

Witness Störmann

Int. Summer: Did you then drive to the airfield or were you able to see it from your home?

Störmann: No, we couldn't see it, but what made us do it, my brother-in-law and me, was of course after we had followed the events in the media. There they had said that the helicopters were flying from the Olympic Village towards Erding. But since it was a sunny, warm evening, we had the windows open, and we suddenly heard what I had already suspected – that they were not flying to Erding, but to Fürstentfeldbruck. The sound was typical of that type of helicopter, and I said to my family: "They aren't flying to Erding, they're flying to Fürstentfeldbruck. Which makes sense. That's a military airbase. It's secured by a fence and personnel."

So I said to my brother-in-law: "Let's go and see what happens". Not being aware of what could actually happen. And so I climbed into my VW camper van, which was brand new at the time, with my brother-in-law in the passenger seat, and we just made it through the airbase guard post on time. I had ID cards and even made it right up to where everything was going on. When we arrived we could already see the light of the fire, the fire itself, and heard noises etc.. Someone told us to get out immediately and take cover. I don't remember who it was. And so we took cover in a coal heap. We can measure it again, how many meters it was. I guess 100 or 150 meters. And we observed and could hear the catastrophe take place – which of course we had not expected and could not have possibly anticipated – but without direct visual contact with the helicopters or the actual scene.

To us it sounded as if there was a terrible shootout, like in the movies. And my brother-in-law, who is a little older, said that it was just like in the war. And so we stayed on the coal heap until probably midnight, when nothing more could be heard, and followed the events visually and acoustically without having direct contact.

So we only really sensed the helicopters. We saw people running around. Who they were – whether they were the Palestinians, the terrorists, or policemen or whoever – we couldn't tell. It was a situation that was foreign to us and that we couldn't really get our heads around. There were also young policemen lying on the coal pile – I assume they were riot police in training, and they didn't know what was going on or why they were there. As far as we could tell they didn't have any orders to get involved. We could see that there was a Lufthansa 727 standing there. We could clearly hear the noise of an auxiliary engine, but we couldn't see what else was going on. So there was commotion, flashes, shots, fire. A pause in the shooting and then again sporadic shots and then we could see the fire department. The lights were on and then suddenly they went out again. I don't know if that was a general power outage or what. So we experienced all that and of course we discussed the events with my brother-in-law for a long time afterwards.

It was not made public just how many people were on the way with the helicopters. As it turned out, there were 8 terrorists and 3 helicopters; two with the hostage-takers and one, I think, with police officers or I don't know what. So that was the impression. And when things quietened down – it must have been after midnight – we said to each other we'd now try to get to our car and go home, not aware of all the things that could still have happened. And when we got to the car, as I said, it was the new Westfalia campervan, someone from the airbase, a policeman or a guard, I assume said "The vehicle stays here. We need it as protection against bullets, just in case something starts up again. So then the question was, of course, how do we get home from the old tower building, from the scene of the fighting, back through the guarded gate.

Then my comrade Henning Remmers came by. I don't know why. He had parked his car somewhere else. So when we met up I asked him if he could give us a ride. And so he gave us a ride to the gates of the airbase, which were closed. From in front of the guardhouse – as seen from the city, there was a huge crowd, camera flashes going off, reporters and all kinds of things. And then, with our ID cards we were able to – they opened the gates briefly and we went through. Of course, with journalists and onlookers and so on jostling us.