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SOURCE FILE

# THE NABATIEH AXIS

IMPLICATIONS OF AN ISRAELI OFFENSIVE ON NABATIEH

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**CORE GROUP**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Israeli shaping operations against Nabatieh moved from latent to active in the first week of May 2026. Three Israeli airstrikes hit Nabatieh's urban core on 7 May, targeting Hezbollah weapons-manufacturing infrastructure. The IDF issued evacuation orders for three Nabatieh-district villages (Deir al-Zahrani, Bafroa, Habush) the same morning. The 6 May Beirut strike that killed Radwan Force commander Ahmed Ghaleb Balout, two senior Hezbollah officers in his immediate cell, and the broader 14 May ceasefire expiry close the window for a passive Israeli posture. The Nabatieh-axis offensive is no longer hypothetical; what remains undetermined is its depth and pace. Pre-offensive damage in the Nabatieh urban-core footprint stands at 0.46% of building stock, roughly 130 buildings on 28,206. A cohort-tempo offensive transposed from the Bint Jbeil and Marjaayoun saturation patterns would damage between 5,800 and 17,500 buildings across a wider 21-cadastre Nabatieh-caza modelled bloc, depending on whether Israel runs an air-and-shaping campaign, a limited ground push to the Iqlim al-Tuffah heights, or an urban assault on the Nabatieh core. The 30 to 90 day implications cut across military, humanitarian, political-sectarian-economic, and diplomatic dimensions. The heaviest weight falls on humanitarian shock (250,000 to 400,000 additional displaced) and political pressure (state-capacity strain on the Salam government, a second wave of Shia community displacement, the sovereignty offensive losing operational reach). Most of the deeper architectural changes (UNIFIL withdrawal, durable demographic re-sorting, Saudi-led reconstruction conditioning) are set in motion inside the 30 to 90 day window but consolidate only beyond it.

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## KEY JUDGMENTS

### KJ-01 HIGH CONFIDENCE

Nabatieh is the de facto next axis of Israeli operations, not a hypothesised target. Active shaping operations include the 7 May three-strike series on Nabatieh urban-core weapons-manufacturing infrastructure, the same-day evacuation orders for Deir al-Zahrani, Bafroa, and Habush, the 6 May US-coordinated decapitation strike on Radwan Force commander Ahmed Ghaleb Balout in Beirut's Dahieh, and the 26 April high-intensity strike day on eastern Nabatieh District declared part of a "forward defense zone" not yet under ground control. The 14 May ceasefire-extension expiry compresses the decision window to roughly six days from this report's date.

### KJ-02 HIGH CONFIDENCE

The operational driver is the firing-geometry problem from Hezbollah positions on the

Iqlim al-Tuffah ridges south and east of Nabatieh, which the Litani buffer cannot suppress. Hezbollah concentrates 122mm Arash-4 rocket fire, 220mm Fadi-1 rocket fire, and Almas-3/4 ATGM fire from these ridge positions. A single 12 March barrage put approximately 200 rockets into Israeli territory from this firing cluster. Israel's stated objective, traceable to public IDF and ministerial statements, is comprehensive fire control over the Nabatieh district extending to Zahrani, Sidon, the Western Bekaa, and Jezzine, achieved by reoccupying 18 strategic sites Israel held before May 2000. Iqlim al-Tuffah heights anchor that target list.

### KJ-03 HIGH CONFIDENCE

The pre-offensive damage baseline is intact; an offensive at the tempo observed in Bint Jbeil and Marjaayoun during the March cohort would damage 70 to 115 times the current building count in a 30 to 60 day window. The Nabatieh urban-core footprint records 0.46% of building stock at moderate-or-worse damage as of 26 April 2026 satellite imagery, roughly 130 buildings on 28,206 with four named severe entries. The wider modelled bloc of 21 Nabatieh-caza sub-cadastres records 0.26% on 58,365 buildings, roughly 153 damaged. A cohort-tempo offensive at the central scenario projects 10,744 damaged buildings (18% of the modelled bloc, 70× current baseline) and at the saturation ceiling 17,530 (30%, 115× current).

### KJ-04 MEDIUM-HIGH CONFIDENCE

Three operational scenarios emerge from Israel's force availability, manpower ceiling, and the Trump administration's post-Beirut-strike tolerance posture. The most likely (assessed at 60–70% probability through end-July 2026) is an air-and-shaping campaign that does not advance ground forces past current positions but systematically degrades Hezbollah weapons-manufacturing, Iqlim al-Tuffah logistics, and Al-Amana fuel infrastructure. The second (20–30%) is a limited ground push to seize the Iqlim al-Tuffah heights and bypass the Nabatieh urban core. The third (10–15%) is a Gaza-style urban assault on the Nabatieh core. Each scenario is bounded by Zamir's 20,000-soldier deficit warning and the rate of Hezbollah escalation that triggers IDF threshold-crossing.

### KJ-05 MEDIUM-HIGH CONFIDENCE

The 30 to 90 day implications concentrate on humanitarian shock and political pressure rather than military terrain change. A ground-push or urban-assault trajectory displaces 250,000 to 400,000 additional people from the Nabatieh caza on top of the existing 1.0 million self-registered displaced. The southern medical system, already collapsed below the Litani after the mid-April Tibnine triple-tap, loses Nabatieh's hospitals as the next probable failure point. The Salam government faces a state-capacity test that strains its anti-

Hezbollah enforcement posture past the limits demonstrated in the March cohort, though formal political collapse is unlikely inside the window. The Aoun White House track shifts from reconciliation toward crisis renegotiation. The AQAH financial-decapitation pattern extends into Nabatieh's commercial parcels under sustained tempo. The demographic re-shape documented in the prior damage assessment is reinforced rather than reversed.

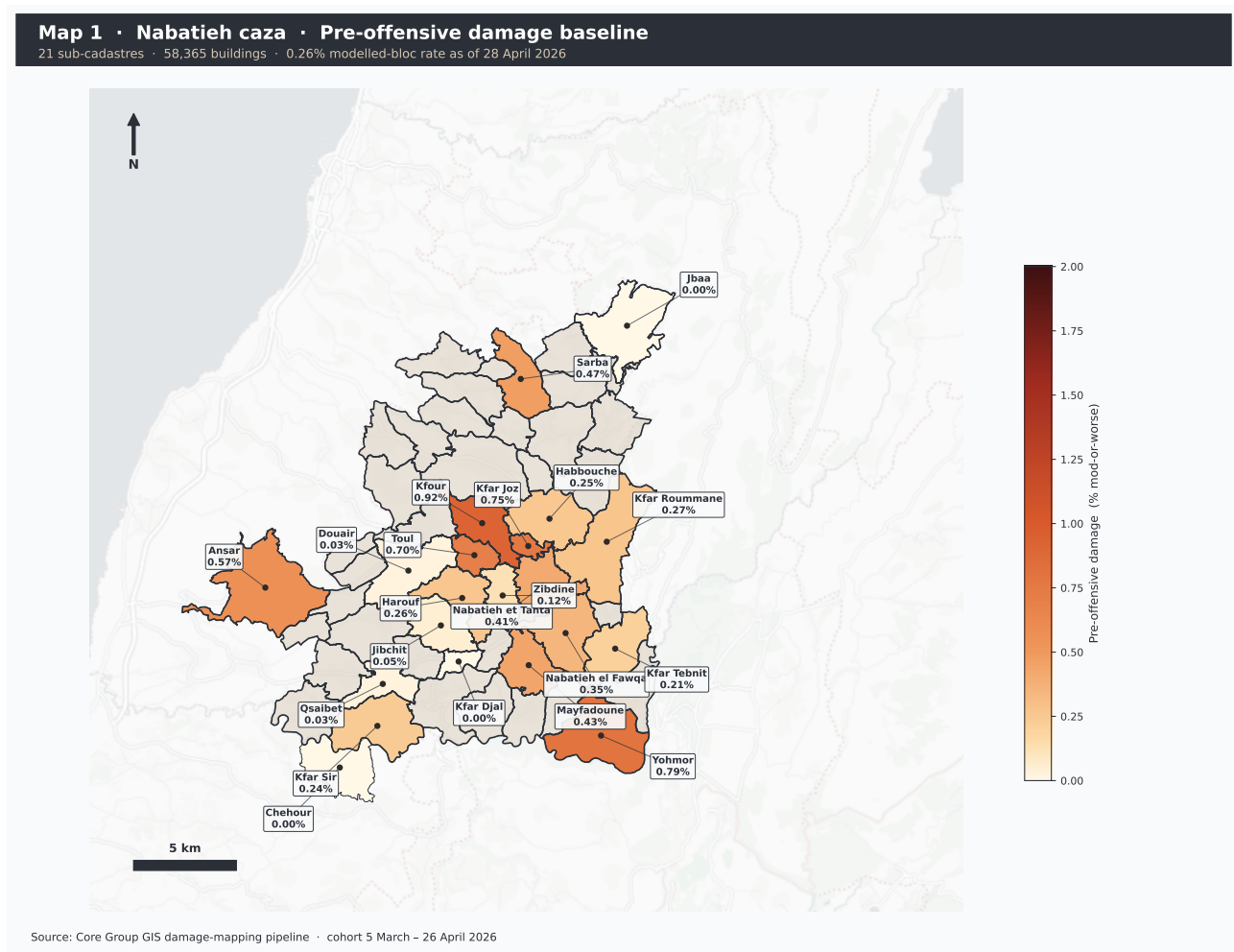
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## I. FRAME

