

Goggle gal is sentenced to five years in Florida

IranTimes: An Iranian woman who voluntarily surrendered to the United States in expectation that she would serve no jail time was sentenced last month to more than five years in federal prison for her role in a plot to smuggle military night-vision goggles to Iran. U.S. District Judge James I. Cohn imposed the sentence on 31-year-old Shahrazad Mir Gholikhan, who maintained her innocence during her trial in December. She has already spent more than a year in jail, which will count toward her five-year, three-month sentence. Gholikhan and her thenhusband, Mahmud Seif, were indicted in 2005 by a grand jury in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on charges of conspiring to obtain thousands of Generation III night vision goggles for the Iranian military. The pair was arrested in 2004 in Vienna, Austria, after a meeting with two undercover agents working for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). ICE was acting on a tip that Tehran was looking to illegally import 3,500 pairs of the goggles. Efforts to extradite her and her ex-husband from Austria failed as the pair returned to Iran. But in December 2007, Gholikhan traveled to South Florida and voluntarily presented herself to the authorities to plead guilty in a deal that was expected to sentence her to no time in jail. In April 2008, the Iranian mother of two testified in court that her main role was acting as a translator and go-between for her husband, who does not speak English. Days after her guilty plea and the subsequent sentence of time served, prosecutors said they had used the wrong sentencing guidelines and a new sentence of 29 months was issued. Gholikhan then withdrew her guilty plea to one count of conspiracy to export the military goggles without a license. But by doing so, Gholikhan faced re-trial based on all seven counts of the grand jury indictment. In the re-trial, Gholikhan insisted she was under Seif's control and denied using the pseudonym "Farideh Fahimi," the name of the woman in numerous recorded phone calls and intercepted



e-mails linked to the goggles deal. But Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Walleisa accused the defendant of inventing a "surreal spy thriller" in an effort to escape responsibility. He said Gholikhan's testimony was in "direct conflict with the evidence in the case" showing the woman with Seif intimately involved in the crime. Gholikhan now appears incensed at her treatment in the United States. The Associated Press reported that in one of her several handwritten court filings, Gholikhan said she looked forward to eventually leaving "devil-land of America." She also boldly compared herself to a lioness. "The bottom line is you are playing with ... a real and true she lion, who is the Queen of the Jungle," Gholikhan wrote. "A she lion is much stronger than a he lion." The Generation III night vision goggles are extremely sensitive because they give the United States a key advantage during night operations. Army Col. Kevin McDonnell, testifying in a similar 2008 smuggling case, said U.S. enemies who obtain such goggles would be better equipped to kill American soldiers, shoot down U.S. aircraft and figure out how to design their own competing version of the goggles.

Memories of Nowruz in Iran

by Davood Rahni

IranTimes: I was born in Dezashib- Shemiran and grew up in Evin. Many of us then, forty or so years ago, looked forward to the prospect of getting new clothing as a prelude to Nowruz visiting exchanges and Eidi! Despite my objection, however, my father every year insisted that I "choose" suits a few sizes larger from then Bab-Homayoun next to Shasmolemareh-Bazaar, and typically for a mere \$3, with the explanation that I would soon grow into it! I vividly recall, still



in the early tender age of primary schooling, and after I had somewhat reluctantly but proudly worn the new outfit at sunrise on Nowruz that the oversized suit must have made me resemble a sort of dwarf rushing to be an adult. And so, dressed up, we set out to my grand aunt's house in Zargandeh as she was revered as the eldest in the family. Aunt Khanom was recognized by

family, friends and foes as baking the best pastries, mixing the most savory nuts and dried fruits, and of course, serving the heavenly Persian cuisine. The expectation in those days was, however, for children to only take one small piece at a time out of respect and only when offered with much insistence by an adult hostess. Everything looked too delicious not to take advantage of, however! So, as the adults were intimately chattering and not noticing me, with one hand I picked one pastry at a time and stuffed it into

my mouth and with the other stuffed pastries and nuts into my pants pockets. I looked carefully around, pretending I was still obedient of the social etiquette, with bulging pockets and pastry crumbs and confectionery sugars on my face. After almost half an hour of stealthy double stock-ups, which must have felt more like a whole day, I quietly stood up to walk out of the room, as if to join other children in the alley to play, but in reality to consume joyously my collection. Sudden laughter of everyone in the room stopped

me in my tracks and as soon as I turned back, I realized that one of my pocket's un-sewn bottom had let its contents out—tracking behind me on the Kerman Persian carpet. I almost choked with my mouth full of cookies, which caused even louder laughter and ridicule of those present. There was nothing else to do but to dash out in embarrassment as fast as I could and hide out crying. Later that day, the adults—especially my aunt—must have realized how painful the ordeal had been for me. My aunt helped restore my dignity by giving me a light brown do-tomani money bill pulled out of the holy book. Dotomani was reserved for teens and elder cousins, and the dark blue yek-tomani was for toddlers and little children; but my aunt made an exception. Back then these notes were equivalent to a dime and a quarter: enough to pay for a limonad and small kalbas sandwich; nowadays they are meagerly worth one-thousandth, and two-thousandth of a penny, respectively! The fond memory of my late aunt (may her soul be rested) and her compassionate forgiveness still makes me cry and smile every time I wear an oversized suit purchased on clearance sale for Nowruz hoping that someday that I will grow into it, but I do check its pockets first!

