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March 26, 2026

ISRAEL BRIEF

Thursday, March 26

Netanyahu orders a 48-hour strike surge before a ceasefire he can't control. Tehran names conditions Washington cannot accept. The Lebanese army's deception in the south unravels in real time.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE Iran's war is accomplishing what years of Abraham Accords diplomacy could not: forcing Gulf states to articulate — publicly, on the record — that their security depends on the United States and Israel, not on Arab solidarity. Gargash's language is diplomatic code for a strategic divorce.

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Israel Brief: Thursday, March 26

Netanyahu orders a 48-hour strike surge before a ceasefire he can't control. Tehran names conditions Washington cannot accept. The Lebanese army's deception in the south unravels in real time.

Flash Brief

- **48-hour strike surge:** Netanyahu directs the IDF to accelerate destruction of Iran's nuclear and missile programs before a possible Trump-imposed halt; U.S. and Israel grant temporary immunity to two senior Iranian officials for diplomatic contact.
- **Tehran's impossible demands:** Iran insists on base closures, war reparations, Hormuz sovereignty, and Hezbollah's inclusion in any deal — conditions designed to be rejected.
- **Lebanese army deception exposed:** IDF discovers intact Hezbollah infrastructure in El-Khiam the LAF reported cleared; Defense Minister Katz orders "root treatment" modeled on Gaza's Yellow Line.
- **Caspian Sea strikes sever Russia-Iran pipeline:** Bandar Anzali port attack destroyed naval assets and disrupted the sanctions-evasion corridor that moved 300,000 artillery shells to Moscow in 2023.
- **Budget vote today:** NIS 850 billion budget reaches the plenum; failure by March 31 triggers elections Netanyahu's coalition would lose at 51 projected seats.
- **Agmon resigns over anti-Mizrachi slurs:** Netanyahu's spokesman and acting chief of staff quits after Channel 12 exposé — second gatekeeper lost in wartime.
- **Gulf states break with Arab League:** UAE publicly attacks Arab inaction on Iranian aggression; Emirati and Kuwaiti voices predict post-war normalization rush with Israel.
- **Herzog to Europe — you're next:** President warns European inaction on Iran is strategic negligence, citing 4,000-km missile demonstrated to Diego Garcia.

The War Today

NETANYAHU ORDERS 48-HOUR STRIKE SURGE AS CEASEFIRE WINDOW NARROWS

Netanyahu directed the IDF to intensify strikes over a 48-hour period targeting Iran's arms industry, nuclear program, and missile capabilities, issuing the directive during a high-level security meeting at the Kirya after receiving senior commander briefings on remaining target sets. The urgency stems from Israeli assessments that Trump could announce a ceasefire or temporary halt as early as this weekend, potentially before Israel achieves its core objectives of degrading Iran's missile and nuclear capacity below reconstitution thresholds.

Israel reviewed a U.S.-drafted 14-point proposal and found it alarming. Officials describe the likelihood of a deal as "somewhere between slim and nonexistent" but fear Trump "could surprise us." Separately, Washington and Jerusalem granted temporary immunity — a four-to-five-day window — to

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, suspending assassination operations to allow diplomatic contact.

Tehran has already rejected the framework outright, but diplomatic theater will proceed regardless. An Iranian official told al-Mayadeen this week that Iran demands binding guarantees against future war, compensation for damages, closure of U.S. regional bases, and a new legal regime for the Strait of Hormuz — conditions no American administration could accept. The same official stated Tehran “does not see a near horizon for a ceasefire” and aims to “punish the aggressor.”

Iran separately told intermediaries through six regional sources that any deal must include Lebanon and a halt to Israeli strikes on Hezbollah, with Hezbollah receiving “Iranian guarantees” of inclusion. Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia pressed Washington not to halt operations and to see through regime change.

