French Defense Chief Visits Armenia Amid Deepening Ties

By Astghik Bedevian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun/AFP) — France will provide more weapons and other military assistance to Armenia to help it defend its territory, French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu said during a first-ever visit to Yerevan on Friday, February 23.

“Threats hanging over Armenia force us to move forward faster,” he told Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. “It is very important for us to react and take necessary steps quickly.”

Speaking after talks with his Armenian counterpart, Suren Papikyan, held earlier in the day, Lecornu confirmed that Armenia took delivery the previous night of the first batch of French night-vision devices commissioned by it last year. The Armenian military will also soon receive air-defense radar systems and more armored personnel carriers from French manufacturers, he said.

The French defense group Thales signed with the Armenian Defense Ministry a contract for the supply of three GM200 radars during Papikyan’s visit to Paris last October. Papikyan and Lecornu signed at the time a “letter of intent” on Armenia’s future acquisition of short-range surface-to-air missiles manufactured by another French company.

Lecornu indicated that the supply of the Mistral air-defense systems is a matter of time. What is more, he said, “France will provide more...”

France Honors French-Armenian Hero Missak Manouchian

By Jean Eckian

PARIS — Through the voice of French President Emmanuel Macron, France honors Missak Manouchian, a great figure of the French Resistance, hero of a singular story of a stateless Armenian poet who fought against the German occupiers on French soil. It would take several columns to write the story of this committed man who, with his comrades, carried out over 90 attacks and acts of sabotage, killing 150 Germans and wounding 600 more. The Nazis called it the Army of Crime.

On February 21, the 80th anniversary of Manouchian’s execution by the Nazis in 1944, France admitted the glorious resistance fighter to the Panthéon mausoleum, home to the greatest figures in the land of human rights.

see MANOUCHIAN, page 7

Ukraine’s Zelenskyy Reportedly Will Visit Armenia

By Artak Khulian and Shoghik Glastian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is planning to visit Armenia next week amid the South Caucasus country’s mounting tensions with Russia, a diplomatic source told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service on February 26.

The visit will likely take place on March 4, the source said, adding that Zelenskyy will also travel to Azerbaijan.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry pointedly declined to confirm or deny the information, saying only that it informs the public about the visits of foreign leaders “in due course.”

Ukraine’s charge d’affaires in Yerevan, Valeri Lo-
NEW YORK — PBS will show the premiere of “Armenia, My Home,” a spectacular visual journey through Armenia, premiering February 27 on PBS (check local listings). From filmmaker Andrew Goldberg, the documentary promises viewers a breathtaking exploration of Armenia’s rich cultural tapestry, featuring stunning cinematography, striking archival photographs, incredible interviews, and vibrant music.

The documentary, narrated by Andrea Martin (“Only Murders in the Building”), features prominent voices from the Armenian diaspora including actor Eric Bogosian (“Succession”); author Chris Bohjalian (HBO’s “The Flight Attendant”); Pulitzer Prize-winning author Peter Balakian (HBO’s “The Hundred-Year Walk”); Conan O’Brien’s famed assistant Sona Movsesian; and Bishop Anahid Mackeen (“Good Day LA”), author Dawn Vespa; journalist Araksya Karapetyan; and scholars Ron Suny and Salpi Ghazarian.

“Armenia, My Home” celebrates the modern-day, independent Armenian Republic and its people, and offers a lens into the nearly 3,000-year-old storied past of the world’s first Christian nation. From medieval monasteries nestled in northern forests to the spectacular Hellenistic temple of Garni, the documentary takes viewers on a compelling journey through Armenia’s diverse landscapes. Sweeping from the Caucasian mountains with stunning views of the peaks of Mount Ararat, “Armenia, My Home” seamlessly blends Armenian music throughout, telling a story that resonates with the fusion of East and West.

For so many that we interviewed in this film, Armenia is more than a country, it’s a part of who they are — a community that has survived and flourished, despite untold enemies who sought to conquer them. This is more than a story of a nation, it is the story of some of the most resilient people alive,” stated director Andrew Goldberg.

“It’s an honor to narrate this documentary exploring Armenia’s storied past and vibrant culture,” said Emmy Award-winning actress Andrea Martin. “As an Armenian-American, I am deeply connected to this part of my heritage and I am proud to share it with the world.”

The documentary promises to be a compelling journey that will offer viewers a deeper understanding of Armenia’s rich history and vibrant culture, and its enduring legacy.

**Armenia, My Home**

Premieres On PBS Stations Across the Country

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Sweet Biscuits from Mediterranean Meals for Mom

Helen Adourian is the successful blogger and entrepreneur at Mediterranean Meals for Moms. She is also a licensed cosmetologist and fashion consultant. When she married her husband John, they traveled extensive-ly which gave her extra time to discover and refine her true culinary passion and creativ-ity. Having two sets of twins since then, Helen has made it her goal to create a variety of healthy and organic foods for her family as often as possible.

