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Save us": the Apache pilots" who arrived first at the scene of the battles speak

The "one" of 2023: the Apache pilots, the combat helicopters of the Air Force, were the first to arrive last Saturday at the scene of the fighting • They are the ones who had to face hundreds of terrorists from the air who broke through the border - and distinguish between terrorists and civilians, between kidnappers and abductees • One of them received messages during the fighting from a young woman who ran away from the party and begged him to come • The testimonies, documents and contact tapes that have not yet been revealed

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You are flying towards the Gaza sector, there are many launches there." Both nautical and ground events. There is a report of dozens of terrorists "in a reporting line. Two, three, live

(from Apache Squadron's communications network, 7.10)

It's a story of one squadron, the 113th Apache Helicopter Squadron. And this is the story of the beginning of the war, of the surprise and shock, of the terrible hours when the Israeli defense system completely collapsed - on the ground only small forces waged the containment battle against Hamas, and they were up, in the enveloping sky, almost alone. Tonight we published for the first time in "Friday Studio" the photographs from the squadron's activities at the beginning of the war. They will never forget what the pilots saw, not even the decisions they had to make in .those moments

10%

I find myself in a dilemma of what I'm shooting at". Hamas terrorists after the breach of the fence | Photo: Atia" Mohammed/Flash90

More people and more terrorists are entering and another breach in the" fence. And I understand that we need to shoot here and quickly", recalls the commander of the unit, SAL E., "they shoot at people in our territory - this is something I didn't think I would do". SAL A, a reserve pilot in the unit, recalls: "I find myself in a dilemma of what I'm shooting for, because there's so much". SAL E., also a reservist, says: "You fly and you smell the .smoke of the fire penetrating into the cockpit", a war zone

“I realized I would fly, but not abroad”

To try and understand what happened, you need to know the opening position. The State of Israel has two squadrons of combat helicopters. The weekend the war broke out, 190 Squadron was in silence and 113 Squadron was on alert in the north. As there was no alert, only two teams remained at the base for immediate call. The squadron commander was in general at the parent base in the south with the family, for the last .weekend of the Freedom

?Where does the war start for you

SAL A: "I arrive as a reservist after a trip to Sukkot and I go on Friday-Saturday alert". I say, I will rest. I wake up independently towards 06:30, something like that, and then I start to see that there are launches to the envelope". Major A of the unit says: "The truth is that in the evening I was scheduled to fly abroad". I also see some kind of report of terrorists infiltrating one of the settlements, and I already understand that on that ."day I will probably fly, but maybe somewhere else

20%

Dozens of targets at once. A Hamas tractor breaks through the border

SAL E: "I am in the Ben Shemen forest, camping with the children, waking up from the noise of explosions and sirens, sending a text to the squadron commander, asking him what is needed". He tells me: 'Come as soon as possible' – I put the children with my mother and drive as fast as I ."can to the base

Wait, now you're in a period where you don't make it to the reserves, ?right

."SAL E: "I didn't reach the reserves a few months before that

You stop volunteering due to the protest. Any reflection on whether ?to come

SAL E: "At that second I didn't even have a shadow of a doubt about a ."dilemma that I just take direction and drive

The squadron was on alert in the north, the commander was in the south in general

”There are no forces of ours in the area of the fence”

At 06:50, the two crews that took standby at the base are jumped into helicopters. In less than ten minutes they are on their way to the Gaza Envelope. They have no idea what is really going on on the ground. SAL A: "On the leap I call and they tell me it's for penetration by the shackles". *The contact network said: "You are flying towards the Gaza sector. Your task at the moment is assisting the infiltration of vessels into*

."our sector

At the same time, the squadron commander launches a technical team to prepare a third helicopter for him - the entire squadron is jumped. At 07:35, the first pair of combat helicopters arrive to wrap from the north, sending it to the Nahal Oz base. "I'm being directed to some kind of plantation near the base, I see a lot of cars on Route 232 standing, and some with doors open", recalled SAL A. I understand that I am going to have a dilemma here about who our forces are and who is an enemy, if at all, and who are civilians. The whole decision is now on me, there is no ."one to talk to

