

## סייון התשע"ה - 6/2015 - 975





# Bell AH-1 Cobra

## The First Attack Helicopter in the Israeli Air Force

After the Yom Kippur War, it was clear to the IDF that new attack helicopters must be acquired in order to assist infantry and armored forces in ground warfare.

On April 11, 1975 six new Bell AH-1 Cobra helicopters arrived at Tel Nof airbase from the US. The helicopter was called "Tzefa" (viper in Hebrew) and the first flight in Israel was conducted on May 13, 1975.

In late 1977, the first squadron of attack helicopters was established – Squadron 160, and in 1979 the squadron moved to its permanent home at Palmachim airbase.

The squadron participated in major combat for the first time during the First Lebanon War and over the next four decades it has taken part in Israel's ongoing security efforts.

Over the years, the American Bell Helicopter company has manufactured more advanced series of the Cobra helicopter and in Israel even more advanced weapons navigation and observation systems were installed. Regardless of the many avionic improvements, the helicopter's physical dimensions have remained similar throughout the years – the aircraft is very narrow (90 cm in total) and only 13.6 meters long and 4.1 meters high. These characteristics have allowed the "Tzefa" to be nearly invisible on the battlefield in addition to being agile and carrying very efficient fire power.

The aircrew has always been the key component of Squadron 160 (and later its sister squadron – Squadron 161). Crewmembers have excelled in their fighting spirit, comradery and friendship, all of which characterize the squadron's atmosphere. The symbols of both squadrons appear on the stamp tab alongside the IAF symbol.

The squadron aircrew has participated in many wars and operations, including the operation in which pilot Yishai Aviram, who ejected from his plane along with Ron Arad while flying over

חותמת אירוע להופעת הכול



Lebanon in October 1986, was rescued on the battlefield, and Operation "Blue and Brown" in which Golani warriors were heroically rescued in an operation that went awry in Lebanon in December 1988. In both of these instances, the "Tzefa" served not only as an attack helicopter, but also as a Search and Rescue (SAR) helicopter, extracting warriors on its skids.

A number of the squadron's aircrew have fallen over the years in battle and training, and the IAF bears their memory to this day.

The cobra that appears on the body of the helicopter serves as the symbol of the squadron and the well-known saying that has accompanied it since its inception is taken from the Book of Ecclesiastes (10:8): He who breaches a stone fence shall be bitten by a snake.

**Major (res) Assaf, Squadron aircrew member**

The illustration of the helicopter and Masada is based on photos by aerial photographer Shay Finkelman.

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Issue:	יוני 2015	הנפקה:
Stamp Size (mm):	H 30 ג / W 40 ר	מידת הכול (מ"מ):
Plate:	987	לוח:
Stamps per Sheet:	15	בולים בגיליון:
Tabs per Sheet:	5	שבילים בגיליון:
Method of printing:	אופסט	שיטת הדפסה:
Security mark:	מיקרוטקסט	סימון אבטחה:
Printer:	Cartor Security Printing, France	דפוס: