnap" Prime Minister Netanyahu and bring him to court—suggesting Turkey could abduct him as well—and labeled Netanyahu "the worst criminal of humanity," and repeatedly invoked ICC warrants as justification—remarks delivered in a studio segment that reportedly ended with the anchor saying the minister would not remain on air after the break.

ASSESSMENT

In New York, officials swear they “oppose antisemitism” while letting people chant support for Hamas outside synagogues. In Britain’s cultural bloodstream, October 7 gets marketed as spiritual inspiration by people with a track record of orbiting Iranian propaganda ecosystems—then everyone wonders why Jews feel unsafe. In Pakistan, a defense minister openly proposes kidnapping a democratic leader and launders it through ICC rhetoric. These people won’t be persuaded—and it almost doesn’t matter. The concern is that their language lowers the cost of escalation for the next actor—first you praise massacre, then you “globalize” it, then you normalize the idea that legal process means hunting Jews and Israelis abroad. The West keeps treating this as “speech” until it becomes a security incident, and then it blames the Jews for being “divisive.”

Netanyahu’s Aid Phaseout Meets Graham’s “Faster, Then”

Israel’s relationship with the United States is entering a new bargaining posture that will punish nostalgia. Prime Minister Netanyahu stated publicly that Israel seeks to end U.S. military assistance within 10 years, framing it as Israel having “come of age” with an economy he expects to reach roughly a trillion dollars within a decade and a desire to taper aid to zero. The current 10-year security assistance framework provides \$3.8 billion annually through 2028, and negotiations over the next memorandum are underway.

The immediate American reaction from one of Israel’s most consistent allies was revealing. Lindsay Graham, a senior U.S. senator, (who chairs the appropriations subcommittee that handles a large share of the foreign-assistance pipeline), said that if Israel has decided to wind down aid, he sees no reason to wait 10 years and will work to expedite the phaseout—explicitly arguing the money should be redirected into U.S. military buildup amid a massive planned Pentagon increase. The senator also rejected the idea that reducing aid will win Israel points with domestic American critics, warning that those who consider Israel a liability won’t become supporters because Israel takes fewer dollars, and those who understand Israel’s value generally don’t object to the aid. He still described the aid as a strong U.S. national-security investment—location and capabilities the U.S. can’t cheaply replicate.

ASSESSMENT

The U.S. system is transactional by design, and Graham’s reaction is the most American thing imaginable: “If you don’t need it, I’ll reallocate it.” That doesn’t mean the alliance collapses. At least not without more egregious political miscalculation on both sides: Israelis thinking aid phaseout buys goodwill from anti-Israel factions (it won’t), and Americans thinking cutting aid reduces U.S. exposure (it might, but it also reduces leverage and shared capacity). Israel should treat this as a leverage redesign: keep the relationship anchored in joint programs, production lines, and operational value—because in Washington, love is fleeting; utility is durable.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

Jerusalem Post: The U.S. raid that captured Nicolss Maduro showcased a multi-domain strike package (EW, cyber disruption, precision targeting, SOF insertion) that shredded Venezuela's Iran/Russia/China-supplied "deterrence."

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

Algemeiner: Reports claim senior Iranian figures are exploring escape routes and asset protection—French visas for families via intermediaries, talk of gold leaving Iran, and even a "Plan B" scenario of Khamenei fleeing to Moscow—while protests escalate and security forces use live fire, tear gas, and water cannons to tamp them down.

Times of Israel: Lebanon signed a deal with a consortium of TotalEnergies, ENI, and QatarEnergy to begin a 1,200 sq km 3D seismic survey offshore. Beirut is hunting for gas to bail out its economic failures.

Ynet: The race to replace Antonio Guterres in December is underway as the UN faces a severe budget crisis (internal estimates suggest up to ~40% budget loss) and candidates court Washington, with Trump positioned as the effective gatekeeper and growing momentum for the first woman secretary-general. Israel's leverage runs through Washington, not the General Assembly—so expect candidates to audition for U.S. approval while pretending the veto cartel is "global democracy."

