

# Pashinyan, Merkel meet in Berlin



**GERMANY – German Chancellor Angela Merkel welcomes Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for a meeting at the chancellery in Berlin, February 1, 2019**

Nikol Pashinyan, who was paying an official visit to the Federal Republic of Germany, met on February 1 with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin. An official welcoming ceremony was held at the German Chancellor’s Residence: the flags of Germany, Armenia and the EU were raised, the Guard of Honor and the Military Band stood along the red carpet. After the performance of the national anthems of the Republic of Armenia and the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Chancellor invited the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia to inspect the Guard of Honor.

After a handshake and protocol photography, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Chancellor Angela Merkel held private talks during a working lunch. Angela Merkel welcomed and highly appreciated the Armenian Prime Minister’s official visit to Germany, expressing confidence that the visit would give a new impetus to Armenian-German friendly cooperation. Angela Merkel noted that Germany is interested in the further development of relations with Armenia and stands ready to discuss prospects for expanding bilateral ties.

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## New Armenian cabinet sworn in

Attended by President of the Republic of Armenia Armen Sarkissian, the government members' oath-taking ceremony was held on January 30 in the presidential Palace.

Nikol Pashinyan, Deputy Prime Ministers Tigran Avinyan and Mher Grigoryan and 11 ministers were sworn in at the presidential palace in Yerevan about two months after the ruling My Step bloc's victory in Armenia's snap parliamentary elections.

Only one government member, Labor and Social Affairs Minister Zaruhi Batoyan, did not hold a ministerial post in the previous cabinet which had three vice-premiers and 17 ministers.

The reappointed Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan, Finance Minister Atom Janjughazian and Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanian are technocrats not affiliated with any party or bloc. The cabinet members who have kept their jobs also include senior My Step figures such as Education Minister Arayik Harutinyan and Local Government Minister Suren Papikyan.

Pashinyan is widely expected to abolish the posts of minister of agriculture, energy, culture, Diaspora, and sports and youth affairs as part of his plans to downsize the government.



Their current -- and presumably outgoing holders -- have not been reappointed.

However, the precise structure of the new government remains unknown. Pashinyan has still not submitted a relevant bill to the Armenian parliament.

Speaking after the ceremony, Pashinyan made clear that Armenia's police, National Security Service (NSS) and tax and customs

services will remain directly accountable to the prime minister, rather than his cabinet or the parliament.

"State bodies must definitely be under a parliamentary oversight, but it doesn't mean that they all must be turned into ministries," he told reporters. He claimed that the police and the NSS could become "partisan" if they are turned into ministries.

## Pashinyan meets new Dashnaksutyun leadership

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan reaffirmed his readiness to again "cooperate" with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun) when he met with the party's new leadership on January 27.

Dashnaksutyun elected its new top decision-making body, the Bureau, during a congress in Nagorno-Karabakh which drew to a close last week. The Bureau is headed by Hagop Der Khatchadurian, a Canadian Armenian, and also comprises 12 other members.

Four of them -- Armen Rustamyan, Arsen Hambardzumyan, Spartak Seyranyan and Giro Manoyan -- are leading members of the pan-Armenian party's organization in Armenia. They and Der Khatchadurian were received by Pashinyan.

"Our government is intent on having a broad and productive



cooperation with Dashnaksutyun," Pashinyan told them at the start of the meeting. "Obviously, we don't have the same views on many issues but on quite a few other issues the vectors of our perceptions converge."

"Our aim is to have a strong homeland and Diaspora and I'm sure that there are enough areas where we can cooperate

to the benefit of our national priorities," Der Khatchadurian said for his part.

Pashinyan's press service did not report other details of the meeting.

In a written appeal to the delegates of the Dashnaksutyun congress publicized last week, Pashinyan paid tribute to the party's 129-year-long history. He said he is ready to cooper-

ate with Dashnaksutyun and "open to your proposals and criticism."

The weeklong congress began with an announcement by Dashnaksutyun's longtime top leader, Hrant Markaryan, that he will not seek reelection to the Bureau. Markaryan was reportedly blamed by dissident Dashnaksutyun figures for the party's poor showing in the December 2018 parliamentary elections.

Dashnaksutyun was part of Armenia's former government ousted during last spring's "velvet revolution." It received two ministerial posts in a new government formed by Pashinyan in May. The prime minister fired his Dashnaksutyun-affiliated ministers in October, accusing their party of secretly collaborating with former President Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party.