This report measures the implications of an Israeli offensive on Nabatieh as Israel begins shaping operations for one. The corroboration tier in Section II establishes that the offensive is being prepared, not merely discussed. Sections III through V derive what Israel is capable of executing, given Hezbollah's posture in the Nabatieh district, the IDF force availability after six weeks of ground operations south of the Litani, and the 14 May ceasefire-extension expiry. Section VI projects damage by transposing the cohort-window saturation patterns documented in the prior Source File (SF-LBN-DMG-2026-05) onto Nabatieh sub-cadastrés. Sections VII and VIII trace implications across the military, humanitarian, political-sectarian-economic, and diplomatic dimensions in the 30 to 90 day window after offensive onset. Section IX carries a cross-dimensional assessment. Section X carries the watch list.

The report does not assess long-horizon implications past the initial offensive window, deliberately. The 6-month and 2-year strategic horizons require fresh analysis once the offensive's terminus geography is known. Nor does the report assess the Bekaa, Beirut, or Christian-area implications past their 30 to 90 day spillover. Force-structure recommendations for any party are out of scope. The report is analytic, not operational.

The pre-offensive baseline is dated to 29 April 2026 (the closing image of the prior cohort) supplemented by 28 April per-sub-cadastre damage layers. Anything after 8 May 2026 (the report date) is not captured by satellite cohort and would require a fresh imagery cycle. The damage projection is a pattern transposition, not a forecast, and is bounded by the saturation precedent of Beit Lif at 39.1% verified mod-or-worse.



## II. CORROBORATION: IS NABATIEH ACTUALLY ON THE TABLE?

Four lines of evidence confirm Nabatieh as the next axis. The convergence is the corroboration; no single line suffices on its own.

**Operational pattern.** On 6 May 2026, an IDF airstrike on Beirut's Dahieh killed Radwan Force commander Ahmed Ghaleb Balout, Nasr regional intelligence chief Muhammad Ali Bazi, and Aerial Defense chief Hussein Hassan Romani. The strike was the first major Israeli operation in Beirut since the 17 April ceasefire onset and was coordinated with the Trump administration. On 7 May, three Israeli airstrikes hit Nabatieh urban core, targeting Hezbollah weapons-manufacturing infrastructure with at least one strike landing in the al-Maslakh neighbourhood. The same morning, the IDF issued evacuation orders for Deir al-Zahrani, Bafroa, and Habush, three Nabatieh-district villages, requiring residents to remain at least one kilometre from the towns. Approximately 20 additional Hezbollah sites were struck across southern Lebanon overnight, including weapon depots, drone-launch sites, and a weapons-transport cell. Preceding strike sequences hit the Al-Amana fuel-station network in Khibet Selm and Duweir inside Nabatieh Governorate and Hezbollah training facilities in Iqlim al-Tuffah (Jbaa, Ain Qana,

Houmine al-Tahta, Arab Salim). On 26 April, eastern Nabatieh District absorbed the heaviest single-day strike concentration since cohort close.

**Stated Israeli objective.** Defense Minister Israel Katz has framed the operational objective as “a security zone up to the Litani” with Israel controlling the remaining bridges over the river. Katz has compared the operation to the Gaza war, ruled out the return of displaced Lebanese as long as Hezbollah remains a threat, and signalled indefinite Israeli occupation of selected Lebanese territory. Prime Minister Netanyahu announced expansion of the buffer zone to ten kilometres of depth, “much stronger, more intense, more continuous and more solid than what we had previously.” The publicly-stated objective covers 18 strategic sites Israel held before its May 2000 withdrawal, with the explicit goal of fire control over the Nabatieh district extending to Zahrani, Sidon, the Western Bekaa, and Jezzine. Iqlim al-Tuffah heights anchor that target set. After the Balout strike, Netanyahu stated that “no terrorist is immune.”

**Regional and Lebanese signal.** A sustained pattern of Israeli strikes on Nabatieh ran through April and into early May. The 2 May strike wave killed 41 people in 24 hours across south Lebanon, including in Nabatieh district. The 3 May displacement orders covered more than ten Nabatieh-district villages north of the Litani, where Israel has stationed troops south. An Iranian military official, speaking publicly during the early-May escalation, said renewed conflict was “likely.” Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem on 27 April publicly refused disarmament; the position has not softened. The historic souq in Nabatieh has been damaged and the archaeological site at Harouf has been destroyed.

**Quantitative tactical evidence.** A geographic breakdown of Hezbollah’s firing-range distribution for 2 March – 8 April 2026 records that 71.5% of all Hezbollah launches operated at ranges of up to 5 kilometres and 26.4% at 5 to 40 kilometres, the geometry consistent with sustained ridge-based fire from Iqlim al-Tuffah and the immediate border. By late March, 11 of approximately 52 Al-Amana fuel stations had been struck. Since October 2025, Israeli strikes have destroyed hundreds of Hezbollah engineering vehicles and a concrete-production quarry as part of an effort to disrupt reconstruction. The post-17 April environment registers as gradual escalation rather than de-escalation across independent OSINT and think-tank tracking.

The corroboration is convergent. Nabatieh is the de facto next axis. The 14 May ceasefire-extension expiry sets the trigger window. Active shaping operations precede the operational decision by days, not weeks.

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### III. STRATEGIC GEOMETRY

The Nabatieh caza covers approximately 58,000 buildings across 21 sub-cadastres in the modelled bloc, with the 28,206-building NBED footprint (Nabatieh el-Fawqa, et-Tahta, plus immediate ridge surround) carrying the urban core. The caza sits between the Litani river to the south and west and the Zahrani river to the north, with the Iqlim al-Tuffah ridge complex forming the southeastern flank. Topographically, the urban core sits at roughly 400 metres elevation; the Iqlim al-Tuffah ridges climb to 800 to 1,100 metres and look directly down on the Israeli border communities of the Galilee Panhandle and Western Galilee. Road geometry connects Nabatieh to Beirut via the Saida-Sidon corridor, to Marjaayoun via the central highway, and to the Bekaa via the Iqlim al-Tuffah valley road network through Jbaa, Ain Qana, and Arab Salim. The road network is the logistics conduit between the Bekaa interior and the southern Hezbollah operating area.