Trump last week rejected Netanyahu’s proposal for a joint call urging Iranians to take to the streets, reportedly telling him: “Why the hell should we tell people to take to the streets when they’ll just get mowed down” — a reference to the Basij’s massacre of protesters in January’s crackdown. Netanyahu issued a solo call tied to the Persian Fire Festival. No demonstrations materialized.

CENTCOM reports more than 10,000 Iranian military targets struck, 92% of Iran’s largest naval vessels destroyed, and a 90%-plus reduction in missile and drone launch rates. The Israeli Air Force struck Isfahan’s Underwater Research Center and unmanned naval vessel production facilities. The cabinet authorized mobilization of up to 400,000 reservists.

Israeli security forces arrested a 14-year-old Tel Aviv boy on suspicion of spying for Iran. His tasks included filming the Kirya headquarters, scouting an apartment nearby, preparing graffiti, and taking surveillance video targeting Foreign Minister Sa’ar’s home — for which he received \$1,170.

The National Security Council warned that Iranian-directed terror against Israeli and Jewish targets worldwide is at an unprecedented level. Israelis abroad were told to avoid unsecured Jewish events and identifiable Jewish sites, with complete avoidance in UAE, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

ASSESSMENT

Israel is racing against two clocks — one set in Tehran, one in Washington. The 48-hour surge reflects a calculation that the military window is at risk. Netanyahu’s problem: the campaign has degraded Iran’s conventional capability by every measurable metric, but the regime itself appears to be consolidating rather than fracturing. The pre-war conditions for internal collapse (fiscal crisis, divided elites, national protest movement) were real, and the war interrupted them by giving the IRGC a unifying external threat.

Trump’s rejection of the joint uprising call reveals Washington’s actual assessment: regime change is a bonus, not a war aim. The immunity granted to Ghalibaf and Araqchi buys four days of diplomatic theater, nothing more.

Tehran's demands — base closures, Hormuz sovereignty, war reparations, Hezbollah protection — declare that officials believe they control the escalation ladder through pain tolerance and energy leverage.

The question is whether Trump agrees. If he announces a halt before Israel finishes degrading the nuclear and missile programs below reconstitution thresholds, the campaign becomes the most expensive pressure operation in Israeli history (devastating on delivery, inconclusive on outcome).

LEBANESE ARMY DECEPTION EXPOSED

IDF officers operating in southern Lebanon said the Lebanese Armed Forces lied to Israel about enforcing Hezbollah's disarmament south of the Litani. Troops intensifying operations in El-Khiam over the past week discovered extensive Hezbollah infrastructure — weapons caches, underground bunkers, command headquarters built adjacent to civilian homes — contradicting LAF reports that the area had been cleared.

One officer stated: "They deceived Israel. They claimed they had enforced the decision to demilitarize southern Lebanon. They shared intelligence and reports on entire regions, but based on what we found, it's clear that nothing was done."

Not surprisingly, given that substantial bloc of Shiite LAF personnel are affiliated with Hezbollah. Defense Minister Katz ordered "root treatment" of El-Khiam — systematic demolition of all terror infrastructure through engineering operations, modeled on IDF operations east of the Yellow Line in Gaza — with bulldozers already entering the town.

El-Khiam's elevated terrain provides direct line-of-sight fire toward Kiryat Shmona, Metula, and the Ramim Ridge. The town functioned as a launch hub where operatives equipped with anti-tank missiles would fire them against IDF troops and Israeli civilians.

Hezbollah fired approximately 120 rockets from residential neighborhoods in Tyre yesterday. The IDF ordered the city's evacuation and struck terrorist infrastructure. Foreign Minister Sa'ar sent a letter to the UN Security Council reporting more than 3,500 rockets, missiles, and UAVs launched at Israeli territory since March 2, including from areas south of the Litani, and called for Hezbollah's designation as a terrorist organization.

Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem, in a televised speech read on his behalf, declared that negotiations under fire amount to "imposed surrender" and vowed fighters would continue "without limits."