## Words should be followed actions: Merkel on Pashinyan-Aliyev meeting



German Chancellor Angela Merkel welcomes the recent contacts between the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, but says that words must be followed by concrete actions.

“The parties must be ready to take actions after words,” Merkel said at a joint press conference with visiting Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

She hailed the Armenian PM’s courageous steps, and stressed the need for the opposite side to be ready for such steps, as well.

Nikol Pashinyan further clarified that any solution to the Karabakh conflict should be acceptable to the peoples of Armenia, Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan.

“When I said these words a few months ago, I hoped to hear a similar statement from the opposite side, but no one in Azerbaijan has ever said the solution should be acceptable to Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh,” he added.

The Prime Minister said there cannot be

great hopes unless Azerbaijan makes a statement.

He noted that “Armenia is committed to solving the issue exceptionally in a peaceful way, but added that he cannot negotiate on behalf of Nagorno Karabakh.

“I have made it clear that I can negotiate only on behalf of Armenia, but not on behalf of Nagorno Karabakh, because they have not given me a vote. They have their own government and their President, and the negotiations should be conducted by their elected representatives,” Pashinyan stated.

The Armenian Prime Minister stressed that there has long been accepted format for negotiations – the Minsk Group chairmanship, but the Minsk group is wider, which means the international community is well involved in the process.

PM Pashinyan stated that the Minsk Group has been effective in ensuring stability in the region, but added that the international community cannot solve the issue instead of the three parties to the conflict.

“It can provide a platform for negotiations, and the Minsk Group has successes in creating such platform,” he stated.

## Pashinyan, Merkel meet in Berlin

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Welcoming the successful holding of parliamentary elections in 2018, the German Chancellor said Germany had been closely following the processes taking place in Armenia, and is prepared to deepen the bilateral relations and support the ongoing multifaceted reforms.

Thankful for the invitation to visit Germany and the warm welcome, Prime Minister Pashinyan hailed the opportunity to meet with Chancellor Merkel once again and take up the discussion over the furtherance of Armenian-German relations.

“Your visit to Armenia became an important milestone for the development of Armenian-German cooperation. I can state with joy and pride that my visit comes just five months after your visit. This means that we are striving to lay the foundation for a more profound and targeted cooperation between Armenia and Germany,” the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia said.

The head of the Armenian government expressed confidence that today, more than ever before, there are all the necessary prerequisites for complementing the Armenian-German cooperation agenda with new content. According to Nikol Pashinyan, the European vector is among the key priorities of Armenia’s foreign policy, and in this respect, he highlighted the cooperation with Germany as one of the most significant EU-member states.

The interlocutors discussed a wide range of issues on the agenda of Armenian-German relations, including bilateral and multilateral cooperation, EU-Armenia interaction, as well as international and regional

issues.

Nikol Pashinyan noted that the snap parliamentary elections, held on December 9, 2018, were exceptional in Armenia’s history in terms of compliance with the letter of the law and international standards, which once again demonstrates the Government’s commitment to strengthening the rule of law, ensuring a higher level of human rights protection, creating an independent judiciary, and fighting corruption.

“The parliamentary elections rounded up the first stage of our revolution. Armenia is moving forward by strengthening the democratic values and institutions. The government is now set to implement an economic revolution in a bid to improve the well-being of Armenian citizens,” the Premier said.

Touching upon the deepening of the Armenian-German economic cooperation, Nikol Pashinyan and Angela Merkel discussed the possibility of implementing joint programs in the fields of information technology, environmental protection and other areas, as well as the prospects for new initiatives. Both sides emphasized that the implementation of such programs might help strengthen ties between the two friendly nations and improve the well-being of their citizens. They agreed to continue the ongoing active dialogue on the implementation of economic programs.

The interlocutors next referred to the liberalization of the visa regime with the European Union. The two heads of government exchanged views on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. They stressed the need for continuing the negotiation process in the format of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmanship as the only entity having the international mandate to deal with this issue.

## EU promises extra aid to Armenia in 2019

The European Union will provide Armenia with additional financial assistance this year in recognition of democratic change in the country, a senior EU official said during a visit to Yerevan on January 29.

Johannes Hahn, the EU commissioner for European neighborhood and enlargement negotiations, said Armenia will be rewarded for the “developments of last year.” He singled out the conduct of the December 9 parliamentary elections, saying that they are regarded as free and fair by the international community.

“This is something good, something unique so far in Armenia’s recent history,” Hahn told a joint news conference with Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnat-sakanyan held before his talks with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Hahn did not specify the likely amount of the extra EU aid. He said only that it will be allocated from an EU fund designed to



reward partner states’ “special achievements” in the areas of democratization and rule of law.