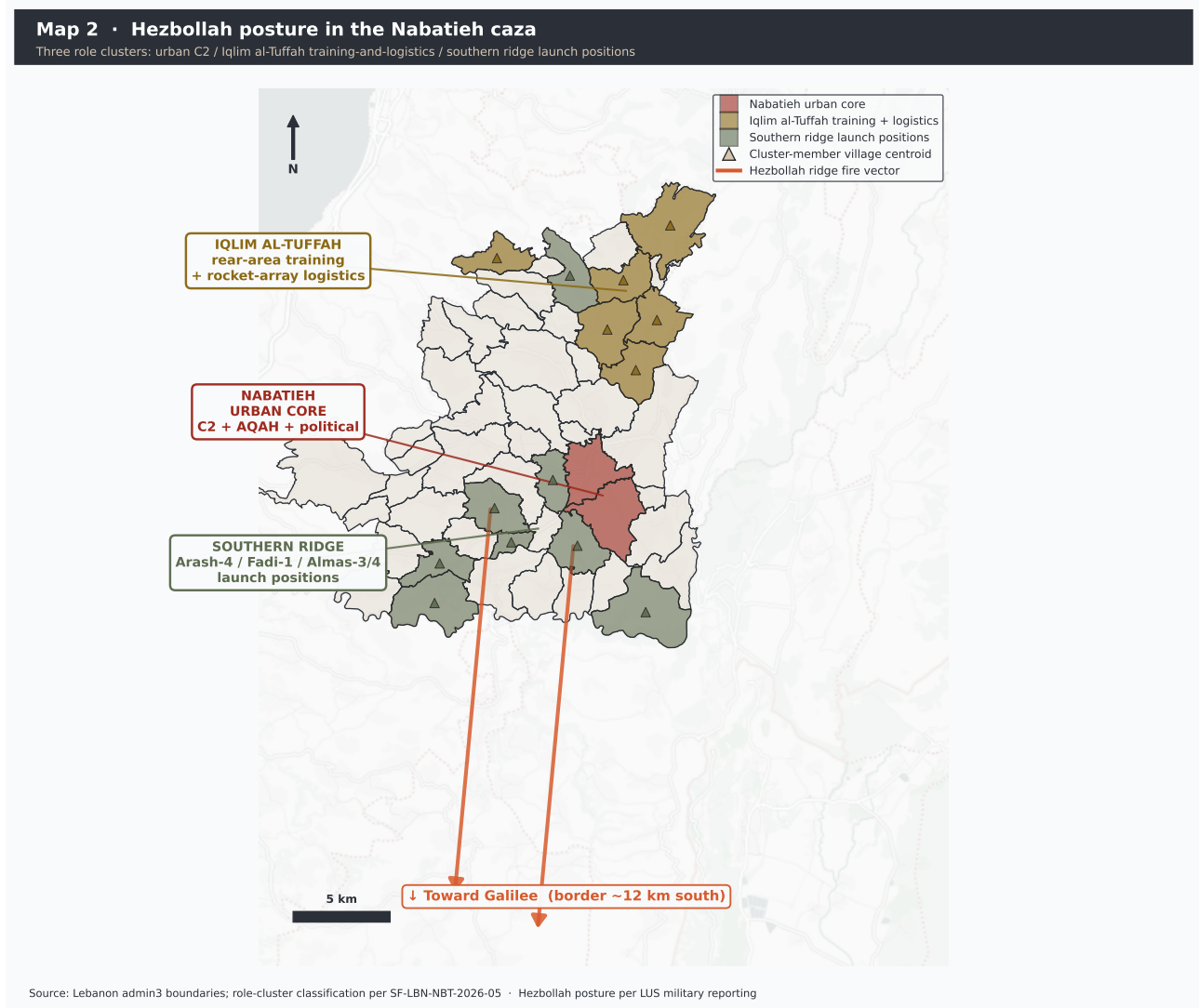
#### **Hezbollah's posture in the Nabatieh caza operates on four interlocking layers.**

**Ridge-launch firing geometry.** Hezbollah concentrates rocket and ATGM fire from positions on the ridges south and east of Nabatieh. The primary systems are the 122mm Arash-4 rocket (effective range covering all Israeli border towns and the Lower Galilee), the 220mm Fadi-1 rocket (effective range to the Upper Galilee and Haifa), and the Almas-3/4 anti-tank guided missile (direct fire on Israeli border towns from positions east of Nabatieh on a separate targeting cycle). On 12 March 2026 alone, approximately 200 rockets were fired from these ridge positions in a single barrage. The seven ridge sub-cadastres in the modelled bloc (Jbaa, Jibchit, Yohmor, Zibdine, Kfar Djal, Sarba, Qsaibet) carry the firing geometry. The Litani buffer zone established in the March 2026 cohort does not suppress this firing geometry; the firing positions sit north of the Litani.

**Urban command, control, and political infrastructure.** The Nabatieh urban core hosts Hezbollah and Amal political offices, Al-Qard al-Hassan branches, Islamic Health Authority centres, and Islamic Risala Scout Association assets. The 10 April strike on the Nabatieh Serail killed 13 State Security personnel and a Lebanese University academic. The same district recorded the 15 April Mayfadoun "quadruple-tap" paramedic strike (four paramedics killed across three response teams: Islamic Health Committee twice, then Nabatieh Emergency Services with the Islamic Risala Scout Association). The 7 May al-Maslakh strike caught a Hezbollah official inside a residential building. The urban-core targeting set in the 7 May strike series prioritises weapons-manufacturing infrastructure over command targets, consistent with the Gaza-doctrine ecosystem-targeting model.

**Logistics and supply network.** The Iqlim al-Tuffah corridor (Jbaa, Ain Qana, Houmine al-Tahta, Arab Salim) is the rear-area training and rocket-array logistics hub that links the southern frontline to the Bekaa interior. The Al-Amana fuel-station network is Hezbollah's retail energy platform, with Khirbet Selm and Duweir nodes inside the Nabatieh-caza geographic catchment. The Iran-Syria-Lebanon supply corridor has been functionally defunct since the 28-29 March Syrian seizure of three Hezbollah smuggling tunnels near Hawsh al-Sayyid Ali.

**Post-ceasefire reconstitution.** Since the 17 April ceasefire onset, Israeli strikes have targeted Hezbollah reconstruction activity in the Nabatieh district, destroying hundreds of engineering vehicles and a concrete-production quarry. The post-17 April pattern reads as gradual escalation rather than de-escalation. Hezbollah continues rocket and drone fire toward IDF positions in southern Lebanon, including a 7 May rocket-and-drone volley after the Balout strike that triggered IDF event-cancellations in northern border towns. The reconstruction-driven targeting cycle is the immediate trigger for the 7 May Nabatieh strike series.



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#### IV. ISRAELI CAPABILITY AND CONSTRAINTS

Six divisions are committed to Lebanese ground operations as of cohort close: the 146th Reserve Armored, 162nd Armored (Atzmon), 36th Armored (with the 1st Golani Infantry Brigade, 7th Armored Brigade, 188th Armored Brigade), 91st Territorial Division (with the 84th Givati Brigade, 401st Armored Brigade, 7338th Artillery), 210th Territorial Division (with the 810th Mountain Infantry Brigade and the IDF Alpinist Unit), and the 98th Paratrooper Division. The 98th Paratrooper deployed as the sixth committed division by late March, with its first killed-in-action on 29 March. By cohort close, IDF units stood 9 to 14 kilometres inside Lebanese territory.

The capability-and-constraint balance defines the scenario envelope.

**Forces available for Nabatieh-axis operations.** The 36th Armored Division and elements of the 91st Territorial Division currently sit in Khiam and the Markaba arc, geographically positioned to push north toward Iqlim al-Tuffah heights without major redeployment. The 84th Brigade controlled most of Khiam by 24 March and IDF armour entered Markaba on 26 March, putting the central axis within striking distance of the Iqlim al-Tuffah valley road network. The 91st Division advanced from hills east of Maroun el-Ras toward Bint Jbeil, a position that supports an east-flank push from Bint Jbeil through Aitaroun toward the Nabatieh approaches. The Sour and Naqoura coastal axis under the 146th and 162nd Divisions does not contribute directly to Nabatieh-axis operations but constrains Hezbollah counter-mobility along the coastal corridor.

**Manpower ceiling.** IDF Chief of Staff Zamir's 26 March 20,000-soldier deficit warning describes a force operating beyond designed reserve tempo. Fifteen soldiers were evacuated from the Lebanon front with hypothermia. The ultra-Orthodox draft exemption was deferred at the cost of operational needs. The 98th Paratrooper Division deployed as the last reserve formation. A 30 to 60 day Nabatieh-axis push is sustainable; a 90 to 180 day occupation of Nabatieh urban core under Gaza-doctrine demolition tempo crosses the manpower ceiling.