“I am a first-generation American-Armenian, and I like to incorporate and create traditional dishes and recipes from my family’s Turkish-Armenian background and heritage.”

“I was born in Chicago, Illinois, and live and work in California. My parents were both born in Turkey; my father is from Kayseri, and my mother is from Istanbul. Kayseri is renowned for its culinary specialties such as manti, pastirma and sucuk. Manti is the most popular dish in Kayseri for the local people and tourists. My in-laws are from Dikranagerd, and I also post special family recipes that I’ve learned from my husband’s relatives.”

“I love to cook and bake especially traditional meals and baked goods from my Armenian culture. My paternal grandparents were a big part of my childhood and I remember them when I cook and bake because I remember the fondest memo-ries with them in the kitchen. Our family likes this sweet biscuit bread (choreg) any time of year, and it’s delicious served with butter, honey, jam, and Armenian coffee or tea,” adds Helen.

INGREDIENTS:
2 1/2 to 3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup butter (1 stick)
3/4 cup powdered sugar
1 large egg (room temperature)
1 tablespoon mahleb*
4 oz. cream cheese (about 1/4 cup)
1 teaspoon baking powder
4-5 teaspoons water for rolling out
Glazing: 1 large egg yolk
Sesame seeds as garnish

PREPARATION:
Combine the dry ingredients in a bowl and set aside.

In another bowl, mix together the egg, oil, butter, and cream cheese; slowly add the dry ingredients to this mixture, and stir to combine.

Refrigerate the dough for an hour or a little longer.

On a large clean work surface, roll out the dough and shape into desired shapes.

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Place biscuits on parchment-lined baking sheets and brush the tops with the egg and sesame seeds, if desired.

Bake for 20 minutes or until lightly golden brown. (Baking time will depend on the size of your biscuits and the shapes you’ve made.)

“Mahleb, sometimes spelled mayleb, is a small, wild cherry pit from the St. Lucy cherry. It’s commonly used in Greek cooking and it’s also used heavily in Middle Eastern dishes. The cherries’ pits are ground into a meal-like substance.

Follow Helen at her Mediterranean Meals for Moms page on Facebook, go to: https://www.facebook.com/MediterraneanMealsforMoms/
For this recipe, go to: https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1556708281129450&set=ph.100064760706556.-2207520000
Check out Helen’s recipes at: https://helenadourian.wordpress.com/
For Helen’s Gluten-Free Easter Bread (Choreg), see: https://helenadourian.wordpress.com/
For her Easter Bread (Choreg), see: https://helenadourian/2014/04/15/easter-bread-choreg/

“I’ve also made a major lifestyle change for the past few years, and have lost 80 pounds. I share my journey and weight loss tips along with recipes and Ar-menian keto food on my Instagram Helen_s_Keto_Journey.” Helen owns her own business selling and promoting wine that is keto-friendly, low carb/low sugar, and organic. For details, see: www.helenesketo vind.com.

REFERENCES:
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Recipe Corner
by Christine Vartanian
Helen Adourian Saman, John Saman, and their family

Soviet Armenian Classic in Spotlight at Socially Relevant Film Festival

FESTIVAL, from page 13 about a series of mysterious metamorpho-ses that lead two inspectors to an investiga
tion into the humorous world of artist Saré, (Evgenia Sarkissyan).

“Barev Yes Em” and “The Forgotten Homeland” screen only in-person in the cinema. The other Armenian films screen in person (except the last four) and online.

The main themes of the festival are 100 Years of Armenian Cinema, Black History, BIPOC films, Aging and Disability, Women, LGBTQI+, and more. The Festival’s YouTube Channel has the trailers of the selection and the live Meet The Filmmakers interviews.

The SRFF 2024 competition award cat-egories are The Vanya Exerjian - Empow-ering Women and Girls Award, Best Nar-rative Feature, Best Documentary Feature, Best Narrative Short, Best Documentary Short, Best Actor, and Best Actress. The Finalist Screenplay Awards are sponsored by InkTip and NetworkISA.

“Eleven years have gone by quickly. We’re proud to have had the opportunity to present over 700 socially relevant films from 40 countries. The work of these talent-ed and dedicated filmmakers has offered us the bonus of learning about the human condi-tion, filmmaking, and ways of engaging an audience as the first steps towards raising awareness of social issues,” Festival Found-ing Artistic Director Nora Armani.

SRFF was founded by Actress/ Film-maker Armani in 2013 as a response to the proliferation of violence and violent forms of storytelling in media and entertainment. Following a family tragedy that cost the lives of two of her dearest and nearest, namely her cousin Vanya, and uncle Jack Exerjian, Armani founded the festival to commemorate them in a meaningful way. SRFF believes in the power of the film medium in raising awareness of social is-suces and promoting positive social change.