In July, Pashinyan criticized the EU for not boosting its assistance to Armenia following the “velvet revolution” that brought him to power. The head of the EU Delegation in Yerevan, Piotr Switalski, countered at the time that the new Armenian government needs to propose specific reform-oriented projects before demanding greater aid.

According to Pashinyan’s press

office, the prime minister and Hahn discussed, among other things, a possible “expansion of EU-supported development programs in Armenia” when they met later on Friday.

“They agreed that the implementation of new initiatives in the fields of infrastructure, education, energy and other areas might be promising,” the office said in a statement. It said the two sides stressed in this regard the importance of implementing the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partner-

ship Agreement (CEPA) signed by the EU and Armenia in 2017.

Hahn described his talks with Pashinyan as “open and forward looking.” “I have reassured the PM that Armenia can count on EU support in implementing CEPA and introducing comprehensive reforms for the benefit of Armenian citizens,” he wrote on his Twitter page.

“We need to seize the moment to consolidate democracy, also to the benefit of the economic development of the country!” added the EU official.

Speaking at the news conference, Hahn said he is also discussing with Armenian leaders the possibility of organizing an investment forum in Yerevan for potential European investors. He said their interest in Armenia’s economy has increased since the “velvet revolution.”

“There is a very positive mood in the country which also has a spill-over effect abroad,” stated Hahn.

## Kocharyan speaks in Court hearing

Former President Robert Kocharyan again defended his actions in the wake of a disputed 2008 presidential election as he personally challenged his pretrial detention in Armenia’s Court of Appeals on February 1.

Kocharyan spoke for nearly two hours during a court hearing on his appeal against a lower court’s decision on January 18 to extend his arrest by two months. The district court in Yerevan also refused to free him on bail.

Kocharyan was arrested again on December 7 on charges of overthrowing the constitutional order just weeks before serving out his second and final presidential term in April 2008. He is specifically accused of illegally using Armenian army units against opposition supporters who protested against alleged fraud in the February 2008 ballot.

Armenia’s Special Investigative Service (SIS) has also leveled the same charges against three retired

army generals, including former Defense Minister Mikael Harutiunyan. The SIS says that Harutiunyan started illegally deploying troops in before Kocharyan declared a state of emergency late on March 1, 2008.

The outgoing president ordered army units into the city center amid vicious clashes between protesters and security forces trying to disperse them. Eight protesters and two policemen were killed in that violence.

According to one of Kocharyan’s lawyers, Hayk Alumyan, the ex-president told the Court of Appeals that he simply ordered the generals to “ensure the army’s neutrality” in political processes unfolding in the country. Kocharyan, he said, argued that opposition leader Levon Ter-Petrosian tried to get the Armenian military to back the protests and that two deputy defense ministers sided with Ter-Petrosian. They both were sacked in April 2008.



The coup charges are based on a secret directive which Harutiunyan issued to the military on February 23, 2008. SIS investigators say that the directive known as the Order No. 0038 led to the army’s illegal involvement in the post-election developments.

In Alumyan’s words, Kochary-

an defended the legality of that order in his court testimony. “I believe that order does not contain any provision for which Mr. Harutiunyan can be accused or rebuked,” the lawyer told journalists.

The Court of Appeals scheduled its next hearing for February 4.



## Armenian Prime Minister's Office to have Ambassador-at-large for relations with Diaspora



Armenian Prime Minister's Office will have Ambassador-at-large for relations with Diaspora, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan said in a meeting with the Armenian

community in Cologne, answering the questions of the representatives of the Armenian community.

The PM noted that the functions of the Minis-

try of Diaspora should be redistributed.

"For example, the Ministry of Diaspora sent textbooks for the Armenian schools in Diaspora, but the Ministry of Education and Science carried out the training of the teachers. And we often had the situation when the teachers are trained in the sidelines of the program of one ministry, but receive the textbooks from another ministry", Pashinyan said, adding that this makes the works of the ministries not so effective.

"Our goal for the optimization of the Government is the following – one body should be engaged in one function", Nikol Pashinyan said, noting that the functions of the Ministry of Diaspora should be redistributed.

"Our vision is the following – the Ambassador-at-large will have nothing else to do but to sum up issues related to the Diaspora, presenting proposals for solutions and implement those solutions with the support of the Prime Minister", Pashinyan said.

## Armenia's crime rate up in 2018



The Armenian police reported on January 30 an 11 percent increase in the number of various crimes registered in the country last year.