**ROE and ceasefire constraint.** The 17 April ceasefire is fragile rather than enforced. The 14 May three-week extension expiry, announced by Trump on 23 April, sets the next decision point. The Trump administration's approval of the 6 May Beirut strike confirms the ceiling is permissive rather than restrictive. Continued Hezbollah rocket fire at IDF positions inside Lebanon registers as ceasefire violation in IDF terms and unlocks reciprocal escalation. Active strikes on Nabatieh under the ceasefire framework are tolerated by the US; a ground push into the Nabatieh urban core is the next escalation rung where US tolerance reaches its edge.

**Hezbollah constraints.** The remaining rocket arsenal is estimated at 11,000 to 13,000, attrited from a pre-war baseline of approximately 25,000 to 30,000. The Iran-Syria-Lebanon supply corridor is functionally defunct. The IRGC Quds Force Lebanon Corps was effectively eliminated by 8 March (Mekeld, Daoud Ali Zada, Reza Khazai, plus four Quds Force commanders

in the 8 March Ramada Hotel strike). At 150 rockets per day average, ammunition depletion becomes the binding constraint within weeks under sustained tempo. Hezbollah's "mosaic defence" model, adopted after IRGC restructuring, provides tactical survivability but removes the ability to pursue a coherent campaign plan. The Almas-3/4 ATGM layer survives ridge clearance because its launch positions are dispersed and its targeting cycle is independent of the rocket array.

**Iranian retaliation calculus.** Khamenei's death on or about 2 March, the IRGC Quds Lebanon Corps elimination through early March, and the Iran-US ceasefire negotiations excluding Hezbollah leave Iran without a meaningful retaliation channel through Lebanon. The Iran-deal track via Trump pulls Iranian attention to its own survival rather than Lebanese theatre escalation.

The constraint balance is asymmetric. Israel can sustain a 30 to 60 day expansion at any of three intensity levels. Hezbollah cannot prevent any of them. The political constraints (US tolerance, Israeli manpower, Iranian retaliation channel) shape which intensity is selected.

## V. OPERATIONAL SCENARIOS (DERIVED)

Three scenarios emerge from the capability-and-constraint balance laid out in Section IV. None is preset; each is what the present constraint set permits. The relative likelihood judgments below are interpretive, not numerical forecasts; each scenario is conditional on actor choices and external shocks (notably the 14 May expiry decision, the Trump-Iran-deal track, and any Hezbollah strategic strike of the Bazan-refinery or Ben-Gurion class) that the analysis cannot timestamp.

### Scenario A — Air-and-shaping campaign

**MOST LIKELY PATH**

Israel continues the current pattern: systematic strikes on Nabatieh urban-core weapons-manufacturing nodes, Iqlim al-Tuffah ridge-village logistics, and the Al-Amana fuel network; targeted decapitation against Radwan-force commanders; cascading evacuation orders through Nabatieh-district approaches. The 14 May ceasefire either lapses without renewal or transitions into a strikes-with-talks holding pattern. No ground push past current positions occurs. Damage tracks toward the floor projection of roughly 5,800 buildings (10% of modelled bloc, 38× current baseline) over a 60 to 90 day arc, with the bulk of the increment landing in the urban core and northern approach band. Displacement adds 100,000 to 180,000. The trajectory is consistent with the Trump administration treating the Iran-deal track as the dominant priority and with the Aoun White House process surviving the ceasefire lapse. End-state through end-July most likely takes the form of a renegotiated multi-month ceasefire under US auspices.

### Scenario B — Limited ground push to the Iqlim al-Tuffah heights

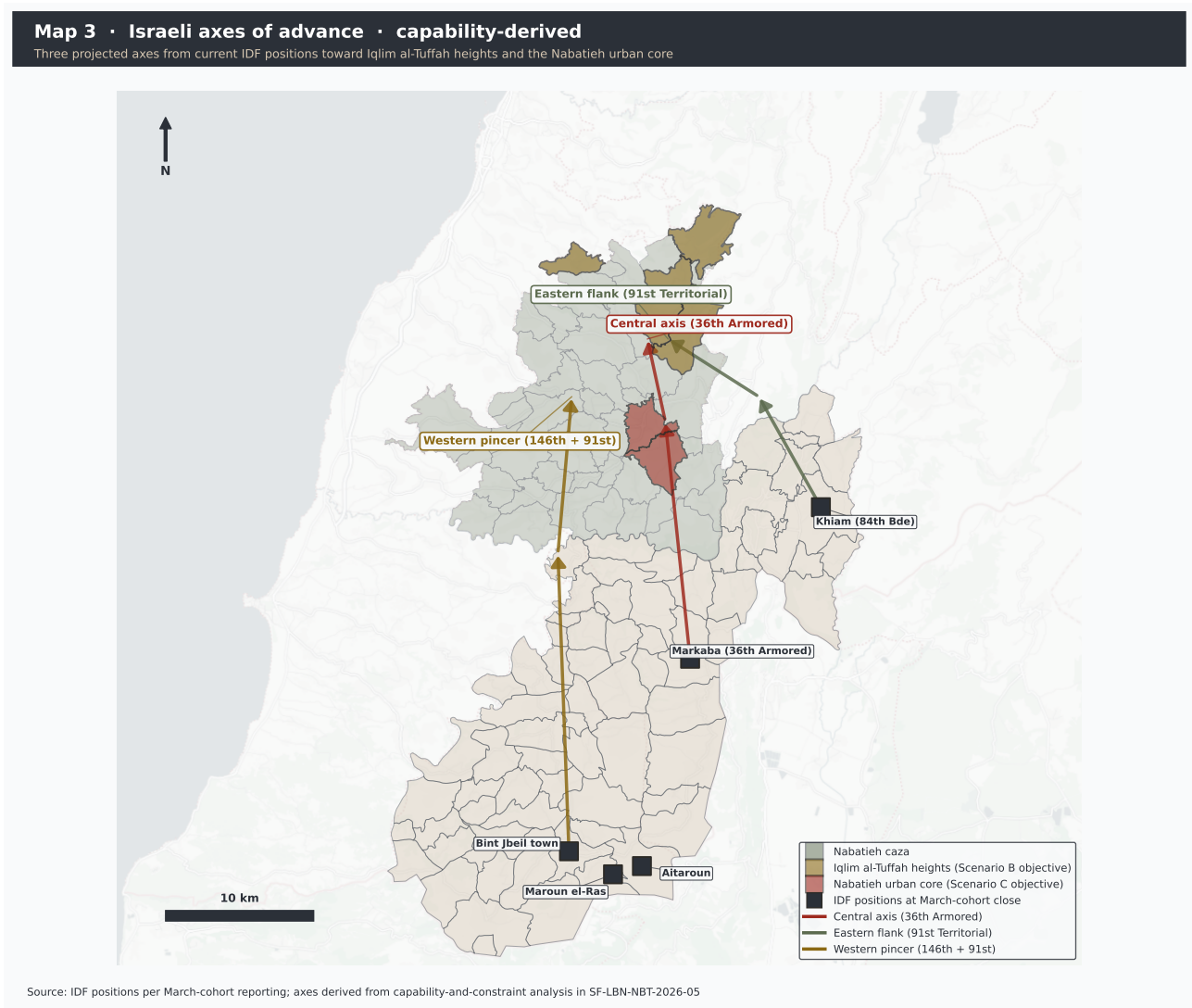
**LOWER LIKELIHOOD**

This path requires a Hezbollah escalation that crosses an IDF threshold, a failure of the Trump-Aoun ambassadorial track, or a strategic Hezbollah strike. The 36th Armored Division and elements of the 91st Territorial Division push north from the Markaba-Khiam arc to seize the strategic sites that anchor the Iqlim al-Tuffah heights, the publicly-stated objective behind comprehensive fire control over the Nabatieh district. Ridge villages take saturation patterns comparable to the Bint Jbeil cohort; the Nabatieh urban core is bypassed and progressively isolated rather than entered. Damage tracks toward the central projection of roughly 10,700 buildings (18% of modelled bloc, 70× baseline). Displacement adds 250,000 to 350,000. The bridge-and-isolation campaign extends north to at least one Awali crossing. End-state inside the 30 to 90 day window is most likely an unstable hold rather than a settled freeze, with either a formal ceasefire codifying the new buffer geometry or a protracted insurgency forming the post-90-day trajectory.

