

Title (up to 20 words) - Operation Atilla

Copy (between 900 and 1000 words) -

02:56am 20th July 1974

Waking up panting and shaking with a cold sweat that made my clothes cling to me I looked over at my nightstand in the darkness. My clock read 02:56am. I had to be up at 06:00am for a meeting with my Commanding Officer(CO), Nik, at 08:00am. I think he said something about a new mission due to our coup d'état 5 days ago. Apparently something about the Turkish wanting to invade our tiny island of Cyprus. Outside all I can hear is the sound of cicadas and stray cats yowling at each other. The humid air flowing in through my open window. As my eyes adjust to the darkness it becomes easier to see around my small room. Getting up I walk over to my desk and pick up my metal water bottle. Cracking it open and gulping it down I slowly walk over to the window, opening the curtains so I can look outside. The city is in darkness, the beautiful architecture stretching far beyond me. Looking up at the clear sky I can see stars littering the stretch of darkness above me. I can only pick out a few constellations but the constant twinkling comforted me just a little. There was a new moon tonight, maybe it was hiding itself from what was about to come.

08:00am 20th July 1974

I walk into the cool building with my head held high and my shoulders back, I couldn't afford to look nervous and weak especially at this time. Following the maze of corridors to the CO's office. The white door is shut and nailed to the door is his name and rank, through the frosted glass I can just about make out the shape of Nik, he's pacing the floor as he yells orders over the phone. The door is muffling the exact words he's saying. I wait until he puts the phone down and lightly knock on the door to alert him of my presence. A few seconds

later it slowly opens to reveal Nik. His normally picture perfect hair was ruffled and messy. As I look at the rest of his face I see the bags under his eyes and the tension in his shoulders. Stepping back and walking over to his desk chair he sits down and gestures to me to do the same.

"So, do you have any idea of why you're here?"

"Not really sir." I reply

"Earlier this morning we were invaded by Turkey from Kyrenia. We put troops there yesterday so they were met with resistance. There were some casualties and we need you to take a team there in order to put pressure on them."

"Yes sir."

"Here is a list of your team, I'm going to call them in one by one to explain what's happening. But I need you to get yourself packed and ready to go. I think you'll only need your webbing and Dimitri is your field medic," he reeled off "any questions?"

"No sir"

"You are dismissed"

I stood up and saluted, after doing an about turn I marched out of his office. After I was out I walked further down the hallway and as soon as I was outside I breathed out heavily not realising I was holding my breath.

09:00am 20th July 1974

As soon as I got back to my room I opened my wardrobe pulling out my bulletproof vest as well as my webbing. In my webbing I packed my canteen, food supplies, mini medic kit, camo cream and my knives. I made a mental note to go to the armoury to check out some ammo as well as my G3A3 rifle. Finishing packing my webbing I go over to my desk and start writing a letter to my family just in case I don't make it back. I do this before every mission, I don't know if it makes me more or less motivated or optimistic that I'm actually coming home but it's a tradition that I've stuck to since I first joined the Cypriot National Guard, even though it went against my mothers wishes I didn't

want to feel like I wasn't doing anything to keep our little island safe. Now was my chance to do that and prove my mother wrong. Before going out I wanted to have my 'last meal' of sorts. Leaving the camp I went to my favourite taverna and ordered a pork kebab with a village salad, coca-cola and for my sweet a small portion of Melomakarona.

05:00am 21st July 1974

Waking up this early on a Sunday morning wasn't really something I wanted to do but this mission was important so I had to suck it up. Getting ready by putting on my bulletproof vest and after that my webbing and zipping it up. Once I'm finished I walk down to my locker in the armoury and put the ammo in its designated pockets as well as putting the rifle strap around me. I walk over to the entrance of the base where our armoured vehicle waits to take us into Limassol to provide assistance in order to pressurise the Turkish Cypriot enclave.

06:00am 21st July 1974

Arriving in Limassol we immediately engaged in a fire fight. The sounds of gunfire, screaming and orders being yelled in both Turkish and Greek was all we could hear. Looking over at Dimitri I covered for him as he ran to a safer location. Switching who's running and who's covering we made it to a more strategic position in order to push the Turkish forces out. Hours later a temporary ceasefire was ordered and we were told to go to Lefkosia in order to head off the rest of the Turkish forces.