The chief of the police staff, Colonel Armen Ghukasyan, said thefts, burglaries and instances of corruption detected by law-enforcement authorities accounted for most of that increase.

The national police chief, Valeri Osipyan, acknowledged the higher crime rate in November. But Osipyan downplayed it, saying that many crimes were underreported under his predecessors. Besides, he said, victims of petty

crimes are now less reluctant to report them because of greater public trust in the police.

Ghukasyan likewise insisted that law-enforcement bodies have been more trusted by Armenians since last spring's "spring revolution." He argued that the number of crime reports and complaints received by the police from citizens jumped by 28 percent in 2018.

"And the police have changed their attitudes towards citizens," Ghukasyan told a news conference. "You have probably seen that in your day-to-day life."

"Of course, we still have many problems in that regard and the most difficult thing is ... the psychological change which we will also achieve. That just takes time," he said.

Police officials say that a general amnesty declared by the Armenian authorities in October is another factor behind the increased number of crimes. The amnesty led to the early release from prison of 581 convicts. In Ghukasyan's words, 30 of them have been arrested again for committing more crimes.

Critics of the current government say that police have been weaker on crime and especially traffic violations since the revolution. They point out, in particular, that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan ordered a less strict enforcement of traffic rules shortly after coming to power in May 2018.

Ghukasyan confirmed that the number of car accidents and resulting fatalities in Armenia also rose last year. But he blamed that first and foremost on a nearly twofold rise in car imports to the country in 2018.

Osipyan dismissed the criticism of the new police leadership when he spoke to reporters in late December. He also claimed to have eliminated corruption in the police ranks since taking office in May.



## Germany's OAOEV to dispatch large economic delegation to Armenia for investment discussions

As part of the official visit to Germany, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had a meeting February 1 with representatives of the German Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (OAOEV) and leading German companies, Pashinyan's office said.

Executive Director of German Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations Michael Harms welcomed the Armenian PM on behalf the committee and said: "I congratulate you on the decisive victory in the parliamentary election and the definite mandate that the people of Armenia have given you. We welcome your program of reforms.

Our agenda regarding Armenia is very ambitious. We will visit Armenia with a large economic delegation in April. Today, we will sign a letter of intent, which concerns one of Armenia's priorities – information technologies.

Armenia is also a very interesting example in terms of economy, as a country that is simultaneously integrating with both the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union. This raises the investment appeal of Armenia".

Thanking for the remarks, Pashinyan attached importance to the meeting with the German economic community and presented Armenia's economic agenda.

"An important segment of our upcoming



agenda relates to the very economy, because political changes have created opportunities for economic changes. We want to make serious changes in the Armenian economy's structure. We are planning to raise our standards in the mining sector and make Informational and High Technologies the locomotive in the economic structure," the PM said.

Pashinyan presented the investment opportunities in Armenia and said that there are no obstacles for investments in any sector. "The right to property in Armenia is guaranteed and protected. Our message is the following – you are exempt from all possible corruption obliga-

tions that existed in the past. We have the same attitude for all investors and we tell them: come to Armenia, invest, get rich and enrich," the Armenian PM said.

Representatives of leading German companies noted that they have visited Armenia recently and noted that the democratic changes have created a positive atmosphere in the country – the investment appeal has increased, and interest of foreign investors has also increased.

A letter of intent was signed at the end of the meeting on cooperation between Armenian and German business associations in the IT sector.

## PM meets with KfW Bank Regional Director

Nikol Pashinyan met with German Development Bank (KfW) Eastern Europe Regional Director Olaf Zimmelka on January 31.

The Prime Minister noted that KfW is an effective partner for the Republic of Armenia, with which a number of programs are being implemented in various sectors of the Armenian economy. In this context, Nikol Pashinyan highlighted the signing of a € 23,208,483.13 grant agreement under the Armenia Biodiversity and Sustainable Local Development Program with KfW Bank in November, 2018, which is one of the most promising projects in our region. The Premier emphasized that bringing this sphere to



high environmental standards is among his government's priorities, and he was glad to have a reliable partner in the face of the German Development Bank.

In turn, the KfW Regional Director noted that Armenia is an important partner for the German Development Bank, with which several joint programs

have been implemented so far. Pleased with the ongoing cooperation with different government agencies, Olaf Zimmelka said Armenia-KfW partnership promotes the development of Armenian-German relations and, in this respect, the Bank is keen to discuss and implement ever new initiatives.