**Scenario C — Urban assault on the Nabatieh core****LOWEST LIKELIHOOD**

This path requires a Hezbollah strategic strike crossing the Israeli political threshold, formal collapse of the ceasefire framework with Iranian or proxy escalation, or an IDF soldier abduction Hezbollah is reportedly pursuing. A five- or six-division assault on the Nabatieh urban core with controlled demolitions would follow the Beit Hanoun and Rafah operational model. Manpower constraints documented in the IDF Chief of Staff's 26 March 20,000-soldier deficit warning bound the scenario at roughly 30 to 60 days of sustained urban operations before reserve-formation exhaustion. Damage tracks toward the saturation ceiling of roughly 17,500 buildings (30% of modelled bloc, 115× baseline). Displacement adds 350,000 to 450,000. Hezbollah's operational posture inside the caza fragments. End-state inside the window is dominated by the urban-assault tempo itself; any ceasefire architecture takes shape only after the assault halts, either through IDF withdrawal under Iran-deal pressure or through a buffer-codification arrangement with no Lebanese counter-party.

The three scenarios are not points on a fixed escalation ladder. They share the same constraint set (manpower ceiling, US tolerance, Iranian retaliation channel, Hezbollah arsenal depletion) and the same shaping tempo. Movement between them is not the only path; events the analysis cannot foresee (a successful Hezbollah strategic strike, an Iran-deal breakthrough that changes US tolerance abruptly, an unforeseen Israeli political shock) can recompose the likelihood structure inside days. The scenarios are framings of where the current pressure points lead under different external-event conditions, not stage transitions through which the offensive necessarily moves.



## VI. PRE-OFFENSIVE DAMAGE BASELINE

The Nabatieh-caza pre-offensive baseline is anchored in the 5 March – 26 April 2026 satellite cohort that produced the prior Source File, supplemented by 28 April per-sub-cadastre layers for ridge villages outside the original NBED footprint.

**Caza-wide aggregate.** The Nabatieh NBED footprint (Nabatieh el-Fawqa, et-Tahta, plus the immediate urban-and-surround bloc) contains 28,206 buildings on 35,611 parcels. The pre-offensive damage rate is 0.46% moderate-or-worse (130 buildings) and 0.79% on the stricter PWTT methodology. Four named-severe entries are recorded inside the NBED footprint as of cohort close. The wider 21-cadastre modelled bloc contains 58,365 buildings; the pre-offensive damage rate aggregates to 0.26% (153 buildings).

**Sub-cadastre breakdown.** The urban core sub-cadastres carry the highest pre-offensive damage rates inside the NBED footprint: Kfour at 0.92%, et-Tahta at 0.41%, el-Fawqa at

0.35%. The Nabatieh-approach buffer cadastres run between 0.21% (Kfar Tebnit) and 0.75% (Kfar Joz). The Iqlim al-Tuffah ridge cluster, where Israel's pre-offensive shaping operations have not yet concentrated, runs at 0.00% (Jbaa, Kfar Djal) to 0.79% (Yohmor) on building-mask measure. Mayfadoune at 0.43% records the cohort's quadruple-tap paramedic strike site.

Sub-cadastre	Role	Total bldgs	% mod-or-worse	Notable
<b>Nabatieh NBED full</b>	Urban core (caza)	28,206	0.46%	4 named severe
<b>Nabatieh el-Fawqa</b>	Urban core	2,274	0.35%	
<b>Nabatieh et-Tahta</b>	Urban core	3,676	0.41%	1 named severe
<b>Kfour</b>	Urban edge	866	0.92%	Highest urban-core rate
<b>Habbouche</b>	N approach	2,753	0.25%	1 named severe
<b>Harouf</b>	E approach	3,057	0.26%	Archaeological site destroyed (Apr)
<b>Mayfadoune</b>	Buffer	1,621	0.43%	15 Apr paramedic quadruple-tap
<b>Kfar Joz</b>	N approach	531	0.75%	
<b>Kfar Roummane</b>	N approach	2,922	0.27%	LAF soldier killed (early May)
<b>Kfar Tebnit</b>	Approach	1,403	0.21%	
<b>Toul</b>	Approach	997	0.70%	
<b>Jbaa</b>	Iqlim al-Tuffah ridge	2,078	0.00%	Hezbollah training hub
<b>Jibchit</b>	Ridge	4,349	0.05%	Alma-named target
<b>Yohmor</b>	Ridge	2,409	0.79%	
<b>Zibdine</b>	Ridge	1,791	0.12%	
<b>Kfar Djal</b>	Ridge	731	0.00%	
<b>Sarba</b>	Ridge	931	0.47%	
<b>Qsaibet</b>	Ridge	5,179	0.03%	Largest single-cadastre stock
<b>Douair</b>	Buffer	7,171	0.03%	Hezbollah-named target
<b>Kfar Sir</b>	Buffer	4,331	0.24%	Hezbollah-named target
<b>Ansar</b>	N approach	6,441	0.57%	
<b>Chehour</b>	Approach	2,854	0.00%	

Table 1. Pre-offensive baseline by sub-cadastre.

**Named pre-offensive severe entries.** The Nabatieh-caza pre-offensive named-severe set includes the Nabatieh Wastewater Treatment Plant (in Taybet Matjaayoun, Marjaayoun-adjacent), the historic souq damage in Nabatieh urban core, and the Harouf archaeological site destruction reported through 2 April. The 10 April Nabatieh Serail strike (13 State Security personnel and an academic killed) and the 15 April Mayfadoune quadruple-tap (four paramedics killed across three response teams) anchor the named human-cost incidents inside the cohort. The 7 May al-Maslakh neighbourhood strike (eight killed, several rescue workers wounded) registers as a post-cohort named incident pending fresh imagery.

**Comparison anchor.** Bint Jbeil district carried 3,445 verified buildings damaged on 65,537 stock during the 5 March – 29 April cohort, with 609 at the severe tier. Marjaayoun district carried 3,890 verified across 32 cadastres on 62,276 stock, with 452 at severe. The Nabatieh-caza pre-offensive damage of 153 buildings on 58,365 stock is therefore about one

twenty-fifth the density of Bint Jbeil's cohort burden and a similar fraction of Marjaayoun's. Nabatieh is mostly intact today, and that intactness is the precondition that makes the projected damage increment so large.

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## VII. PROJECTED DAMAGE INCREMENT

The projection model transposes patterns from cohort cadastres onto Nabatieh sub-cadastres, scaled by the role each sub-cadastre plays in the operational geometry. Three profile bands are used.

The **frontline-saturation profile** anchors on Bint Jbeil borderline cluster cadastres (Beit Lif at 39%, Aitaroun at 33%, Rachaf at 43%, Aita ash-Shaab at 15%). The profile applies to the seven Iqlim al-Tuffah ridge sub-cadastres in the modelled bloc (Jbaa, Jibchit, Yohmor, Zib-dine, Kfar Djal, Sarba, Qsaibet). Bands are set at p25 = 15.0% additive on baseline, p50 = 22.0%, p95 = 39.0%.

The **buffer-corridor profile** anchors on the Marjaayoun salient (Meiss el-Jabal at 21%, Taybet Matjaayoun at 27%, Houla at 18%, Markaba at 13%). The profile applies to the eleven approach and buffer sub-cadastres (Habbouche, Harouf, Mayfadoune, Kfar Joz, Kfar Roumane, Kfar Tebnit, Toul, Douair, Kfar Sir, Ansar, Chehour). Bands: p25 = 8.0%, p50 = 17.0%, p95 = 27.0%.