Jewish News: The UAE is reportedly pulling government-backed student financial aid for study in the UK (while maintaining funds for other countries), citing concern that universities have failed to stop Islamist indoctrination linked to groups like the Muslim Brotherhood. When an Arab state decides British campuses are too radicalized for *its* kids, the UK's "it's just activism" routine wears ever thinner.

Developments to Watch

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Hezbollah Rebuild Targets** — The IDF struck almost two dozen Hezbollah targets across southern Lebanon and into the Beqaa, including weapons storage, production sites, and launch infrastructure, with explosions audible in Kiryat Shmona and the Galilee.
- **U.S. Hits ISIS as Syria Talks Resume** — U.S.-led airstrikes hit ISIS targets across Syria while Washington's envoy met Damascus' new leadership. Counter-ISIS force continues in parallel with diplomacy, underscoring that "transition" doesn't have to mean ignoring jihadists.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Yellow Line Probes Continue** — Multiple Hamas operatives crossed or approached the Yellow Line and were eliminated, including one attempting to steal IDF equipment.
- **Hamas Reconstitution Under Fire** — After a failed Gaza City launch, the IDF killed senior Hamas figures (including the anti-tank chief and weapons-production leadership), struck command-and-control sites, tunnel shafts, and located a loaded launcher in Jabaliya. This degrades capability now, but also signals Hamas is rebuilding fast enough to require repeat interdiction.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Iran Goes Dark, Shoots Live** — Iran imposed a nationwide internet blackout (~1% connectivity), deployed live fire in places like Zahedan, with hundreds (or more) killed as protests spread to 100+ cities. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Elite Exit Chatter** — Reports of visa requests, asset moves, and contingency plans for senior Iranian figures are circulating alongside internal blame games—including some alleged to have decamped to Moscow.
- **U.S. Posture** — Trump publicly warned Tehran of severe consequences for killing protesters (though, as yet, he seems content to ignore the violence); planning chatter surfaced about strike options even as officials deny imminent moves. Mixed signaling compresses Tehran's options and raises misread risk. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Diplomatic, Economic, & Legal

- **Airlines Pull the Plug on Iran** — Turkish, Emirati, Qatari, and European carriers suspended or canceled Iran flights as unrest and blackout persist.
- **China Shuttles, Israel Warns** — Beijing's envoy met Jerusalem and Ramallah; Israel pressed Iran-as-destabilizer and deradicalization lines. China is collecting leverage, not overtly choosing sides—yet.

Home Front & Politics

- **Iranian Cyber Intimidation Pings Israelis** — A mass spam message attributed to Iranian actors ("We are coming...") hit Israeli phones in an effort to fray nerves during regional unrest.

Judea & Samaria

- **Counterterror Tempo** — Over the past week, Shin Bet-directed operations arrested dozens of suspects, seized weapons and terror funds, and disrupted cells preparing imminent attacks; a reported ramming attempt ended with the attacker neutralized. Persistent pressure suppresses networks but raises lone-actor risk.

Conclusion

THINGS are mostly staying the same (at least until they don't). Gaza continues to get struck when it overtly violates the ceasefire framework. Lebanon gets hit when it rebuilds. Syria stays held where infiltration would otherwise begin. The only thing changing is Iran's timeline—blackout and live fire compress decision windows, and Trump's warnings make Tehran feel cornered. The biggest coming moves are whether Tehran—staring at its own streets—chooses to export fear through proxies, cyber noise, or a stunt meant to change the subject.

Give this to whoever still thinks today's calm means tomorrow's quiet.

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Mitzpe Institute is an intelligence and strategy organization focused on Israeli security, diaspora threat assessment, and the strategic challenges confronting the Jewish people and the West. We produce daily intelligence, forensic analyses, strategic assessments, and tactical briefings read by policymakers, military leaders, and institutional decision-makers across more than 90 countries and all 50 US states — from the Knesset and the US Congress to allied governments, major policy institutions, and Jewish organizational leadership worldwide.

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