The Prime Minister of Armenia and the KfW Regional Director discussed the current programs in the spheres of environmental protection, energy, agriculture, infrastructure, water management and reservoirs. They took the opportunity to exchange views on the prospects of cooperation in other promising areas.



## Germany vows support for Armenia's economy, reforms

Germany wants to contribute to Armenia's economic development and supports sweeping reforms promised by its government, Chancellor Angela Merkel said after meeting with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Berlin on February 1.

Merkel said that closer commercial ties between the two countries would help to boost living standards in Armenia.

"We want to provide support in as many areas as possible in order to advance the economic development of Armenia," she told a joint news conference with Pashinyan. "In the past year our commercial and trade relations have already grown by 40 percent, but we can still do a lot to expand that."

In that context, Merkel stressed the importance of "quick progress" in the implementation of Pashinyan's reform agenda. "He is, I believe, determined -- and we want to support this course -- to take action against corruption and other things that have always negatively affected this economic development in the past," she said.

Pashinyan, who was making an official visit to Germany, also singled out economic issues when he commented on his meeting with Merkel. "We hope that German investments in Armenia will inevitably increase parallel to the improvement of our business environment," he said.

An Armenian government statement on the talks said the two leaders agreed to "continue active dialogue on the implementation of various economic projects." It did not elaborate.

Germany is already Armenia's number European Union donor and trading partner. It has provided the South Caucasus nation with hun-



dreds of millions euros in aid and low-interest loans since the 1990s.

Merkel also expressed confidence that the EU's relations with Armenia will "intensify" after the recent Armenian parliamentary elections which she described as "democratic."

"We want to support Armenia -- I believe that the European Union has also made this clear through Commissioner Hahn -- without us interfering in Armenia's other foreign policy activities," she said. "Armenia must be free to decide who it has relations with."

"EU representatives have said that they are going to expand assistance to Armenia," Pashinyan said for his part. He noted with satisfaction that the EU and Germany in particular are not pressing his country to make a "geopolitical choice."

"Important democratic developments are un-

derway in Armenia and there is no doubt that they will continue regardless of the existence or absence of foreign aid because democracy is the choice of our people," he added.

Pashinyan also called on the EU to start official negotiations with Yerevan on the eventual lifting its visa requirements for Armenian citizens. "I think that it's about time we thought about starting negotiations on this subject," he said.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was also on the agenda of the talks, with Merkel praising "courageous steps" taken by the Armenian leader and saying that she hopes they will be reciprocated by "the other side."

"I encouraged the Prime Minister to continue trying to resolve this conflict, but as I said, at the end of the day both sides must be ready [for a compromise solution,]" she said.

## Armenia sends measles vaccine to Georgia to combat outbreak

Armenian Healthcare Minister Arsen Torosyan has ordered to provide 30,000 doses of measles vaccinations to Georgia in order "for our neighbor country to more effectively and faster struggle with the measles outbreaks".

Minister of Healthcare Arsen Torosyan said on Facebook that he has spoken with his Georgian counterpart Davit Sergeenko about the outbreaks yesterday. "He informed me that 1028 new cases of measles have

been detected until today, which is mostly associated with the fact that many children in the 90s were not vaccinated against measles. I was also informed that the daily detected 50-60 cases have dropped to a daily of 35, thanks to the anti-pandemic actions that are being carried out in Georgia, including the intensive vaccinations of the population aged 20-40," Torosyan said on Facebook.

According to Torosyan, the last confirmed case of measles in Armenia was back in 2007

– due to the high indicator of anti-measles vaccinations. "The last imported case was detected in December of 2018 in a passenger who arrived from Russia, and fortunately it did not spread in our country. I call on everyone to get the vaccinations envisaged by the national immunization program, and in case of having symptoms – contact a doctor," he said.

The measles outbreak in Georgia is mostly centralized in Tbilisi.

## Armenian PM, Cologne Mayor discuss cooperation in IT and cultural spheres

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with Mayor of Cologne Henriette Reker in the frame of his official visit to Germany.

Welcoming Nikol Pashinyan to Cologne, Federal Republic of Germany, Henriette Reker said she was highly honored to host the Armenian Prime Minister at the Cologne City Hall. She noted that they closely followed last year's political developments in Armenia, and witnessed with enthusiasm the successful completion of the popular movement and the fact that the citizens of Armenia managed to achieve democratic changes in a peaceful way.

"You are raising hopes in all those who stand for the promotion of democracy in the world," the Mayor of Cologne said, addressing Nikol Pashinyan.