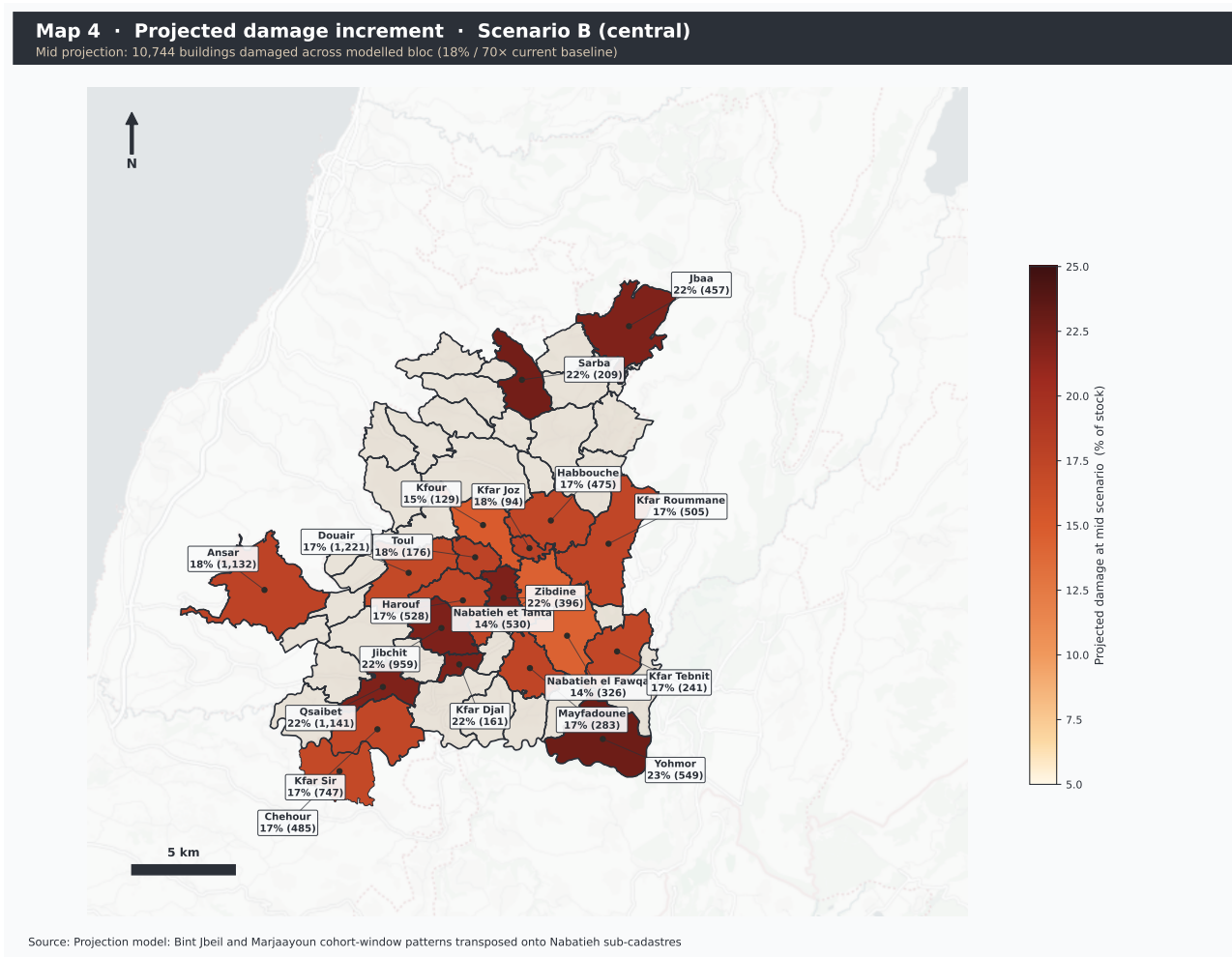
The **urban-with-civic-anchor profile** anchors on Bent Jbayl town (20% with 220 verified-severe), Khiyam (8% with 53 strikes), and Sour town (1.6% on a much larger denominator). The profile applies to the three Nabatieh urban-core sub-cadastres (el-Fawqa, et-Tahta, Kfour). Bands: p25 = 5.0%, p50 = 14.0%, p95 = 20.0%.

The bands are additive on the current pre-offensive baseline. The projection is a pattern-transposition, not a forecast. It reads as: if Israeli operations on Nabatieh saturate to the levels observed in the named prior-cohort cadastres, here is the damage envelope.

The aggregate output across the 21-cadastre modelled bloc:

- **Floor projection (cautious / Scenario A):** 5,842 damaged buildings (10.0% of modelled bloc, 38× current baseline)
- **Mid projection (central / Scenario B):** 10,744 damaged buildings (18.4% of modelled bloc, 70× current baseline)
- **Ceiling projection (saturation / Scenario C):** 17,530 damaged buildings (30.0% of modelled bloc, 115× current baseline)

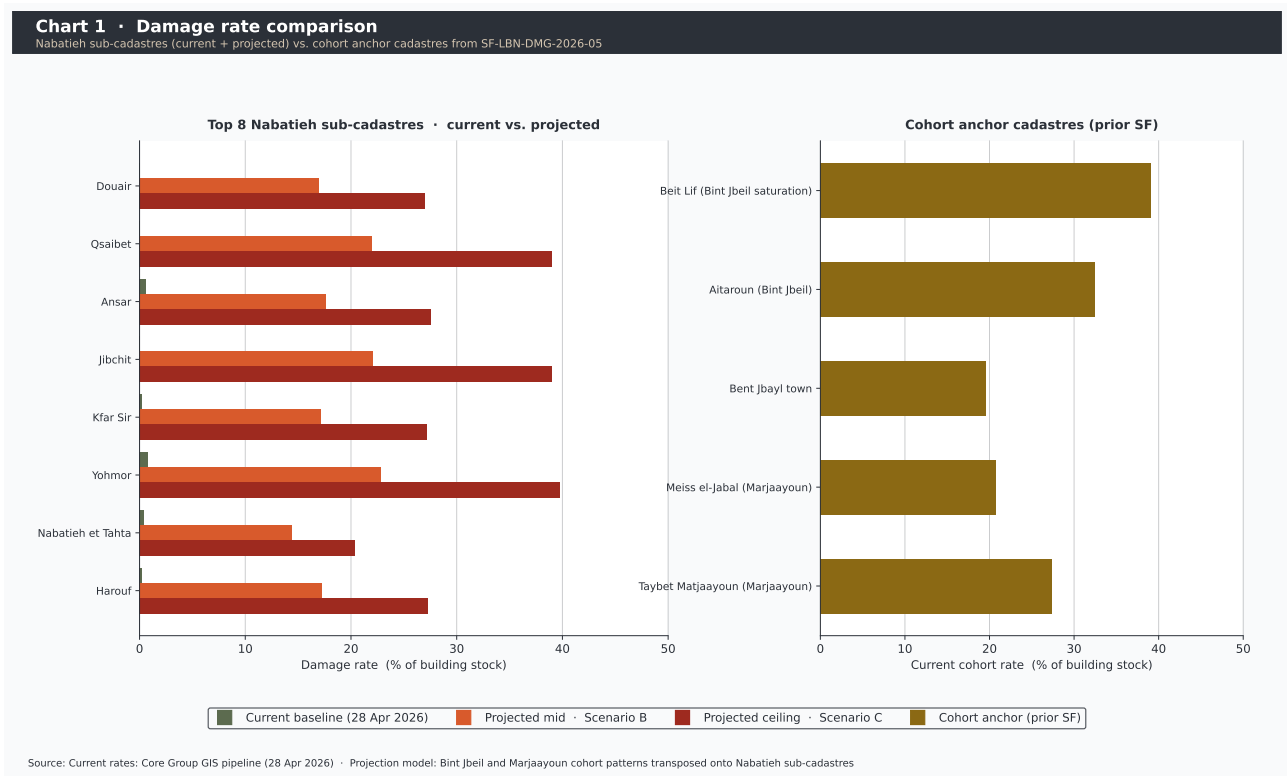
At the mid scenario, the largest single-cadastre damage counts concentrate on the buffer corridor (Douair 1,221 buildings, Ansar 1,132, Kfar Sir 747) and the Iqlim al-Tuffah ridge (Qsaibet 1,141, Jibchit 959, Yohmor 549). The urban core absorbs proportionally lighter damage (et-Tahta 530, el-Fawqa 326, Kfour 129) consistent with Bent-Jbayl-town-style targeting that



focuses on civic and economic anchors rather than wholesale demolition. The geometric pattern reads consistently with Scenario B operational logic.

The projection is bounded above by the Beit Lif saturation ceiling at 39.1% and by operational tempo. In the prior cohort, Bint Jbeil and Marjaayoun reached their saturation rates over five to six weeks of escalation. The mid scenario assumes operational tempo similar to weeks 3–6 of the March cohort.

Population effects scale with damage. The Nabatieh caza counts roughly 320,000 to 400,000 inhabitants across the modelled bloc, with the urban core (el-Fawqa, et-Tahta, Kfour) hosting approximately 50,000 to 75,000. At the central scenario, displacement extends to 250,000 to 350,000 inhabitants, an additional 25 to 35% on top of the 1.0 million already displaced at cohort end.