Egoz commando troops operating near Mount Dov apprehended a cell commander of the Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese Resistance Brigades — an organization that trains in Hezbollah camps but whose members do not formally join the group.

Overnight, the IDF struck a Dahiyeh command center and multiple gas stations belonging to al-Amana, Hezbollah's fuel company, which generates millions in operational revenue. Unfortunately an IDF reservist was severely

wounded by Hezbollah rocket fire in southern Lebanon, and a combat officer was lightly injured separately by anti-tank fire.

A Lebanese Military Court judge issued arrest warrants against four Hezbollah members accused of smuggling 21 Grad missiles, 3,000 rounds of ammunition, and eight machine guns from the Bekaa Valley into southern Lebanon. Hezbollah-affiliated lawyers attempted to downgrade the charges to misdemeanors to avoid setting a judicial precedent — and protests broke out outside the presidential palace in support of the detainees.

ASSESSMENT

The El-Khiam discoveries confirm what Israeli commanders suspected and the LAF actively concealed: UNSCR 1701 enforcement south of the Litani was more or less nonexistent. The LAF chose not to disarm Hezbollah, then filed reports saying it had. The “root treatment” model imported from Gaza signals that the IDF intends to demolish the infrastructure physically, not negotiate its removal diplomatically.

Qassem has no mandate to concede anything and every incentive to prove Hezbollah's relevance to Tehran's broader strategy, but it also means the Lebanon front remains open-ended — exactly the cost Iran wants to impose. The Lebanese court warrants against Hezbollah arms smugglers are theatre. Hezbollah remains embedded in and in control of huge swaths of the government.

CASPIAN SEA STRIKES SEVER RUSSIA-IRAN ARMS PIPELINE

Israeli airstrikes on Iran's Caspian Sea port of Bandar Anzali targeted a key shipping route used by Russia and Iran to transfer weapons — including arms Moscow uses against Ukraine. The strikes destroyed an Iranian Navy corvette, four missile boats, several auxiliary and guard vessels, a command center, and a shipyard. The IDF publicly framed the strikes as degrading Iranian naval capacity.

This disrupted the sanctions-evasion corridor through which Iran transferred more than 300,000 artillery shells and one million rounds of ammunition to Russia in just 2023 alone, alongside the Shahed drones Moscow now produces domestically with Iranian technical assistance. Russia operates its own port roughly 600 miles from Bandar Anzali on the same inland sea. The sanctioned Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines regularly operates from the port.

Russia is reciprocating. Moscow provides intelligence, satellite imagery and improved drone technology to aid Tehran's targeting of U.S. forces, along with parts to upgrade Shahed communications, navigation, and targeting.

Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov called the strikes on Bandar Anzali a “dangerous spread of the conflict” to the Caspian, and Kremlin spokesman Peskov warned Russia would view any spillover “extremely negatively.”

Ukraine, meanwhile, deployed more than 200 defense specialists to help Gulf states counter Iran's drone strikes, leveraging interceptor systems developed against the same Shahed variants Russia uses against Ukrainian cities.

ASSESSMENT

The Bandar Anzali strikes accomplished three things simultaneously: degraded Iran's Caspian naval capacity, severed (at least temporarily) a major sanctions-evasion artery feeding Russia's war machine and Tehran's coffers, and created a fact on the ground that neither Jerusalem nor Moscow will discuss in the open.

Israel benefits from degrading the pipeline without claiming credit, because acknowledging the Russia angle would force a diplomatic confrontation Netanyahu doesn't want. Moscow benefits from ignoring it because admitting the route existed means admitting it violated its own stated neutrality. The Ukraine angle adds a layer Washington won't advertise either — Israeli strikes are doing more to disrupt Russian arms supply than two years of Western sanctions achieved on this corridor.

The Kremlin's "extremely negative" language is calibrated displeasure. Russia's options are limited: it cannot credibly retaliate against Israel while depending on the same regional dynamics for its own interests in Syria and beyond. The operational takeaway is that Israel used a naval strike package framed as force degradation to execute a strategic disruption of a Russia-Iran military logistics network — and everyone involved has reasons to pretend that's not what happened.