Scratch an American tradition, find a Persian root

IranTimes: To Americans, Nowruz has a strange touch to it, but quite a number of customs that Americans hold dear actually come down to us from ancient Persian traditions that penetrated other cultures centuries ago. Many cultures have spring and harvest rites. In Iran, the spring rite—Nowruz—came to dominate all other holidays. In the United States, the harvest rite—Thanksgiving—is emerging as the dominant holiday, more important in many families than Christmas. The two holidays, Thanksgiving and Nowruz, are very different. But they are the same in one key way. Both are holidays that can be celebrated by all ethnic groups, because they are not the preserve of a dominant religious sect. And both are holidays that celebrate cultural history without the histrionics associated with holidays linked to wars and conflict, like the American 4th of July or the Iranian Revolution Day.

also the celebration of the renewal of life. When we look at Easter, we can see how Nowruz has come down through the centuries to find a home in the New World. First, as mentioned, we have the colored eggs of Nowruz transmuted into the Easter egg. Second, we have the new clothing and fancy finery worn in the Easter parade. Nowruz tradition decrees that every good Persian must have at least one article of clothing that is new to mark the new year. (Fortunately, Americans have not adopted a related Nowruz tradition found in some provinces where families throw out all their earthenware dishes at Nowruz and start with a whole new set!) Third, there is the American tradition of "spring cleaning," which is no more than "Now Ruz cleaning" in Yankee finery. In Iran, it is rug cleaning time. Furniture is repaired and refinished. Houses are often repainted. But, first and foremost, the win-



Haft Seen at the White House

Nowruz is a holiday for all Iranians—Shiite, Sunni, Christian, Jew, and Zoroastrian. Similarly, Thanksgiving is a holiday that joins Protestant, Catholic, Jew and the rising numbers of adherents of other religions—Buddhist, Hindu, and, of course, Muslim. But there are more direct links between Nowruz and American culture. Take the Easter egg. The gaily colored egg is an Iranian concept, created millennia ago as part of the spring rite of Nowruz. Easter is, in fact, a classic spring rite of the old world around which is wrapped the solemn theological message of Christianity. Although Easter is not the premier holiday of American society, it is the keystone holiday of Christianity, for it carries the message of Christianity, the message of eternal life—of renewal—associated with the resurrection of Christ. Ancient Christians are believed to have settled on the springtime celebration of Easter because they associated spring with the primary rite of the year—because that is what the Persians taught them. Not incidentally, Now Ruz is

dows and doorways are opened and all the accumulated dust of the winter months is swept out. Nowruz is also far more than a holiday. It has never been confined to a solitary day. It is really a holiday season, one that is anticipated for weeks beforehand—much as Christmas in the United States has evolved from a one-day event in the early days of the republic into a month long season that starts with Thanksgiving, reaches its high point on Christmas Day, and continues through New Year's Day. Nowruz is a similar long season with a precursor holiday on Chahar Shanbeh Souri a few days before the new year, with the high point reached on Nowruz day itself, and with a continuation of events through to conclusion 13 days later on Sizdeh Bedar. Sizdeh Bedar usually falls on April 2, sometimes a day earlier. One of the things for which Sizdeh Bedar is known is practical jokes. And, thus, April Fool's Day has its foundation in Iranian tradition. In the end, then, Now Ruz isn't such a "foreign" holiday after all.

Regime allows access to Facebook and YouTube

IranTimes: The Iranian government has unblocked without explanation the videosharing site YouTube and the social networking site Facebook. Last month, officials policing the Internet unblocked the social networking site three years after it had been dubbed "illegal." Since then, Iranians have been joining the site in droves; the site is reportedly the 10th most popular website in Iran. The move is a surprise in a country known as one of the strictest censors of the Internet. Reporters Without Borders said Iran leads the Middle East in Internet censorship and is one of 12 countries it classifies as an "Internet enemy." But a month after unblocking Facebook, there has still been no explanation as to why officials restored access to the site or why it was blocked in the first place. Christophe Ginisty, the president of the French group Internet Without Borders, told Radio Farda some governments with a history of heavy Internet censorship choose to open some sites in an effort to gain a sly look into an online community frequented by political opponents and activists. "During election periods, as is the case of Iran, it allows the government to give the impression that it is offering more freedom. But that's absolutely not what's happening, because the first thing that happens following an opening is that filters and controls are established. It

means that they reopen Facebook when they have the possibility to put people in place who can control it," Ginisty said. Hadi Nili, a Tehran-based journalist who specializes in social and information technology issues, told Radio Farda Tehran may have unblocked Facebook as a way to better monitor Iranian journalists who make up a large percentage of Facebook's Iranian membership. He said the move could also be a way for the regime to win over young voters ahead of the June presidential elections. "The election is getting close, and the government is willing to take steps that are welcomed by the more modern segments of society. One of these steps is the unblocking of websites that are popular," Nili said. But Ebrahim Nabavi, a Belgium-based Iranian satirist, said Tehran's decision to unlock the sites might have more to do with the benefits the sites can provide the Iranian regime. "It's not like we're the only people who need Facebook to get in touch with people inside Iran. Mesbah Yazdi [an ultra hard-line ayatollah said to be the spiritual mentor of President Ahmadinejad] also needs the Internet to be in touch with the supporters of the kind of Islam he preaches in Italy, Britain, and elsewhere. "Therefore, the current government needs to open up these doors for its own survival. And when those doors are open, we [critics] can enter as well," Nabavi said.

حل جدول شماره ۲۱۴

