



and others had left the Air Force. At the time of the Revolution, I was 22 years old and one of the last pilots to have completed all the combat and piloting courses before the Revolution, which positioned me to assist the country in this regard. When the war broke out, I was 24 years old and ready to fly, but due to my relatively young age, I was initially assigned fewer challenging missions at Tabriz Air Base. However, after a short time, I was sent on more difficult missions. In the second year of the war, under the command of Martyr Babaei, I completed the F-14 flight training at Isfahan Air Base and subsequently undertook missions with that aircraft. This was the first F-14 training course conducted in Iran after the Revolution and without the presence of Americans.

You have successfully completed numerous aerial operations, to the extent that you have even been referred to as 'a lucky pilot'. What is the secret behind this success?

When I was undergoing F-14 flight training in Isfahan, Martyr Babaei asked me to work in the flight safety section of the base, and I completed a short course in this area. This training provided me with a unique perspective on flight safety. After that, when I was transferred to Shiraz Air Base and then to Bushehr Air Base, I continued my work in flight safety. Therefore, my experience in this section greatly helped me prevent potential accidents. I was particularly involved in most aerial engagements during the latter part of the war, and in the final year of the war (1988), I recorded the highest number of operations. The fact that I was able to

carry out these missions safely was, first and foremost, a blessing from God. Secondly, my flight successes were related to my awareness and understanding of the operational environment. On February 9, 1988, I engaged with several Iraqi aircraft on two separate occasions, successfully downing three of them.

You are also mentioned as a close friend of the martyrs Mostafa Ardestani and Abbas Babaei. Could you share a bit about these two martyrs and their roles in operations?

I met Martyr Ardestani while I was undergoing F-5 flight training in Dezful. He had come to the base to complete his instructor pilot course while I was training on the F-5. That's where our friendship began. We later collaborated in various organizations, such as the Islamic Association and the Construction Jihad, which fostered a strong bond between us. In 1981, he was appointed as the commander of the Omidieh Base, while I went to Isfahan Air Base, where I had the privilege of training under Martyr Babaei for the F-14. I had the opportunity to fly in the back seat of Martyr Babaei's aircraft as a test pilot, as well as in the front seat alongside him, where he signed my flight log. Although Martyr Babaei did not have the chance to participate in some advanced flight courses, his exceptional talent enabled him to excel in his work.

I remember when we participated together in Operation Kheibar and positioned ourselves behind the F-14 aircraft. Since we didn't have radar, we controlled our flight position via radio communication. We would visually scan the area for any threats to the F-14s and report them over the radio. However, the radio's battery would only last about fifteen to twenty minutes before it would suddenly cut out. Martyr Pilot [Mohammad Reza] Shadnejad raised this issue with Martyr Babaei, who replied, "If we procure radar, the enemy will receive anti-radar technology and will easily become aware of our position." Thus, we took part in the operation, and with my presence alongside several other pilots, we successfully flew F-14s over the nation's forces, ensuring the safety



“

My flight successes were related to my awareness and understanding of the operational environment. On February 9, 1988, I engaged with several Iraqi aircraft on two separate occasions, successfully downing three of them.

of the soldiers in the area. Under the cover of our air operations, our forces were relocated via helicopters to the Majnoon Island.

In recent years, you have taken on various responsibilities, including serving as a senior advisor to the Air Force commander. Could you elaborate on the capabilities of the Air Force and its significance?

The capabilities of the Air Force play a crucial role in classic warfare. Nearly 100 years ago, many military theorists, including Billy Mitchell (one of the pioneers of the US Air Force) and Viscount Trenchard (often referred to as the "Father of the Royal Air Force," who was a key figure in the establishment and development of the RAF in the early 20th century), stated that air power would dominate future wars. Time has proven their assertions correct, as evidenced by the air operations in Normandy during World War II and one year prior to the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which paved the way for Japan's surrender and showcased the power of air superiority.

In the past, efforts were made to complete the southern flank of the former Soviet Union's blockade during the Cold War, equipping our military with air power to withstand a potential Soviet invasion in the short term. Thus, our country has a strong foundation in this regard. However, one of the weaknesses and threats to the Air Force is the high cost of the necessary equipment, which requires a significant budget for its procurement. A country that wishes to be viewed as the military power in the region needs a very strong Air Force, and, therefore, with the guidance of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution [Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei], our air power must continue to grow day by day.

As a final question, as someone who has interacted with many soldiers throughout your service, what is your perspective on this group and their role?

Since I joined the flying squadrons, I have had direct interactions with soldiers in various capacities, whether as secretaries, drivers, or combatants. I sincerely appreciate the kindness of each and every one of these soldiers. Many of them, even after years have passed since their service, still remain in my memory. Many have married, had children, and even grandchildren, and we still keep in touch, occasionally checking in on each other's well-being. I will never forget the wonderful memories I have shared with these soldiers.

However, I also recall a particularly painful memory from 10:30 PM on October 3, 1980, just 12 days into the war. Iraq launched a heavy bombardment that struck the guardhouse of the airbase, resulting in the martyrdom of around 40 soldiers, and this remains one of the bitterest memories of my service. I will never forget the following day when the bodies of the soldiers were pulled from the rubble.