

= Battle of Fort Lahtzanit =

The Battle of Fort Lahtzanit took place on October 6 , 1973 , between the Egyptian Army and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) . Part of the Egyptian @-@ initiated Operation Badr , the battle was one of the first of the Yom Kippur War , fought in and around Fort Lahtzanit , a fortification of the Bar Lev Line , located 19 kilometres (12 mi) south of Port Fouad in the Sinai Peninsula .

Commencing the battle with an artillery barrage against the fort , the Egyptians surrounded and isolated the fort prior to assaulting it . Firing ramps intended for Israeli tanks were occupied by Egyptian infantry , who defeated several Israeli attempts to reinforce the fort with armor . The Egyptians managed to breach the defenses and swiftly capture the fort , and proceeded to clear the bunkers , utilizing flamethrower teams . By nighttime , the fort was completely under Egyptian control .

= = Background = =

Operation Badr , an Egyptian military operation , had the objective of crossing the Suez Canal and seizing the Bar Lev line of fortifications . Three of these fortifications , codenamed Budapest , Orkal and Lahtzanit , fell within the area of operations of the Port Said Military Sector . Commanded by Major General Omar Khaled , the sector was a military command independent of the Egyptian Second Field Army to the south . The military sector incorporated the towns of Port Said and Port Fouad on the Mediterranean Sea and surrounding areas . Two independent infantry brigades , the 30th and 135th , were under the military sector 's command along with some coast guard units .

The commander of Fort Lahtzanit was Lieutenant Muli Malhov , who had served on the canal before . During the week leading up to the Yom Kippur War , Israeli patrols between Lahtzanit and Orkal discovered footprints coming from the canal and moving inwards , almost on a daily basis , indicating that the Egyptians were possibly sending men on long @-@ range intelligence missions , or to act as artillery observers . Two days before the outbreak of the war , Malhov expressed concern to his superior officer of the observations being made on the canal line , and that the forts would not stand a chance if they were attacked .

= = = Plan of attack = = =

The 30th Independent Infantry Brigade was tasked with capturing Fort Lahtzanit , located at the Kilometer 19 mark south of Port Fouad . Fort Lahtzanit was surrounded by minefields and barbed wire to a depth of 600 metres (2 @,@ 000 ft) , and incorporated seven bunkers . The commander of the 30th Brigade , Colonel Mustafa el- ' Abassi , committed an infantry battalion to capture the Israeli fort . The battalion would cross at three different points , between an area 2 kilometres (1 @.@ 2 mi) south and 1 @.@ 5 kilometres (0 @.@ 93 mi) north of the fort . Initially the battalion would encircle the fort and cut it off from north , east and south , before the battalion 's assault units would move to attack the fort from several directions . ' Abassi was also tasked with overseeing the defense of the Port Said Sector , and thus deployed two battalions on the west bank to defend against an Israeli naval landing or canal @-@ crossing . Additionally , ' Abassi was reinforced with a Sa 'iqa company (lit. lightning ; Egyptian commandos) . Per planning the company would cross the canal south of the fort , then advance eastward to seize a crossroads located eight kilometers east of the canal , while simultaneously working to intercept enemy reserves headed towards the fort .

= = Battle = =

= = = Isolation = = =

At 1 : 55 p.m. , just before the start of the war , a reconnaissance force swam to the east bank of the Suez Canal , two kilometers south of Fort Lahtzanit , and laid two ropes across the canal to

facilitate the crossing of friendly forces . At 2 : 05 p.m. , as Operation Badr began , an artillery barrage was initiated against the fort using just the 85 mm guns and B @-@ 10 recoilless rifles of the brigade 's anti @-@ tank company ; the use of high trajectory artillery guns was forbidden since a number of Egyptian aircraft were flying over this area .

The troops tasked with isolating Fort Lahtzanit began crossing the canal in dinghies at 2 : 15 p.m .. Ten minutes later they reached the east bank and proceeded to climb the sand wall . They succeeded in attracting Israeli fire , thereby facilitating the main assault force in its mission to attack the fort later on . The troops tasked with isolating the fort from the east reached and occupied a firing ramp prepared for tanks , and raised the Egyptian flag over it . This severely demoralized the Israeli soldiers inside Fort Lahtzanit . Soon after the Sa 'iqa company (less one platoon) arrived at the firing ramp as well .