This new edition deals with topics such as Climate Change, Family and Adoption, LGBTQ Rights, Home and Health, Dis-ability, Incarceration and Freedom, New York City, Racism, and BIPOC cultures.

The Mission of the SR Film Festival is to shine the spotlight on filmmakers who tell compelling, socially relevant, human-in-terest stories, across a broad range of social issues without resorting to violence and viol-ent forms of storytelling.

Early Bird $5 tickets, the Trio $12, are available for a limited time before regular prices become effective. Students enter for free with a valid ID.

For more information visit https://www. ratedsfilms.org/
ACYOA Seniors Serve on Mission Trip in Atlanta

By Jennifer Morris

NEW YORK — The Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) Seniors from across the Eastern Diocese just returned from the 4th annual ACYOA Seniors Mission Trip. The ACYOA Central Council partnered with Habitat for Humanity of North Central Georgia and the Armenian Church of Atlanta Mission Parish in Roswell, Ga., over the weekend of February 15-18.

The Mission Trip was underwritten by a grant from the Dadourian Foundation, along with funds from the ACYOA Central Council, which covered the participants’ lodging, ground transportation, meals, and donation fees to take part in a Habitat for Humanity house build.

Nineteen young adults, ranging from college students to working professionals, participated in the trip and were immersed in service, education, witness, worship, and fellowship. They traveled from 9 states (Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin), representing 11 parish communities of the Eastern Diocese. They were joined by group leader Fr. Yeprem Kelegian, along with Jennifer Morris of the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, along with St. Nersess Seminary graduates Deacon Alex Calikyan and Deacon Johnny Chadoyan.

The group arrived in Roswell, GA on Thursday evening. Early Friday morning, Fr. Kelegian led the participants in prayer and reflection before the group took off for Gainesville, GA, the site of the Habitat for Humanity house build. After meeting the Habitat staff and acclimating themselves with the tasks ahead, the group got right to work–eager to lend a hand for two full work days as they diligently prepared materials and cleared the land for the build.

First-time participant Cynthia Panthier came together with a common motivation and goal. “My first time on this mission trip was special for me not only because I was able to give back to the community, but I was also able to go out of my comfort zone and reignite a passion inside of me. I’m thankful for what the mission trip gives to people, and what it gave to me. Bonding with families, giving a family a home, and making new friendships: this weekend made a huge impact on me and gave me memories that will last a lifetime.”

Among the Atlanta Faithful

After a full day on the build site, the participants broke up into four groups and visited four homes of parishioners from the Atlanta Mission Parish. The participants entered their homes as strangers and left feeling like family, sharing life stories and spending time getting to know each other. Participants gathered back at their hotel together and participated in another late night of engaging group discussions that provided space for the participants to be vulnerable and grow deeper in their faith and prayer life.

Saturday’s work on the Habitat worksite was especially meaningful, as participants worked alongside the future homeowner. A returning participant from the Atlanta Mission Parish, Emma Freeborn, reflected on her experiences by sharing: “I feel thankful to have had the opportunity to serve on the ACYOA mission trip for a second year. One thing that really impressed me this year and last year was the enthusiasm of all the ACYOA members to serve. At the Habitat for Humanity site, we formed smaller teams by task and area of the house and were able to work efficiently and effectively. Since everyone was eager to help, we were able to complete a substantial part of the siding of the house. It showed how much of a difference we can make when people come together with a common motivation and goal.”

At the end of the work day, and after an emotional closing reflection, the group witnessed a baptism ceremony for two young adults from the Atlanta parish. Concluding the service, the young adults provided and served dinner to parishioners and spent time in fellowship playing cards, chess, and tavloo.

The trip concluded on Sunday as the group participated in the Divine Liturgy, celebrated by Fr. Kelegian. After liturgy, Jennifer Morris and Lerna Lacinian of the Diocesan Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries spoke about the ministries of the ACYOA and Diocesan Summer Camp programs, St. Vartan Camp and Hye Camp.

Fr. Yeprem shared: “It was a joy and privilege to be with a group of young people who eagerly wanted to put their Christian values to work. They worked hard for Habitat for two days in inclement weather. They had deep reflections about their faith. They were pastoral on home visits. They did it all with joy and fervor.”

After a closing fellowship meal and pasting conversations with members of the parish community, the group said their tearful goodbyes—eagerly awaiting a chance to meet at future national and regional ACYOA programs.

Follow @ACYOA on Facebook and Instagram to stay up-to-date on upcoming events, or subscribe to their email newsletter by visiting www.acyoa.org. Feel free to contact Jennifer Morris at jenniferm@armeniandioce.org.