Inside Israel

NETANYAHU RACES BUDGET PAST DEADLINE TO BLOCK ELECTIONS HE WOULD LOSE

Netanyahu is maneuvering to pass the NIS 850 billion state budget before the March 31 deadline — which, under Israeli law, would trigger elections within 90 days if missed — after abandoning an early election gamble that briefly tempted his camp in the war's opening days.

In the first days of Operation Roaring Lion, Netanyahu's advisors saw an opportunity to capitalize on the assassination of Khamenei by forcing a snap vote. Science Minister Gila Gamliel publicly floated a late June date, and senior Likud aides made similar remarks to Israeli media.

But nearly four weeks into a war that has not toppled the regime, polls show the coalition frozen. A Times of Israel survey on March 19 gave Likud 28 seats (down from 34), with the full coalition at 51 — nine short of a majority. The 40-40 split between coalition and opposition blocs has barely moved since October 7, 2023. The war costs the economy \$1.6 billion per week. And the government approved an additional NIS 32 billion in defense spending since February 28.

The ultra-Orthodox parties dropped their threat to vote against the budget after the coalition allocated approximately NIS 5 billion for ultra-Orthodox schools, despite not finalizing the draft exemption legislation they had demanded. Opposition MK Vladimir Beliak accused the government of choosing "coalition survival over fair distribution of resources."

The budget cleared the Finance Committee and heads to the plenum for a vote today.

ASSESSMENT

Netanyahu is buying coalition loyalty at NIS 5 billion per line item — and the Haredi parties are selling. They dropped the draft law demand, which was their single non-negotiable condition for months, in exchange for funding. That trade tells you what each side actually values.

The polls explain the urgency. The coalition is stuck at 51 seats in every survey — below the threshold to form a government, regardless of war performance. The war rallied the public behind the operation but did not move the voters. His strategy — buy time, pass the budget, delay elections until October — depends on something changing between now and then. The war hasn't provided it.

NETANYAHU'S SPOKESMAN QUILTS AFTER ANTI-MIZRACHI SLURS SURFACE

Ziv Agmon, Netanyahu's spokesman and acting chief of staff, resigned Wednesday after a Channel 12 investigative report accused him of making racist remarks about Moroccan Jews and Likud MKs. Agmon — who rose from wartime PR consultant to spokesman to acting chief of staff after Tzachi Braverman's suspension — reportedly called MK Nissim Vaturi a "baboon," MK Eliyahu Revivo "a retarded Moroccan," and said of Likud's Knesset list that "rapists and murderers are needed."

He described Shas as a party that "only knows how to take money," expressed interest in joining Gantz's Blue and White list as "much more suitable than the monkeys," and — after October 7 — said Netanyahu "has to go home."

Condemnation came from across the spectrum. Justice Minister Levin: "There is no place for racism." MK Vaturi called for immediate dismissal. Opposition leader Lapid called the racism in Netanyahu's inner circle "a disgrace to the Prime Minister's Office."

Agmon apologized "to anyone who was hurt by the statements attributed to me" and announced his withdrawal from public life, citing concern that "a divisive discourse has arisen around me" during "fateful days."

ASSESSMENT

The Agmon affair is a personnel embarrassment which lands at seemingly the worst possible moment for a prime minister whose coalition depends on Mizrahi and Haredi parties whose members Agmon was caught mocking. What matters operationally: Agmon was the acting chief of staff because Braverman was suspended for potential obstruction. The PMO has burned through two gatekeepers in wartime. The vacancy leaves Netanyahu's internal management structure thinner at the exact moment budget, war, and diplomacy are converging.