The Armenian Premier thanked Mrs. Reker for her appreciation and kind remarks, noting that he was glad to visit the Cologne City Hall in the frame of his official visit. "We were able to achieve democratic changes in Armenia and implement a process that turned the impossible into possible. We called it an Armenian non-violent velvet revolution," Nikol Pashinyan said.

The head of the Armenian government pointed out that at this point his government's agenda implies translating the popular movement into an economic revolution so that freedom could lead to wellbeing. In this context, the Premier highlighted the importance of attracting foreign investments, including investments from Germany.

As for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the Mayor emphasized that her city had contributed to it with a khachkar placed in commemoration of Armenian Genocide victims. She stressed the need for continuing the process of recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide in a bid to develop a global memory policy.

In turn, Prime Minister Pashinyan noted that Armenia and the Armenian people highly appreciated the adoption of a resolution condemning the Armenian Genocide by the German Bundestag in 2016.

"We believe that the recognition of the



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Armenian Genocide is not just a mere statement of the historical fact; it is crucial in terms of preventing future genocides. The truth should be exposed to come to its condemnation. Let me mention that the promotion of the process of genocide prevention is an important part of Armenia's foreign policy, and the Republic of Armenia is an active participant in that process," Nikol Pashinyan said. In this context, the Prime Minister advised that the 3rd Global Genocide Prevention Forum was held in Yerevan on December 9, last year.

The parties discussed opportunities for developing bilateral cooperation. Touching upon the prospects for building closer ties in the IT sphere, Nikol Pashinyan welcomed the signing of a memorandum of cooperation between the respective universities of Cologne and Armenia earlier today.

The Prime Minister next referred to the activities of the Tumo Center for Creative Technologies, noting that it has already become a global brand. Tumo centers are already operating in Yerevan, Stepanakert, Paris; it is envisaged to open such centers in Moscow, Beirut, Tirana and Berlin.

Impressed by Armenia's IT development experience, the Mayor of Cologne said she would consider the possibility of

visiting Armenia in order to get acquainted with the technological progress on the spot.

Praising the Armenian commitment for the role played in the development of Cologne, Henriette Reker highlighted the fact that the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church is located in Cologne.

Highly appreciative of the signing of a memorandum of cooperation between the Cologne Technological University and Armenia's National Polytechnic University, she expressed readiness to promote bilateral ties in other spheres as well.

In this context, Nikol Pashinyan pointed out that Cologne holds a special place in the preservation of cultural heritage and suggested considering the possibility of establishing cooperation with Gyumri, the second largest city of Armenia. He underscored that the earthquake-hit Gyumri boasts a rich cultural heritage, and the exchange of experience with Cologne could benefit both cities. The Mayor of Cologne welcomed the proposal and expressed readiness to discuss the details.

Nikol Pashinyan signed the book of Honorary Guests of the City Hall. North Rhine-Westphalia's Minister for Federal, European and International Affairs Stephan Holthoff-Pfortner hosted an official dinner in honor of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia.



# Pentagon Praises U.S.-Armenia Military Cooperation

## Senior Defense Department Official Addresses Armenian Embassy Celebration of Armenian Army Day

WASHINGTON—A senior U.S. Defense Department official this week praised the “selfless contributions of the Armenian armed forces to international operations and peace-keeping missions,” highlighting Armenia’s commitment to the Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan and recognizing Armenia as a top-five non-NATO contributor to NATO’s Kosovo force.

Speaking at the Armenian Embassy’s January 29 celebration of Armenian Army Day, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Laura K. Cooper also shared the Pentagon’s pride in Armenia’s 15-year “enduring” partnership with the Kansas National Guard, a joint undertaking that has materially increased Armenia’s NATO inter-operability. She closed her remarks by expressing her interest in visiting Armenia and exploring ways to deepen U.S.-Armenia defense ties, support a free and prosperous Armenia, and work cooperatively to advance regional and global security.

Speaking on behalf of the Armenian government, Armenian Ambassador to the U.S. Varuzhan Nersesyan underscored the value that Armenia attaches to the continued evolution of bilateral U.S.-Armenia defense cooperation. In his remarks, Colonel Arman Mkrtchyan, Armenia’s Defense Attache in Washington, DC, reviewed the full array of international peace-

keeping and other regional and international security operations undertaken by the Armenian military.

A large delegation from the Kansas National Guard traveled from Kansas to take part in the celebration, as did defense attaches and other military officials from dozens of Washington, DC-based embassies.

