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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

Tuesday, February 24

Tehran buys days. Beijing buys Iran's survival. Hamas buys uniforms.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVER

THE BOTTOM LINE Corbyn “knew the source’s credibility, chose to broadcast the claim anyway, and framed it as established fact.” Blood libel is a specific, centuries-old mechanism for inciting violence against Jews. Broadcasting through verified social media “to a large following is an amplification of a dehumanization narrative—one with a documented body count in the historical record.”

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Flash Brief

- **Iran Rearms:** Russia delivers Verba MANPADS under a €500M deal; China anti-ship missile transfer nearing completion.
- **Strike Window:** Trump's 10-day ultimatum expires this week as Poland, Germany, Japan, and Serbia order citizens out of Iran.
- **Hamas Embedded:** Leaked files confirm al-Qassam commanders placed in Gaza ministries; IDF warned Netanyahu in January.
- **PIJ Rising:** Islamic Jihad fills Hamas's operational vacuum in northern Judea and Samaria, deepening Iran's foothold.
- **Coalition Fractures:** Eight Likud MKs voted against Smotrich's VAT order and warned they'll break on conscription too.
- **Corbyn's Blood Libel:** Former UK Labour leader broadcast IDF organ-harvesting claims from Al-Shifa's Hamas-linked director.
- **Buchenwald Protest:** Anti-Zionist group plans demonstration at Nazi death camp on liberation anniversary.
- **Modi Address Wednesday:** Supreme Court President Amit excluded again; opposition threatening boycott of Knesset session.

The War Today

Iran Rearms on Two Fronts as Strike Window Shortens

Iran signed a €500 million contract with Russia in December for 500 Verba MANPADS launch units and 2,500 missiles with deliveries phased from 2027 to 2029. The Verba is infrared-guided and capable of engaging cruise missiles, low-flying aircraft, and drones.

Simultaneously, Iran nears completion of a deal with China for CM-302 supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles with 290-kilometer range and sea-skimming flight profile designed to defeat shipborne intercept systems. Deputy Defense Minister Massoud Oraei traveled to Beijing personally as talks entered final stages last summer.

Two U.S. carrier strike groups—USS Abraham Lincoln and USS Gerald R. Ford, together carrying 5,000 personnel and 150 aircraft—are assembling within strike range. Khamenei publicly threatened to sink the U.S. carriers.

Tehran rejected the latest U.S. nuclear offer and floated unspecified “moderate concessions,” with a written proposal reportedly pending. Poland issued an emergency evacuation order for its citizens in Iran.

ASSESSMENT

The Russia deal represents a future problem—deliveries begin in 2027. The China deal is a present one. If CM-302s transfer before any strike, Iran gains a carrier-killing option. China wants Iran functional, dependent, and pointed at American power but doesn't want direct confrontation with the US. Iran's military leadership studied June's strikes and concluded the answer is “quantity, layering, and distributed lethality.”

PIJ Moves Into Hamas's Shadow in Judea and Samaria

Palestinian Islamic Jihad accelerated recruitment and propaganda operations throughout Judea and Samaria, especially in the north, as Hamas reduced its operational and financial footprint. PIJ deepened alliances with decentralized armed gangs, notably Brigade 313 in Jenin—an Iran-backed outfit named after a Shiite messianic number.

Unlike Hamas, PIJ has no governance pretensions, no political wing, and no need to balance armed resistance against administrative legitimacy. PIJ's recruitment runs heavily on financial incentive, accelerated by the freeze of work/entry permits following October 7, which left an estimated half-million Palestinians unemployed.

ASSESSMENT

Hamas's constraint created space; PIJ filled it not because PIJ is uniquely strong but because "Iran still has cash and a mission." The decentralized gang-alliance model comes with no leadership node worth targeting. Current operational tempo in Judea and Samaria is insufficient—the group continues resurging despite near-continuous kinetic operations. Two theaters of Iranian proxy expansion run simultaneously next to Israel's population centers.

Hamas Shadow Government Embedded in Gaza Governance Structures

Hamas internal documents, corroborated by an IDF briefing of Netanyahu in January, confirm senior military commanders from the al-Qassam Brigades are embedded in civilian governance roles as deliberate strategy to maintain control through the U.S.-backed post-war transition.

On orders from al-Qassam commander Izz al-Din al-Haddad, Hamas appointed district governors and officials in interior and finance ministries with clear ties to its military wing. These roles are set to be absorbed into the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG).

Hamas provides NCAG with governmental files while retaining complete duplicates. Hamas's intelligence apparatus maintains active surveillance throughout Gaza. According to internal documents, Hamas views renewed military conflict with Israel as inevitable and does not intend to honor disarmament commitments. NCAG's inaugural chair, Ali Shaath, is a former PA deputy minister—despite Trump administration assurances that neither the PA nor Hamas would have governance roles.