Israel and the World**HERZOG WARNS EUROPE: IRAN'S MISSILES ALREADY REACH YOU**

President Isaac Herzog said that European reluctance to confront Iran is strategic negligence, pointing to Tehran's 4,000-kilometer missile test to Diego Garcia as proof that Iranian ballistic capability covers all of Europe. "What are you so naive about? Read their scriptures, read their ideology, and understand — you're next," Herzog said.

He cited British Prime Minister Starmer's acknowledgment of 10 to 20 Iranian terror-linked events in the UK in the past year alone and asked: "They're allowed to do what they want?"

Herzog called Iran "an empire of evil" that "must be crushed" and praised Trump's decision to act as "courageous" and "historic." He confirmed that the campaign's primary objectives are degrading Iran's nuclear weapon capability and long-range missile capacity.

ASSESSMENT

Herzog's message to Europe is accurate on the merits — Iran's demonstrated range and operational terror networks on European soil are facts, not projections. Where he's wrong is the diagnosis. Europe's non-response to Iran isn't naiveté. It's capitulation — the structural kind. British ministers calibrate Iran policy by the weekend protest calendar. French officials game the policing plan before they draft the diplomatic cable.

Governments that spent two decades building domestic veto points for Islamist-aligned blocs — in council chambers, in police liaison desks, in coalition arithmetic — cannot suddenly pivot to confronting the state sponsor of the ideology those blocs defend. Herzog is asking Europe to act against Tehran while London still can't enforce its own incitement statutes against mobs chanting for intifada on Whitehall. The paralysis is connected. A state that subcontracts its domestic authority to avoid being called Islamophobic will not assert its strategic authority against the Islamic Republic.

Iran doesn't need to hit Europe with a missile to neutralize it. The internal permission structure already does the work. Which, clearly, tells Tehran everything it needs to know about European resolve.

GULF STATES BREAK WITH ARAB LEAGUE — AND SIGNAL NORMALIZATION WITH ISRAEL

The UAE launched a public campaign against Arab League countries for their tepid response to Iranian strikes on Gulf infrastructure, with presidential adviser Anwar Gargash asking: "Where are the major Arab and regional countries while our nations and peoples face this treacherous Iranian aggression?"

When France's former diplomat Gérard Araud warned the stance would deepen Gulf dependence on Washington, Emirati Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed responded: "We will never be blackmailed by terrorists." Gargash followed up Wednesday by distinguishing "those who offered genuine support" from "those who settled for statements without action."

The fury extends beyond the UAE. Similar messages appeared in Qatari newspaper editorials and Kuwaiti statements. Targets include Egypt — whose president took five days to comment and whose secretary-general of the Arab League, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, called the attacks "audacious" rather than condemning them — and states like Iraq, Algeria, and Sudan.

Emirati media personality Jamal Al Mulla said on his podcast that "when the shooting stops, I expect a few Gulf countries to rush to normalization with Israel. My money is on Kuwait, perhaps Saudi Arabia too."

Hussain Abdul-Hussain of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies confirmed that Gulf anger at Arab inaction is driving realignment calculations, noting that Hamas and the PA both failed to denounce Iran: “The thinking in the Gulf is that this time, it’s our turn. We’re the victims. The Palestinians can wait.”

UAE Ambassador to Washington Yousef Al Otaiba wrote in the Wall Street Journal that the war must end decisively — addressing nuclear, missile, drone, proxy, and shipping threats — and declared: “We are ready to join an international initiative to reopen the strait and keep it open.”

Kuwait foiled a Hezbollah plot to assassinate state leaders — arresting six suspects who confessed to espionage, assassination training, and terrorist activities. 14 additional suspects — Kuwaiti, Lebanese, and Iranian — were identified abroad. This follows two separate Hezbollah-linked arrest waves in Kuwait in recent weeks.

ASSESSMENT

Iran’s war is accomplishing what years of Abraham Accords diplomacy could not: forcing Gulf states to articulate — publicly, on the record — that their security depends on the United States and Israel, not on Arab solidarity. Gargash’s language is diplomatic code for a strategic divorce.