30%

The contact network said: "We see a lot of terrorists, we don't know if they are terrorists, but soldiers are on vans towards the Strip, and we overtake them". A pilot replies: "Enters the performance on soft", and receives ."confirmation: "May

Very quickly the control tells me that there is a more important event -" fear of kidnapping a soldier in the southern sector in the Gaza Strip. I say, okay, it's... Something else is happening here", recalled SAL A. "That's the first time I've actually come across that there are loopholes in the fence, there are people crossing the fence and it's a surreal image. Anyone who crosses the fence is an enemy. There are not any of our forces in the area of the fence, there is nothing - and this is in doubled quotes the 'dream' of ."every pilot

The documentation revealed for the first time: the vulnerability of Hamas terrorists from the combat helicopters

The commander of the unit adds: "I arrive in the area ten to eight, five to eight, I just see a lot of fires, gunfire, a picture that looks like a war film, and I understand that you have to shoot here and quickly. A few seconds later I hear that there are 40 terrorists approaching the outpost, I see ."them

?How do you prioritize in such a situation

You're trying to figure out what's the most significant, most threatening" ."thing right now, and you're going to it

"There are terrorists, I don't know who is who"

The squadron is currently running a race against the clock. Everyone is launched from the houses, those who are ready take off immediately. The reservist E. arrives at the base in the north at 08:30 from the camping in the Ben Shemen forest. Fifteen minutes later, he's in the air. "Just a friend, one of my best from the squadron landed in Ramon. He tells me: 'War, we were shot at, we finished our stomachs, taking off for another round.'". Versen A adds: "Someone is talking to us about the relationship, which is the camp that was in the bad guys". He tells us: 'Listen, there are terrorists inside the outpost.'". The call was also heard on the contact network: "Nahal Oz outpost, there are terrorists there. For, I don't know ."who is who, I don't know what these vehicles are

Major A explains the confusion: "We get there and actually see a lot of people". We fail to understand at this stage that these people are terrorists, it doesn't make sense to us because they walk, enter buildings, leave". At this point, says Major A, the KM Maraim explains: "He tells us, 'Our soldiers are besieged inside, inside the bunker, everyone outside is either a dead man or a terrorist". At this point the pilots enter to perform and hit the targets: "Seeing the people at that moment all begin to disperse and escape from the outpost and the area". And on the contact network it is heard: "He (the terrorist) is running away from me. Wait a ."second, I want to see where he runs off to

40%

How surreal is it to shoot at our base, that you actually understand ?that our forces are no longer there, they are only underground

Major A: "It's by and large delusional". Then we see in the axis that goes from the post towards the strip the breach of the fence, and we see lots ."and lots of people and motorcycles – a boardwalk of people on the fence

?How many penetration points

."SAL E: "Full

?What happens in the places you attack? Does it really stop

curfew. You see people just stop coming, because there are bodies on" the ground and vehicles on fire, and everyone who comes gets a missile ."in the head or shells

Firing at people in our territory - that's something I didn't think I'd do". Unit Commander, S.A.L. E"

"A kind of flying tank"

The combat helicopters were designed to assist the ground forces with fire. Each helicopter carries with it six to eight precision missiles, plus hundreds of shells it fires from the forward machine gun. And the commander of Squadron 113 explains: "There is no other air vehicle that knows how to connect, talk to any force at the end, see outside what it is ."talking about, with its eyes. We are actually some kind of flying tank

