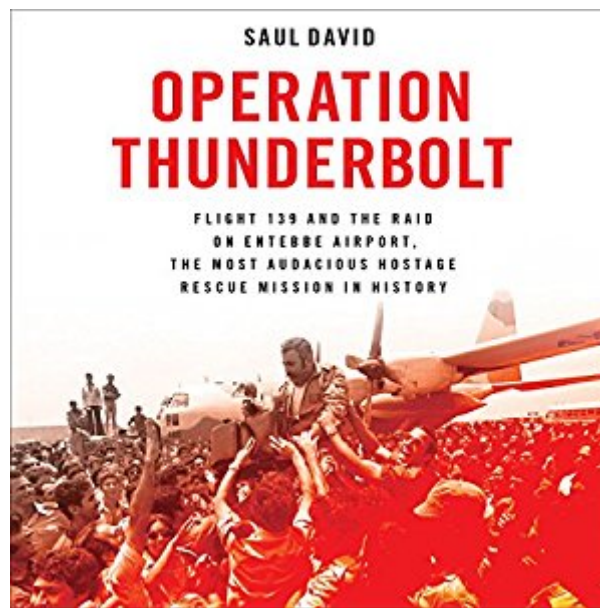


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# Operation Thunderbolt: Flight 139 And The Raid On Entebbe Airport, The Most Audacious Hostage Rescue Mission In History



## Synopsis

The definitive account of one of the greatest Special Forces missions ever, the Raid of Entebbe, by acclaimed military historian Saul David. On June 27, 1976, an Air France flight from Tel Aviv to Paris was hijacked by a group of Arab and German terrorists who demanded the release of 53 terrorists. The plane was forced to divert to Entebbe in Uganda - ruled by the murderous despot Idi Amin, who had no interest in intervening. Days later, Israeli commandos disguised as Ugandan soldiers assaulted the airport terminal, killed all the terrorists, and rescued all the hostages but three who were killed in the crossfire. The assault force suffered just one fatality: its commander, Yoni Netanyahu (brother of Israel's current prime minister.) Three of the country's greatest leaders - Ehud Barak, Shimon Peres, and Yitzhak Rabin - planned and pulled off one of the most astonishing military operations in history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin are names many know today only for their leadership in the State of Israel. Each man served terms as Prime Minister, as well as in the Israeli military and various political positions. But in 1976, they faced a terrifying emergency: the hijacking of Air France Flight 139 by Arab and German terrorists, who demanded the release of imprisoned terrorists in exchange for the safe return of the plane's passengers and crew. Air travel in 1976 was dramatically different from what it is today. Security, while present, varied in effectiveness from country to country. In Greece it was notoriously slack, while in Israel it was the strictest in the entire world.

During this era, hijackings were much more common, reaching a height of 82 in the single year of 1969. These hijackings were often focused on the takeovers of Israeli airplanes by pro-Palestinian terror groups, following Israel's defeat of Jordan, Syria and Egypt in the Six-Day War. In response, Israel tightened its airport security and became the safest country in the world to fly from, with thorough examinations of every single passenger (and accompanying baggage) boarding flights departing Israel. On June 27, 1976, over 200 passengers boarded Air France Flight 139 at Israel's Ben Gurion International Airport. Many were alarmed to learn upon check-in that the plane would be making an unplanned stop in Athens, Greece; one child on the flight, Olivier Cojot, remarked to his father, "Hey Dad, if I were a terrorist I would get on at the stopover." Ellinikon International Airport was known, apparently even to children, as the easiest place for a terrorist to board a plane, along with weapons.

In military annals, few countries have achieved as many accomplishments in special warfare and intelligence-craft as has Israel. The Israelis have pulled off some stunning coups in the few decades of its existence and - of those - few have garnered more attention than the 1976 Entebbe hostage rescue. Saul David's "Operation Thunderbolt" is a compelling recounting of the event, adding considerable details of planning and execution to the existing record. As is universally known, Israel has been locked in struggle with its numerous adversaries since the May, 1948 declaration of statehood. Of course, hostilities long preceded that event, but the nascent Israel Defense Forces (IDF) were able to preserve the state. The 1949 armistice lines de facto established its borders for many years. In 1964, disorganized and disparate irregular warfare groups were gathered under the aegis of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), this in an effort to improve military prospects against the highly accomplished IDF. The PLO and various splinter factions eventually recognized that isolated armed action was only a component of a successful campaign: novelty and publicity were needed. To achieve that end, airline hijacking became a favored tactic in service of the larger goal of "defeating" Israel (however that may be defined). One sub-splinter group acting under the authority of Wadie Hadad acted in concert with a German extremist faction, the "Revolutionary Cells" and together, members of both groups hijacked an Air France jet and eventually landed it in Entebbe, Uganda. On the ground, they were warmly received by Idi Amin Dada, "Field Marshall" and state leader who actively collaborated in the affair from its inception.

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