The Gulf states absorbed 84% of Iran’s missile and drone fire while Arab League members issued statements calibrated to offend no one, and the calculation is straightforward. If Arab institutions won’t protect you, you build alliances with those who will. Al Mulla’s normalization prediction deserves attention because the sentiment is now public rather than private. The Palestinian cause, which Gulf leaders were expected to champion indefinitely, has become a distraction other Arab states insert into statements to avoid taking a position.

Briefly Noted

FRONTLINE & SECURITY

- **Israeli security forces dismantled a ten-member Hamas cell near Nablus** that carried out roadside bombings wounding three soldiers — two seriously — and dug a six-meter tunnel behind a suspect’s home to hold kidnapped Israelis.
- **COGAT intercepted hundreds of engine oil bottles disguised as cooking oil** inside a UNDP-coordinated humanitarian shipment at Kerem Shalom and suspended all UNDP aid deliveries to Gaza pending investigation. Hamas continues to exploit the aid mechanism for military buildup — and the agency coordinating the shipment bears responsibility for its contents.

DIPLOMACY & GEOPOLITICS

- **Lebanese authorities conducted a comprehensive survey of Iranian nationals** across the country — diplomatic, cultural, religious, and intelligence-linked personnel — and confirmed that most embassy staff have departed via Iraq, Turkey, and Russia. Security sources acknowledged IRGC officers

may be operating under civilian cover but claimed enforcement would follow Lebanese law.

- **Three new pro-Palestinian PACs — PAL PAC, American Priorities, and Citizens Against AIPAC Corruption** — entered the 2026 midterms with at least \$10 million pledged, backing candidates who support conditioning military aid to Israel and “recognizing the genocide in Palestine.” A Sanders-linked staffer won in New Jersey and a pastor who praised Farrakhan won a Texas primary.
- **Uganda’s military chief, Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, tweeted** that his country would enter the war on Israel’s side if anyone tries to “destroy or defeat” it — generating 1.3 million engagements and citing bible verses. Kainerugaba also announced plans to erect a statue of Lt. Col. Yonatan Netanyahu *z”l* at Entebbe Airport, where he fell in the 1976 hostage rescue.

DOMESTIC & LAW

- **Otzma Yehudit’s death penalty bill for terrorists cleared the National Security Committee** for its final Knesset vote next week, but Yisrael Beytenu conditioned support on Netanyahu personally voting in the plenum. With Haredi MKs expected to abstain, the margin is razor-thin.
- **The government approved NIS 110 million in emergency funding for front-line communities** — NIS 60 million for municipalities within nine kilometers of the northern border and NIS 50 million for areas hit by direct missile strikes. The package supplements existing property tax compensation and evacuee hotel accommodations but does not include the employee compensation framework that remains unfinished.
- **JDC Israel deployed a four-part emergency model** — supplies, flexible funding, community workers, medical support — to municipalities hit by Iranian missile strikes, and launched a program relocating displaced families from hotels into permanent housing. Families are emerging from shelters barefoot with nothing. All of Israel is now a frontline.

ECONOMY, TECH & INFRASTRUCTURE

- **A Los Angeles jury found Meta and Google liable for designing platforms dangerous to minors** — \$4.2 million and \$1.8 million in damages respectively — in a landmark verdict that could reshape how tech companies defend against child safety claims. Both plan to appeal, but at least 20 states enacted social media child-safety laws last year, and a separate federal trial is expected this summer.

CULTURE, RELIGION & SOCIETY

- **Sami Rahamim, an Iranian-American whose father was murdered in a 2012 Minneapolis mass shooting**, landed at Ben Gurion Wednesday as one of 50 new North American immigrants — calling his aliyah a continuation of Cyrus’s biblical call. More than 130 North Americans have made aliyah since the Iran war began, with 830 additional immigration files opened.
- **Argentina marks 50 years since the 1976 coup** with new educational initiatives documenting the disproportionate Jewish toll: up to 1,900 Jews

among the 30,000 disappeared — 5–8% of victims from less than 1% of the population. The new curriculum documents how Jewish detainees faced specifically antisemitic treatment, including Nazi symbols and dedicated interrogation sessions.