## VIII. CROSS-DIMENSIONAL IMPLICATIONS (30–90 DAY WINDOW)

The implications below cover four dimensions: military, humanitarian, political-sectarian-economic, and diplomatic. The 30 to 90 day window captures the initial offensive phase only. Several effects below are set in motion inside the window but consolidate beyond it; the text flags those distinctions explicitly.

### Military

The first-order implication is the front-line geometry change. Iqlim al-Tuffah heights, once seized, give Israel comprehensive fire control over the Nabatieh caza, the Zahrani river axis, the Sidon approaches, the Western Bekaa, and Jezzine. The Litani buffer extends north to a de facto Iqlim al-Tuffah-Zahrani line under Scenario B and to the Sidon outskirts under Scenario C. Hezbollah’s primary rocket firing geometry against Israeli border communities is materially degraded, though the Almas-3/4 ATGM layer survives ridge clearance because its launch positions are dispersed and its targeting cycle is independent of the rocket array.

Hezbollah’s fire-volume response is bounded by arsenal depletion. At 150 rockets per day sustained tempo, the 11,000 to 13,000 remaining stock runs to depletion in two to three months. Tactical innovations continue: FPV drones with fiber-optic variants resistant to electronic jamming, SAM-against-aircraft posture, IED ambushes. The counter-offensive capacity is harassment, not interdiction; battalion-scale armoured advances are effectively unstoppable at current rates of attrition.

The IDF buffer-zone area expands by approximately 250 to 400 square kilometres under Scenario B and 600 to 800 square kilometres under Scenario C. The 55-village no-go area declared at cohort close grows to 80–110 villages under Scenario B and 120–150 under Scenario C. Bekaa second-front activation risk is low in the 30 to 90 day window because of IDF manpower constraints, but Iqlim al-Tuffah heights position IDF forces to interdict the Beirut-Damascus highway south spur and the Bekaa-south corridor, a capability gain that does not require a force commitment.

LAF posture continues progressive retreat. Eight LAF soldiers were killed by Israeli fire in the March cohort window. Under Scenario B or C the count rises through accidental targeting in expanded operations and deliberate pressure to clear approach roads. The Salam government's anti-Hezbollah enforcement posture, already reduced to token operations, is increasingly difficult to sustain under offensive conditions. New LAF checkpoint abandonments in the Nabatieh-district approaches are likely under any scenario.

## Humanitarian

The displacement trajectory is the heaviest 30 to 90 day implication. Pre-offensive caza population of 320,000 to 400,000 across the modelled bloc implies 100,000 to 180,000 newly displaced under Scenario A, 250,000 to 350,000 under Scenario B, and 350,000 to 450,000 under Scenario C. The displacement adds to the existing 1.0 million self-registered cohort and the 121,000 in formal shelters at cohort end. Northern host communities (Saida, Greater Beirut, Mount Lebanon) absorb the second wave under host-family and informal-accommodation patterns.

The hospital and water-system collapse advances. The Tibnine Governmental Hospital was put out of operation by the 15-16 April triple-tap, eliminating the last large-volume hospital south of the Litani. Meiss el-Jabal hospital was seized 27 March. Salah Ghandour Hospital in Bent Jbayl town carries verified-severe damage. Nabatieh's hospitals (Hekma Hospital, Nabatieh Governmental Hospital) become the next failure points under Scenario B or C. The Nabatieh Wastewater Treatment Plant, already verified-severe, fails fully if redundant water-utility damage occurs at Dahieh-cohort rates (63% verified for water and sanitation).

Food-security degradation extends from the 29 April IPC update of 1.24 million in Phase 3 or above through August 2026, with 55 to 65% of the southern governorate already in Phase 3 or worse. A Scenario B or C offensive damages the Iqlim al-Tuffah valley olive groves, the Nabatieh-area tobacco fields, and the Zahrani river corridor agricultural system. Agricultural-land damage extends past the cohort's 22% southern-governorate baseline.

Paramedic-strike risk is elevated. The 15 April Mayfadoune quadruple-tap pattern is replicable across the Nabatieh-district response-team network. Hezbollah-affiliated medical infrastructure (Islamic Health Authority, Islamic Risala) sits inside the ecosystem-targeting set. Civic-anchor damage carries the prior cohort's 9 to 18 times multipliers over building-level rates: schools, mosques, hospitals. The Nabatieh souq sits inside the urban-core targeting zone; the Harouf archaeological site, already destroyed, demonstrates that heritage assets are not protected under the operational pattern.

## Political-Sectarian-Economic

The Shia community shock is the heaviest political implication. The Nabatieh caza is approximately 80% Shia. Displacement of 250,000 to 400,000 Shia inhabitants into northern host communities adds to the Bint Jbeil and Marjaayoun displacement waves and the Dahieh dispersal. The Berri / Amal political infrastructure inside Nabatieh, including the State Security and academic targeting at the 10 April Serail strike, faces continued degradation. The Hezbollah / Amal joint political operation across the caza loses physical infrastructure across all three scenarios at varying rates.

The state-capacity test strains the Salam government's residual posture. The 7 May evacuation orders for Deir al-Zahrani, Bafroa, and Habush require LAF, General Security, and Lebanese Civil Defence coordination at a tempo the institutions cannot operationally match. The Aoun White House visit shifts from reconciliation toward crisis renegotiation under any scenario and is unlikely to produce a return-of-territory clause Lebanon can sell domestically. The 2 March cabinet ban on Hezbollah's military activities becomes politically harder to defend as the Hezbollah-affected population demands state protection the state cannot deliver. Formal political collapse of the Salam government inside the 30 to 90 day window is unlikely; the more probable inside-window read is institutional retreat and a narrowing of the cabinet's enforceable authority.

Christian and Druze positioning shifts. Jezzine (Christian-majority) sits inside the publicly-stated Israeli fire-control objective; the Druze-majority Iqlim al-Kharroub and Aley districts host displaced Shia populations under continued sectarian friction. The TMS-tracked dashboard escalates from cohort-end critical-and-rising to direct-confrontation thresholds under Scenario B or C. The 25 April Saqiet al-Janzir incident in Beirut, where a State Security operation acquired sectarian overtones over generator pricing for displaced Shia families, is the precedent for how friction crystallises. The 7 May 2008 inter-confessional clash framing recurs in online discourse.

The AQAH financial decapitation extends into Nabatieh. The March cohort's 30-plus AQAH branch destruction did not yet cover the Nabatieh-caza network. Scenario A or B targeting of AQAH branches in el-Fawqa, et-Tahta, and Kfour brings the financial-network elimination toward completion across the southern Hezbollah-affiliated economy. The caza's commercial-parcel concentration (16.7% damage rate observed in the prior cohort's parcel-level cut for the Nabatieh region under air-strike tempo alone) absorbs a disproportionate share of new damage under offensive conditions. Reconstruction horizons under Scenario B run beyond 5 to 8 years at peacetime engineering tempo, given that bridge reconstruction did not begin during the March cohort's 13-day post-ceasefire window. Saudi or Gulf-led reconstruction finance is the most likely functional pathway, with conditioning on political reconfiguration of Lebanon's power balance away from Hezbollah; the conditioning architecture itself does not stand up inside the 30 to 90 day window.

## Diplomatic

US tolerance ceiling is the dominant diplomatic constraint. The 6 May Balout strike was US-coordinated; the 7 May Nabatieh strikes follow under the same permissive ceiling. Trump's "more force if Iran doesn't agree to a deal" framing pulls the Iran-deal track into Lebanon-axis decisions. The tolerance ceiling permits Scenario A and parts of Scenario B; it forces a ceasefire-imposition pull-back if Scenario C produces casualty rates that Iran-deal optics cannot absorb. The US-Israel-Lebanon ambassadorial track that produced the 14 April first meeting and the 23 April three-week extension faces collapse if Scenario C activates.