During those terrible hours, the helicopters are the main aid tool for the individual forces on the ground. Why? Because it is almost impossible to operate fighter jets on our territory without greatly endangering the residents and fighters. The army also took time to launch the battle in the border area. And it's important to know: the number of helicopter squadrons in the IDF was decreasing. According to SAL E., "the state thought it was so good that it might be possible to do without it - there is such good technology and intelligence as "water and fighter planes that ."know how to hit, that you don't have to

50%

He did not reach the reserve in the squadron for months because of the protest - and this time he did not hesitate to report. SAL E

One of the events in 7.10 provided an example of a moment that can only take place with a helicopter that sees the area in real time. A commander of a makeshift unit fighting on the ground attempts to recapture an outpost, and has no military liaison system. "For the first time in my life, I get a call through the controller, realizing that it is a fighter in a special unit in the IDF", notes the squadron commander. "We just start talking and building a common language and a snapshot through the phone, inside the cockpit, and then it also goes to WhatsApp - including the ."location of our forces and all the places, to time the shooting now

I mean, you conduct an attack on our base with a special unit, when the communication is on WhatsApp. This is an imaginary sounding .event

.It feels imaginary to me", confirms SAL A"

?How far do you shoot from the force

meters, something like that. But there were also places where it was 80" ."less

In the area of 10:30 in the morning there are already eight combat helicopters in the air, but the number of targets is much greater - and there is almost no intelligence that will help make fateful decisions. "We receive a report that there are terrorists who are at the entrance of Nahal

Oz and they are trying to enter and blow up the gate", Rasen A describes those moments. "We are pointing the weapons system in the direction of the settlement, identifying characters and firing relatively quickly in the .″area, with the intention of deterring them and scaring them

While we are carrying out the shooting, we see an IDF vehicle and also" see armed people getting into the vehicle, the vehicle stops, coming towards the gate". And then we're happy and say 'OK, okay, Hina, there's a force here to take care of it. And we are directed at the same time to another place, they say: 'There are terrorists in the greenhouse area, we need them to shoot there', we are actually going there - in retrospect, I understand that it was probably not our soldiers, it was probably a vehicle ."that should have hijacked a missile

60%

Air Force Apache helicopter over Gaza, archive | Photo: Reuters

"Come quickly, everything here is terrorists"

When I landed from the second sortie, all the squadron's reservists were" in the squadron", explains the squadron commander, and one of the officers emphasizes: "Every helicopter that returns, receives an armament and immediately takes off. Look, usually when a helicopter goes on a mission, then it launches one missile, launches two, fires some shells. ."Here they come back empty

As the hours pass, the photos also come out of the massacre that takes place in the envelope - and here too everyone knows someone, every staff member also has a family. "I thought first of all about my family who lived in Sderot", says Res.L. Shiraz, head of an armament team in the squadron. "I pick up the phone to my mother, she says: 'We are closed inside the house, there are terrorists in the neighborhood and in the area', I tell her: 'Take care of yourselves' and I hang up the phone and concentrate on the tasks they gave me - I feel that this is where I take care ."of them the best there is

The reservist SAL E also shares a personal story: "When I land after a few hours' sortie, I get WhatsApp from my brother". He says his best friend's daughter was at the party. I start corresponding with her and she answers me 'we're going to be killed', and I answer her: 'I'm an Apache pilot, your father informed me.'. She answers me: 'We've been out for five hours, terrorists are out, all my friends are dead', and I answer her: 'Don't go out under any circumstances, hide as much as you can, we're on our way.'. She answers me: 'Please save us, we are cool, hiding, afraid, lots of terrorists and gunfire. I think my partner was killed, save us! Arrive quickly, there is no time, everything here is terrorists' and then I just took ."off and the conversation was disconnected

?What do you think

."A very difficult feeling, of helplessness"

Come quickly, save us!". The burnt car lot from the party is bad | Photo: None"

70%

It may be that this is the first time that the squadron learned about the party at all: the situation was very partial. When the Apache forces got