ASSESSMENT

This is not ambiguous. The IDF warned the Prime Minister in January. Documents are leaked and corroborated. Hamas executes deliberate infiltration of a governance structure Washington sponsors. The U.S. funds and legitimizes a shell organization whose internal command structure is Hamas. Hamas survives this war "with institutional continuity, state-adjacent resources, and a document retention strategy"—which is not a ceasefire.

Inside Israel

Coalition Fractures on VAT and Conscription; Netanyahu Faces Dual Defections

Eight Likud MKs voted against Finance Minister Smotrich's VAT exemption order on imported goods, with large numbers of ministers abstaining. Netanyahu attempted to enforce coalition discipline, recognized arithmetic wasn't there, and allowed a free vote—which became a coalition-plus-opposition vote against his own government's measure.

Smotrich announced he will re-sign the order. More consequentially, several of the same Likud rebels warned they will withhold votes on the conscription law. Supreme Court President Isaac Amit was again excluded from a major diplomatic event—Prime Minister Modi's Knesset address Wednesday—confirmed by both the Judicial Authority and Knesset Speaker Ohana's office.

ASSESSMENT

The VAT revolt is a proxy war establishing that Netanyahu cannot take their votes for granted on conscription. The conscription law is the real structural fight with worse coalition arithmetic than appears on paper. Ohana's gambit of filling empty opposition seats with former lawmakers is an aesthetics operation. The opposition boycott and visible snub of Israel's top justice during a visiting head of government's address is "a gift to every commentator currently writing about Israeli democratic backsliding."

AI Acceleration, Negev Arms Crackdown, Toxic Produce Scandal

Netanyahu's cabinet voted to fast-track AI data center construction. Energy Minister Cohen reported data centers with one gigawatt combined capacity already under construction—more than 5% of Israel's total national energy consumption. Netanyahu explicitly linked AI leadership to military power projection.

Israeli undercover agents spent a year embedded in Negev crime networks, conducting dozens of controlled weapons purchases, seizing 13 M-16 rifles, 11 Glock pistols, and over NIS 1 million in arms.

The Knesset Health Committee reported that 50% of cucumber samples, 49% of tomatoes, and 66% of hot peppers from Palestinian Authority agricultural exports tested positive for banned pesticides—including neurotoxins. Roughly 15,000 tons of Palestinian produce cross into Israel annually. The Civil Administration admitted it prioritized the Palestinian economy over Israeli public health.

ASSESSMENT

Three separate domestic stories share an underlying theme: "institutional gaps that were tolerated because they were inconvenient to close." The Negev arms network built over years. Health Committee findings aren't revelations—testing data from 2015 onward showed contamination trends. Netanyahu framing data centers as national security infrastructure is correct, though governance and regulatory velocity matching investment ambition remains uncertain.

Israel and the World

Corbyn Amplifies Blood Libel; Buchenwald Protest Targets Holocaust Memory

Former UK Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn posted an Instagram video repeating claims by Al-Shifa Hospital director Mohammed Abu Salmiya—imprisoned seven months for the hospital’s role as a Hamas command node—that the IDF delivered boxes containing Palestinian skulls and bodies with removed organs.

The IDF’s international spokesperson, Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, stated IDF soldiers had not been near Shifa in months and described the claim as “a wild blood libel.”

An anti-Zionist group calling itself “Kufiyas in Buchenwald” announced a protest at the Buchenwald concentration camp memorial on April 11—liberation anniversary—accusing it of “historical revisionism and genocide denial.” A German court previously ruled the memorial could ban keffiyehs.

ASSESSMENT

Corbyn “knew the source’s credibility, chose to broadcast the claim anyway, and framed it as established fact.” Blood libel is a specific, centuries-old mechanism for inciting violence against Jews. Broadcasting through verified social media “to a large following is an amplification of a dehumanization narrative—one with a documented body count in the historical record.”

Staging a pro-Palestinian protest at a Nazi death camp on liberation day while accusing the memorial of “genocide denial” is not satire—“it is the most precise possible statement of where antizionism ends up.”

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

Jerusalem Post: Up to 20 drones cross daily from Egypt into Israel carrying weapons and drugs, with payload capacity reaching 150 kilograms—Cairo’s cooperation under bilateral security commitments remains “effectively nonexistent.” Former ambassador David Govrin noted Egypt has treaty obligation to stop this traffic.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

Jewish Insider: Rep. Sean Casten (D-IL) and 25 Democratic co-sponsors introduced the Ceasefire Compliance Act, imposing 90-day rolling assessments of Israeli compliance with October 2025 ceasefire and banning U.S. military transfers for Gaza or Judea and Samaria use if Israel falls short—with no

carve-out for Hamas violations. J Street made the bill its top legislative priority. The legislation has no path through Republican-controlled Congress but “establishes the template for the next time Democrats hold the majority.”