- **Farsi social media is flooded with pro-Israel, anti-regime sentiment** — Iranians celebrating eliminated IRGC officials and thanking Israel publicly for the strikes — but Western outlets ignore it. Iran expert Alex Greenberg of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security: the posts reflect genuine fury from a population terrorized by a regime that charges families ransom to retrieve murdered relatives' bodies.
- **CNN's Fred Pleitgen, broadcasting from Tehran with regime permission**, portrayed Iranian street life as calm and normal — stocked shelves, no gas lines — while omitting the IRGC's shoot-to-kill order, the thousands killed in January's crackdown, and the strategic rationale behind Israeli and U.S. strikes. Access journalism in a country ranked 176th on the Press Freedom Index produces coverage that mirrors the regime's messaging — which is the point of granting access.
- **Physicians Against Antisemitism flagged Atlanta-based therapist Erica Holladay Webb** for telling a Jewish man “you are white, you don't have a right to a country in the Middle East” while branding herself “anti-racist.” The case captures a recurring failure in progressive therapeutic spaces: frameworks that claim to center marginalized voices systematically exclude Jews — and then deny the exclusion counts as bigotry.

Developments to Watch

REGIONAL AXIS (IRAN, HOUTHIS, MILITIAS)

- **Kharg Island ground option live** — Two Marine expeditionary units deploying to the region: the first due at the end of this month, the second mid-April. Iran's Tasnim threatened to “turn the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait into unsafe areas” if the island is seized.
- **Iran cluster munitions in central Israel** — Bomblets dispersed across Bnei Brak from a single ballistic warhead; nine wounded including children. Iran is compensating for reduced accuracy with area-effect warheads.

NORTHERN FRONT (LEBANON / SYRIA)

- **Iranian ambassador expulsion deadline Sunday** — Lebanese foreign ministry ordered Ambassador Sheibani out; Hezbollah and Berri told him to stay. Sunday is the test: does the Lebanese government enforce its own directive or does Hezbollah veto it? The answer determines whether post-Khamenei Lebanese sovereignty has any institutional weight. Making an appointment with Sheibani on Monday in Beirut is a relatively safe bet.
- **Hezbollah helicopter shootdown attempt** — IDF confirmed Hezbollah tried to shoot down an Israeli combat helicopter over Lebanon; the attempt failed.

JUDEA & SAMARIA

- **Hamas kidnapping infrastructure near Nablus** — The Beita cell dismantled this week dug a purpose-built hostage tunnel and conducted target surveillance. The October 7 model — hostage-taking as strategic leverage — is being replicated in Judea and Samaria on an ad hoc basis.

DIPLOMATIC & LEGAL

- **Passover global threat window** — NSC assesses Iranian-directed targeting of Israeli and Jewish sites worldwide at an unprecedented level, with the holiday identified as a strategic operational window. Specific guidance issued for UAE, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, India, and Thailand. Ben Gurion Airport remains closed; land crossings through Sinai and Jordan operating under Level 4 warnings.

HOME FRONT & POLITICS

- **Budget plenum vote today** — NIS 850 billion budget reaches the Knesset floor Thursday; failure to pass by March 31 triggers elections within 90 days. Coalition arithmetic depends on Haredi parties honoring the NIS 5 billion school-funding agreement and Yisrael Beytenu not withholding votes over the death penalty bill sequencing.

The war is entering its fifth week with American paratroopers en route, Iranian diplomats temporarily immune from assassination, a Lebanese army caught lying about a mandate it never intended to enforce, and a budget vote that doubles as a survival mechanism for a coalition barely holding together. Tehran believes pain tolerance wins wars. Jerusalem believes speed does. Trump believes announcements do. They're not all right.

Shabbat shalom!

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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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