The Iranian retaliation channel is the second constraint. The IRGC Quds Force Lebanon Corps was effectively eliminated by 8 March; Khamenei's death and the post-2 March IRGC restructuring removed the coordination layer between Tehran and Hezbollah's mosaic defence. Iran cannot meaningfully retaliate via Hezbollah without committing its own remaining strategic strike capability against Israel directly, a step the Iran-US ceasefire negotiations are conditioned to prevent. Iran tolerates the Nabatieh-axis offensive in exchange for nuclear-deal advancement; Hezbollah operates without strategic backstop.

Saudi and Gulf reconstruction-leverage posture remains structural. No Saudi or Emirati signal points to intervention to halt the offensive. The Gulf states' triple role (secondary victims, architects of Lebanon's exclusion from negotiations, post-war beneficiaries through reconstruction conditioning) holds. The post-offensive arrangement hands Saudi Arabia conditioning leverage over Lebanese political reconfiguration that becomes operationalisable in the 90-day-plus window.

France and the EU continue 1701-track diplomacy without military leverage. UNIFIL is the most immediate diplomatic pressure point; troop-contributing nations (Italy, Spain, France) face exposure that Scenario B and especially Scenario C make politically harder to defend at home. Formal UNIFIL withdrawal is a multi-month political process that does not complete inside the 30 to 90 day window; what does happen inside the window is the visible activation of withdrawal-prep posture (parliamentary debates in contributing capitals, contingency-rotation planning, force-posture downgrades), which sets the trajectory rather than terminates it.

Hezbollah weapon-control dynamics harden. Naim Qassem's 27 April refusal to disarm becomes the operational baseline through the offensive window. The Lebanese state's enforcement capacity, already absent during the March cohort, is unlikely to be reconstituted under offensive conditions. The sovereignty offensive that the Salam government opened on 2 March loses operational reach; Hezbollah's weapons-retention posture survives the window because the institutions that would demand and enforce disarmament are weakened, not because they have collapsed.

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## IX. CROSS-DIMENSIONAL ASSESSMENT

Four assessments follow from the corroboration tier, the capability-constraint analysis, the damage projection, and the dimensional implications. Each interprets a pattern that the evidence supports rather than projecting a deterministic chain of events.

### Assessment 1

**HIGH CONFIDENCE**

The Nabatieh-axis offensive does not require a single triggering decision; the constraint set already pulls Israeli operations toward it. The firing-geometry problem from the Iqlim al-Tuffah ridges is structural and cannot be solved by a Litani buffer. The publicly-stated Israeli objective covers fire control over the Nabatieh district, Zahrani, Sidon, the Western Bekaa, and Jezzine, anchored on 18 strategic sites Israel held before May 2000. The 6 May Beirut decapitation strike, the 7 May Nabatieh urban-core strikes, the same-day evacuation orders for Deir al-Zahrani, Bafroa, and Habush, and the 26 April high-intensity strike day on eastern Nabatieh District constitute the shaping phase rather than a pause. The pattern reads as a continuous escalation curve compressed against the 14 May ceasefire-extension expiry, not as a discrete decision Israel may or may not take.

### Assessment 2

**MEDIUM-HIGH CONFIDENCE**

The damage-and-displacement envelope opened by the offensive sits inside a humanitarian system already at saturation, which bounds what reception architecture can absorb without secondary collapse. The cohort closes with 1.0 million self-registered displaced, 121,000 in formal shelters at 62% near-capacity, 1.24 million in IPC Phase 3 or worse through August, no functioning hospital south of the Litani, and the Litani bridge sequence unreconstructed. A Scenario B or C addition of 250,000 to 400,000 Nabatieh-caza displaced lands on this saturation, not on a baseline of unstressed reception capacity. The implication is a secondary-effects domain (host-community friction, sectarian re-sorting under TMS-critical drivers, food-security degradation past the southern-governorate 55–65% Phase 3 figure) where each new pressure point lands harder than its predecessor. The assessment is not that collapse is inevitable, but that the buffer between displacement load and absorptive capacity is now thin enough to be measured in tens of thousands rather than hundreds.

### Assessment 3

**MEDIUM CONFIDENCE**

The 30 to 90 day window is too short for the deeper political reconfiguration to consolidate, but long enough for the trajectories that produce it to be set on a path that is difficult to re-

verse from outside the window. State-capacity strain on the Salam government does not equal state collapse inside the window; UNIFIL exposure does not equal formal withdrawal inside the window; AQAH branch-network attrition in Nabatieh does not equal full financial decapitation inside the window; Saudi reconstruction-leverage architecture does not stand up inside the window. Each of these moves into a path-dependent zone, however, where the post-offensive architecture is shaped by which inflection points actually fire. The honest reading is that the offensive's enduring effects are mostly post-90-day; what the 30 to 90 day window resolves is the slope and direction of the trajectories that compose them.

## Assessment 4

MEDIUM CONFIDENCE

The relative likelihood of the three operational scenarios is conditional on three external decision points the analysis cannot timestamp: the 14 May ceasefire-extension expiry, the Trump-Iran-deal track, and Hezbollah's choice on whether to attempt a strategic strike against Israeli civilian or strategic infrastructure. The probability assignments in Section V are interpretive judgements derived from the present constraint set; they are not stable forecasts. A successful Hezbollah strategic strike compresses the Scenario B and C bands upward inside days. An Iran-deal breakthrough compresses them downward inside days. The shape of the offensive 60 days from this report is therefore meaningfully indeterminate; what is not indeterminate is the saturated humanitarian floor on which any of the three scenarios will land and the structural pull toward Iqlim al-Tuffah heights that all three share.

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## X. WATCH LIST (NEXT 4 TO 8 WEEKS)

The indicators below sit on the boundary between the 8 May 2026 report state and the 30 to 90 day post-offensive trajectory. Each is operationally observable.

- **Ceasefire continuation past 14 May 2026.** The three-week extension expires on or about 14 May. Watch for: third Israeli-Lebanese ambassadorial meeting, formal renewal language, new territorial-arrangement clauses addressing Iqlim al-Tuffah heights, Hezbollah weapon-control language under the state-arms-monopoly framing.
- **Iqlim al-Tuffah ridge-village strike concentration.** Pre-offensive shaping concentrates strikes on Jbaa, Jibchit, Yohmor, Sarba, and Zibdine. A sustained week of strikes across all five sub-cadastres precedes Scenario B operational ground push.
- **Nabatieh urban-core strikes beyond weapons-manufacturing.** The 7 May al-Maslakh strike pattern targeted weapons-manufacturing specifically. Watch for: AQAH branch strikes, Hezbollah political-office strikes, Islamic Health Authority strikes, escalation from weapons-manufacturing to broader ecosystem targeting.
- **36th Armored Division northward movement.** Markaba-Khiam arc currently positions the 36th Armored Division for an Iqlim al-Tuffah push. Watch for: forward-deployment sightings, supply-corridor activations along the central highway, Hezbollah counter-mobility on the Iqlim al-Tuffah valley road network.
- **Hezbollah retaliation tempo.** Watch for: rocket volume past 150 per day sustained, ATGM strike count past 5 per day, FPV drone deployment beyond IDF positions to civilian Israeli targets, SAM activation sustaining past two events per week.
- **Evacuation orders extending toward Sidon-Zahrani axis.** The 7 May orders covered three Nabatieh-district villages. Watch for: orders extending to Sidon-bound villages (Saksakieh, Kfar Hatta, Gharifeh), Zahrani-axis villages (Deir al-Zahrani already covered, plus Sariin and Kafour), or Iqlim al-Tuffah ridge approaches (Ain Qana, Houmine al-Tahta, Arab Salim).
- **AQAH branch destruction in Nabatieh.** The March cohort destroyed 30-plus AQAH branches nationally but did not yet cover the Nabatieh-caza network. Watch for: systematic strikes on AQAH offices in el-Fawqa, et-Tahta, Kfour.
- **Aoun White House summit conversion.** The originally-scheduled reconciliation summit converts to crisis renegotiation under any of the three scenarios. Watch for: White House readout language emphasising ceasefire-monitoring versus territorial settlement; presence or absence of reconstruction-financing announcements.



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### ABOUT CORE GROUP

Core Group is a Beirut-based strategic foresight house. We produce decision-ready analysis and advisory for governments, diplomatic institutions, and strategic investors navigating Middle Eastern complexity. Our work integrates structured analytical products, applied strategic advisory, and analysis-informed mediation; delivered on daily and weekly cycles calibrated to the speed at which the situation changes.

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