“We welcome Deputy Assistant Secretary Cooper’s warm words conveying the Defense Department’s appreciation for a growing U.S.-Armenia military partnership that stretches from NATO’s Partnership for Peace and peace-keeping deployments across the globe to training and cooperation here at home, with the Kansas National Guard,” said Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) Executive Director Aram Hamparian.

“We share the Pentagon’s commitment to the deepening of defense and security ties between the U.S. and Armenia, and look forward to steady progress in upgrading the status, scope, and scale of bilateral defense consultations. We will continue to engage with Administration and Congressional stakeholders regarding the mutual benefits of increased U.S. support for Armenia’s military modernization plans, including through expanded Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Educational Training (IMET), and programs aimed

at strengthening Armenia’s peace-keeping training and operational capabilities,” concluded Hamparian.

The Congressional Armenian Caucus, in a December 18, 2018, letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, called for “policies and programs to broaden and deepen U.S.-Armenia military cooperation.”

Key points in Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Cooper’s remarks include:

- The Department of Defense appreciates the selfless contributions of the Armenian armed forces for international operations and peace-keeping missions.
- The Department of Defense values Armenia’s commitment to the Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan.
- The Department of Defense recognizes that Armenia is a top-five non-NATO contributor to NATO’s Kosovo force.
- The Department of Defense respects Armenia’s 15-year partnership with the Kansas National Guard, which has materially increased Armenia’s NATO inter-operability.
- The Department of Defense looks forward to deepening U.S.-Armenia defense ties, investing together to ensure a free and prosperous Armenia, and working cooperatively to advance regional and global security.

## Details of Russian-Armenian fighter jet deal reported

Russia will reportedly sell four Russian multirole fighter jets to Armenia in line with a contract signed by the two states.

The Moscow daily “Kommersant” reported on Friday that the Sukhoi Su-30SM jets will be delivered to Armenia next year at discounted prices reflecting the South Caucasus state’s close military ties with Russia.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s government showed a strong interest in acquiring such aircraft shortly after taking office in May last year. Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan said in December that Moscow and Yerevan are now close to signing a contract on the delivery of the warplanes which would significantly strengthen Armenia’s modest Air Force.

Citing the Armenian Defense Ministry, the Russian Sputnik news agency reported on January 30 that the contract has already been

signed. A ministry spokesman did not explicitly confirm the information when he spoke to RFE/RL’s Armenian service on January 31.

“Kommersant” cited an unnamed “top manager of one of the aviation industry enterprises” of Russia as saying that the deal has indeed been signed and that Armenia will buy four Su-30SMs at internal Russian prices set well below international market-based levels. He did not specify their total cost, saying only that Yerevan will pay for them with a Russian loan.

Armenia is eligible for such discounts because of its membership in the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

The Russian defense industry executive was also quoted as saying that under the terms of the contract the Russian military will also train Armenian pilots to fly the sophisticated aircraft.

“In essence, this is the first contract signed with the Armenian Defense Ministry under Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, and it was important for us to confirm the strength of our positions in our CSTO ally,” he added.

The Armenian Air Force currently consists of 15 or so low-flying Su-25 jets designed for air-to-ground missions.

Su-30SM can perform a broader range of military tasks with more long-range and precision-guided weapons. It is a more advanced version of a heavy fighter jet developed by the Sukhoi company in the late 1980s. The Russian military commissioned the first batch of such aircraft in 2012.

Tonoyan said in August that the Armenian army needs them too because “no missile system can be a substitute for this capacity in terms of flexibility and resilience.”

## Report on Armenia recommends measures to improve women's rights

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatović urges the Armenian authorities to ensure women's full and effective participation in decision-making, as well as equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of public life, equal pay and equal access to the labour market.

In order to counter the persisting discriminatory gender stereotypes, Commissioner Mijatović recommends raising public awareness and promoting gender equality, especially through education.

To build on the considerable improvements to Armenia's legislation against domestic violence, the Commissioner recommends ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, while ensuring that the new national legislation is effectively applied in practice.

Specifically, she urges the authorities to increase the availability of places in shelters for victims of domestic violence, and to ensure access to education for children staying in such shelters.

Another focus area of the report is the human rights of persons with disabilities, children, older persons and LGBTI people.

While welcoming the authorities' clear commitment towards de-institutionalization of persons with disabilities, the Commissioner recommends that revised legislation governing state support to persons with disabilities ensure their inclusion in all decision-making processes that concern them.

