

FZ1073: The Target Was the Terminal

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · 12 October 2026

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By Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren

Last week we asked a plain question about flydubai flight FZ1073: who was supposed to check the man in the right-hand seat? On Friday, 9 October 2026, the United Arab Emirates added two facts that make the question heavier, not lighter.

The first is the target. In a statement carried by WAM, the official Emirati news agency, the UAE Attorney-General said the co-pilot meant to seize the aircraft and use it for a suicide attack on the passenger terminal at Ben Gurion Airport, “with the aim of causing the greatest possible loss of life.” In the first days, reports floated the airport or a Tel Aviv tower. Now the UAE has named one place. Not the runway. The terminal: the hall where grandparents wait with balloons and soldiers sleep on their duffel bags before a flight.

The second is the rehearsal. According to the same statement, he used two earlier flights to Tel Aviv to learn the route and the airport. The flight on 30 September was his third.

Sit with that. Twice he landed at our front gate, looked around, and flew home. Israeli law requires airlines to send crew names before every flight into the country, so his name should have reached Israel before each of those landings. Our first piece was never only about one bad morning. It was about a system in which a man could practise.

Since then, more of the gap has come into view, all of it outside the cockpit.

The Times of Israel, citing Channel 13, reports that one Israeli airline has stopped waiting for the state and hired a private firm to screen some 2,500 pilots and flight attendants on its leased foreign aircraft. That is a single report, so treat it as such. The same paper reports that most flights sold by Arkia and Israir use planes and crews leased from foreign carriers, and Arkia’s chief executive confirmed that flights of this kind originating abroad do not get the Shin Bet’s security envelope. The question is no longer only about foreign airlines. It reaches flights with Israeli names on the tickets.

A private company doing the state’s job is a symptom, not a cure. The four steps we proposed last week still stand. Name one owner, in writing, for checking every crew member on every flight into Israel. Read the crew lists for security, not only for crime. Treat an airline’s declaration as the start of the check, not the end of it. Keep the hands at the gate clean.

And remember why the terminal is still standing. People in the cabin moved. On 8 October President Herzog gave the Presidential Award for Civilian Heroism to six of them, and said their bravery “cannot absolve us of the obligation to obtain full answers.” He is right. Courage bought us the chance to fix this. It does not fix it.

This week we read that when Noach and his household entered the ark, “the L-rd shut him in” (Bereishit 7:16). Rashi explains that G-d guarded the door, so the people outside could not break it open. That door was kept from Above. The doors of our airport, and the lists of who stands behind a cockpit door on approach to it, are left to us. Some of the guarding is our job, and it has an address.

Three times he flew toward that terminal. The fourth time must not depend on a handful of passengers and a wounded captain with one last fight in him.

May G-d grant full healing to Captain Smit Machchhar, bless the six who rushed the door, and guard every traveller who passes through our gates.

Sources

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- Times of Israel (citing Channel 13), 9 Oct 2026: background checks on leased crews
- Times of Israel: most Arkia and Israir flights use leased planes and crews
- Times of Israel: leased foreign planes and the security envelope
- Jerusalem Post, 8 Oct 2026: Presidential Award for Civilian Heroism
- President Herzog on X, 8 Oct 2026
- Bereishit 7:16 with Rashi (Sefaria)
- Earlier piece: FZ1073: Who Vets the Pilot?

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