JNS: Israel and Azerbaijan signed an AI memorandum of understanding in Jerusalem covering supercomputing infrastructure, civilian AI applications, and joint research—the second such agreement this month, following a joint declaration with the United States in January.

Jerusalem Post: Reps. Thomas Massie and Ro Khanna force a War Powers vote next week to restrict unilateral U.S. military action against Iran, fracturing nominal congressional consensus behind Trump administration pressure campaign. “Tehran’s negotiators will have read the vote count before Washington does.”

Culture, Religion & Society

Jerusalem Post: The United States’ first Palestinian bookstore, Watermelon Books LA, opened in Los Angeles, stocking texts including works by a PFLP spokesman killed for role in Lod Airport massacre, Norman Finkelstein’s *The Holocaust Industry*, and a children’s book teaching the Jewish state is a temporary “occupying” entity.

Jerusalem Post: The director with ties to a terror organization of Australia’s Malek Fahd Islamic School—federally funded receiving 60% of budget from Canberra—resigned after Sky News reported he posted a Hamas combat video with Arabic prayer for jihadist victory.

HonestReporting: On the first Friday of Ramadan, 80,000 Muslim worshippers prayed at Al-Aqsa without incident—a fact *The Guardian* did not report, having filed a piece framing Israel’s routine security preparations “as an attack on Muslim prayer rights and drawing comparisons to the Second Intifada and October 7.”

Times of Israel: The Great Isaiah Scroll—oldest near-complete biblical manuscript, recovered from Qumran in 1947—is on public display in its entirety at the Israel Museum for the first time since 1968 in a specially climate-controlled room. “Seven meters of unbroken Hebrew text, older than most of Western civilization’s foundational documents, sitting in Jerusalem.”

Developments to Watch

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Trump’s 10-Day Clock Expires This Week** — Ultimatum expires roughly Friday–Saturday before Trump moves to “something very tough.” Poland, Germany, Japan, and Serbia issued emergency evacuation orders.
- **War Powers Vote Next Week** — Massie and Khanna force floor vote restricting unilateral Iran action. If it passes or draws significant Republican

support, it hands Tehran argument that Washington's fuse is political, not military.

- **Iraq Al-Nujaba Pre-Delegation** — Iran-aligned Al-Nujaba reportedly established decentralized “corps system” authorizing attacks on U.S. targets without leadership sign-off if Iran is struck.
- **China CM-302 Delivery Timeline** — No delivery date agreed on anti-ship missile deal, but Oraei's personal Beijing trip and accelerating talks suggest transfer window is months, not years.

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Beqaa Strike Aftermath** — Lebanese media reported Israeli airstrike in eastern Beqaa Valley overnight; target banks reportedly finalized for Hezbollah contingency.
- **Suweida Power Vacuum** — Syrian forces reportedly preparing to enter Druze-controlled Suweida as U.S. moves to withdraw roughly 1,000 troops from Syria.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Hamas Shadow Government Integration Deadline** — NCAG moving toward operational status while assessments confirm Hamas military-wing commanders embedded in civilian roles. Window to contest structure's legitimacy before it becomes functioning, U.S.-legitimized institution is closing fast.
- **Egypt Drone Corridor Unresolved** — Up to 20 drones cross daily from Egypt carrying weapons and drugs. Cairo not enforcing treaty obligations; Israeli leadership contact with Egypt “effectively absent.”

Judea & Samaria

- **PIJ Recruitment Momentum** — PIJ expanding in Judea and Samaria through mosque networks, gang alliances, and social media.
- **Sa-Nur Reentry Preparations Under Pressure** — Defense approval to re-open access roads to Sa-Nur (evacuated 2005) delayed by manpower diversion to ongoing clashes. Reentry politically committed; operationally competing with everything else for same soldiers.

Home Front & Politics

- **Conscription Law Arithmetic Collapsing** — Eight Likud rebels signaled they'll withhold votes on conscription bill after VAT revolt. Netanyahu couldn't hold coalition on economic measure; outcomes on conscription uncertain.
- **Modi Address Wednesday** — Supreme Court President Amit remains uninvited to Modi's Knesset address. Opposition threatened boycott; Ohana says he'll fill with former MKs. Whatever happens Wednesday becomes the week's international optics story on Israeli democratic institutions.

Closing Assessment

THE Iran acquisition picture deteriorated measurably. Hamas transition fraud became documented record rather than informed suspicion. The Israeli coalition demonstrated it cannot take its own arithmetic for granted. Israel retains operational initiative; the U.S. military buildup continues; Tehran still hasn't found negotiating position addressing what Washington actually cares about.

The next inflection point is Friday—when Trump's stated deadline lands and everyone discovers “whether it was a fuse or a prop.”

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ABOUT MITZPE INSTITUTE

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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