.there, there was no one to help

?When you see from above, what do you understand

They slaughtered people here", SAL A sadly replies. "I understand that" people were slaughtered there. I see a crazy amount of vehicles, burnt out, it's a spectacle not... I guess there was no party there who knew how to use fire, and if they attacked all the outposts at the same time –, which in retrospect I understand - then no one knew how to look to the right or ."left to see what was happening there

”Suddenly our territory is being shot at”

It wasn't until noon that the two Apache squadrons gained all their strength. If only there had been an alert, things would have looked different, but nothing of what was happening at those hours was written in the books. No one imagined such a collapse at all, and the pilots faced something else they did not know. "We always know that in Gaza it's dangerous, they shoot. But suddenly they shoot you from our territory. .Suddenly they shoot at you from below", explains SAL E

?Anyone hurt

Yes. They came prepared. They shot down a storm helicopter. And you" understand that this is a dangerous area". The squadron commander adds: "Someone comes up in front of me, tells me: 'I'm on the phone with a family that is in the MMD, there are terrorists inside their house, they are locked inside the MMD". Our forces have not yet had time to reach this settlement, and I have already run out of missiles there, which is the more accurate armament. I decide to shoot a cannon 30 meters from this house, a very difficult decision. I shoot so that if they are now there, they will hear the explosions inside the house, that they will realize that they know they are there, and in the ambition that they will leave this house. ."I'm also telling you the truth, it crosses my mind if I shoot at the house

The helicopters killed hundreds of terrorists, but the attack was not stopped. A destroyed house in Bari

They fought bravely, risking themselves to stop the Hamas terrorists. And they were there alone when they had to make unbearably difficult decisions: "I'm in the air in one of the sorties, it has already been said that .there are abductees", recalls SAL A

Then what do we do? How do you shoot someone who returns to the ?border

."Good question, and it's a super-complex dilemma"

?Shooting? Not shooting? What do we do

A very difficult dilemma", also admits SAL A. "You look on purpose, you" see what's going on there". And SAL A explains: "I allow myself to say that I already understand how targets behave - a kidnapped person will not run within a group on his own initiative without someone holding him". And I choose such targets that I tell myself that the chance that I shoot ."abductees here is also low

.But there is not one hundred percent in it

."To tell you one hundred percent, it's not"

.A large weight on the shoulders

."crazy"

On the first day of the war, 113 Squadron fired over a hundred missiles and thousands of shells. She destroyed hundreds of terrorists. It was not enough to stop the massacre, but together with the alert classes and the fighters in the settlements, they were small points of light in the great darkness of this black Sabbath. And it is impossible not to think of .another October, that of 1973

I'm in the air during one of the sorties, it's already said that there are abductees". Apache helicopter, archive | Photo: Air" Force website

I think that in Kippur the surprise was in a military area, and here it is in a" civilian area", says the squadron commander. "The sense of failure you feel for citizens is immeasurable. In the end, that's why I get up in the morning, that's why I decided to stay in the army - no matter how ."effective you were on the battlefield, it's a hard feeling

?And what do you feel

frustration. You say, 'No matter how much we've done, it's not over,'"" replies SAL A. "But if we hadn't been there, it could have been a lot worse". SAL E. elaborates: "I guess it will take a long time to recover from this situation and prove what this country is worth and what this army ."knows how to do". And I'm sure we'll win. It's totally on us

90%

SAL A admits: "I made a decision that I was suppressing everything now and I'm opening this album at the end of the war". I'm 'all in' the task, there's no choice - otherwise I won't be sharp, I have to be sharp. Because it's still long, it will still be long". One of the fighters thanks the squadron and says: "You saved us many times, I'm sure that without you it would ."have ended completely differently. I hope we meet inside

Investigation: Noi Bracha

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What liars. As if a helicopter and another Apache should approach! It's a helicopter hitting a target 5 km away! What liars! How come they didn't drop a missile on the tractor or on all the vans. Just shot in the air or on empty buildings. Zeros

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