A reserve of eight M48 Patton tanks were pushed forward to reinforce the fort . They came up against the eastern isolation force , which destroyed one of the tanks at a range of 300 metres (980 ft) . Another tank broke through the Egyptian position and proceeded immediately north towards Fort Orkal , but was destroyed at Kilometer 14 by the northern isolation force . The remaining tanks retreated eastwards to Baluza .

= = = Attack = = =

At around 2 : 50 p.m. , the B @-@ 10 rifles on the west bank managed to open a breach in the barbed wire surrounding the fort , and also destroyed other significant targets , such as the observation equipment . Meanwhile , combat engineers were breaching further openings using Bangalore torpedoes , under heavy small arms fire and hand grenades . The battalion 's main assault force was crossing at the same time . The main assault force then funneled through the breaches and entered the Israeli trenches . The Israeli command in Northern Sinai kept receiving frantic calls for help from the fort 's radio operator , and gunfire could also be heard . The Egyptians captured the southern sector of the fort by 3 : 05 p.m .. Five minutes later , the assault force moved against the northern sector of the fort . Within fifteen minutes , the Egyptians were in control of the fort . The power generator inside the fort was destroyed , and all electricity and communication lines leading to the fort were severed . At 3 : 30 p.m. , Maj. Gen. Khaled was informed that Lahtzanit had been seized and that Israeli soldiers had been captured . The Israelis reported losing radio contact with the fort at around 4 : 00 p.m.

The Egyptians proceeded to clear the bunkers . They utilized flamethrower teams , which had a visible psychological impact on the fort 's garrison . At one point , the Egyptians , with the help of a wounded Israeli prisoner , managed to secure a bunker by convincing the panicked Israelis inside to come out and surrender . Soon after losing contact with the fort , the Israelis attempted to reach it once more . By this time , Malhov was dead . A group of tanks from Baluza advanced to Lahtzanit , but the Sa 'iqa company occupying the firing ramp managed to destroy two tanks , forcing the remainder to retreat . Another group of tanks and half @-@ tracks tried to break through the southern isolation force , but were ambushed and withdrew after losing a tank .

At 4 : 00 p.m. , two anti @-@ tank teams joined the Sa 'iqa company on the firing ramp . Both teams , along with the company , were ordered to advance eastward and seize the crossroads . At around 5 : 00 p.m. , the Israeli Air Force began attacking Egyptian forces in the fort and on the west bank of the canal . One group of four aircraft attempted to bomb the fort ; the first aircraft dropped its payload of seven bombs , then descended to a low altitude to escape anti @-@ aircraft fire . An anti @-@ air platoon at the Kilometer 17 mark soon shot down an Israeli aircraft (either a Mirage III or an A @-@ 4 Skyhawk) with a Strela 2 missile , destroying it . Between 6 : 00 and 7 : 00 p.m. all bunkers and troop shelters inside the fort were cleared , and the Egyptians transferred 26 Israeli prisoners to the west bank of the canal , and thereafter transferred them to Port Said for intelligence gathering . The Israelis concentrated heavy artillery fire against the fort , once they were sure it had been captured by the Egyptians .

At 9 : 30 p.m. , the Sa 'iqa company reported an Israeli armored column advancing towards the fort . Two Egyptian tanks on the west bank opened fire , forcing the Israeli tanks and armored vehicles

to withdraw . The company continued eastwards , eventually reaching the crossroads , facing no resistance along the way . With the reinforcing anti @-@ tank teams , the company established defensive positions , and el- ' Abassi dispatched patrols to secure the roads leading to the fort .

= = Aftermath = =

Fort Lahtzanit was the first defensive fortification of the Bar Lev Line to be captured , over one hour after the start of the assault . Israeli casualties were 60 killed and 26 captured ; Egyptian losses were 23 killed , including one officer , and 7 wounded , including two officers . The most important factor leading to the capture of the fort was its isolation on all sides , and the speed with which the infantry reached and seized the firing ramp east of the fort before Israeli tanks occupied it . In contrast to the capture of Fort Lahtzanit , the attempt to capture Fort Orkal by the 135th Brigade went awry , and el- ' Abassi was forced to commit a reserve infantry company on the west bank to help seize the fort . The company crossed at 4 : 00 p.m. on October 6 , and the following day Fort Orkal was captured .