In particular, she calls on the authorities to put an end to plenary guardianship for persons with psycho-social disabilities and to move from a substituted to a supported decision-making model for all persons who may require such support.

The Commissioner encourages the government to achieve its aim to make all education fully inclusive by 2025, and recommends that special attention be paid to ensuring inclusive education at the pre-



school level and to pursuing de-institutionalization equally for children with and without disabilities.

She also recommends that Armenia solidify its commitment to international standards in this area, by accepting additional provisions of the Revised European Social Charter, and by ratifying instruments allowing for individual and collective complaints.

The Commissioner welcomes the recent appointment of a well-known disability rights activist as Minister for Labour and Social Affairs, and encourages the government to take further action to raise public awareness on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Commissioner Mijatović recommends that Armenia strengthen its efforts to combat child poverty and to guarantee the right of all children to an adequate standard of living.

To address the inadequate level of social protection of older persons in Armenia, the Commissioner recommends raising the overall level of old age pensions, increasing the availability of primary and specialized health care at the home or in the community, and tackling the shortage of medical professionals specialized in geriatric services.

The Commissioner further recommends that the authorities promptly adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law which

should specifically include a clear reference to sexual orientation and gender identity.

She calls on the authorities to take prompt and resolute action against all instances of violence, hate speech and hate crime targeting LGBTI persons in Armenia. Such incidents must be firmly condemned and investigated, and those responsible prosecuted.

She also urges parliamentarians to unequivocally reject any legislative proposals that may infringe on the rights of LGBTI persons or stoke anti-LGBTI sentiments.

Lastly, Commissioner Mijatović welcomes the steps taken to finally establish the truth and prosecute those responsible for the deaths that occurred during the violent events of March 2008.

At the same time, she stresses the importance of ensuring that this process is conducted in a careful manner and in strict adherence to the principles of rule of law, judicial independence, transparency and guarantees of fair trial, in order to dispel any accusations of alleged revenge politics or selective justice.

She also calls on the Armenian authorities to protect the presumption of innocence of any person charged with criminal misconduct and to avoid using polarizing, stigmatizing or inflammatory language in their public discourse, which the Commissioner believes to be an obstacle to building a cohesive society and healing past divisions.



## World Congress on IT to bring Google, Amazon and Facebook executives to Armenia

The leaderships of Google, Amazon and Facebook are going to participate in the World Congress on Information Technology (WCIT) which will be held in Armenia on October 6-9, 2019, Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan said during the conference on “Digital Agenda in the Globalization Era: Eurasian Innovative Ecosystem”, Sputnik Kazakhstan reports.

The Deputy PM is participating in the session of the Eurasian Inter-governmental council in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

“I want to invite all those who have a desire to this major event: the World Congress on IT will take place in Yerevan from October 6 to 9. The executives of Google, Amazon, Facebook and other companies will attend the Congress. That will be an interesting platform for our regular meeting”, he said.

An Engineering Town will also be built in Yerevan which will be ready in February 2020.

*The World Congress on Information Technology (WCIT) is the largest and the most reputable international event*



*among worldwide IT leaders.*

*It brings together high-level officials from different countries, heads of multinational organizations, universities and scientific research centers, non-governmental organizations' representatives*

*and many more.*

*The event includes discussions of legal, political and economic trends affecting IT business processes, presentations of innovative solutions, B2B meetings and so on.*

## Missing commemorative coins at PM residence mysteriously re-appear on display



The commemorative coins that were stolen from the official residence of the Prime

Minister of Armenia, colloquially known by the name of its address Baghramyan

26, have been mysteriously returned.

The investigative committee said that they received a call on January 30 that 4 commemorative coins on display in a corridor of one of the floors of the administrative building have been stolen. The report said that an unknown person breached into the area and used technical equipment to break the lock of the storage compartment.

A criminal case on burglary was launched.

The crime scene was examined by law enforcement experts and more than 20 people have been questioned.

However, on January 31, police were notified that the missing coins have re-appeared and are on display.

The Investigative Committee said the incident is under investigation to reveal the perpetrator or perpetrators behind the incident.

## Erdogan Legalizes Drugs Contrary to his Islamic Faith



By  
**Harut  
Sassounian**

Pinar Tremblay, a Turkish reporter for Al-Monitor news website, exposed Pres. Recep Tayyip Erdogan's recent announcement to legalize the plantation of cannabis.

Tremblay wrote in the January 24, 2019 issue of Al-Monitor that the Turkish leader has been an outspoken opponent of selling or using alcohol, tobacco, and drugs due to his Islamic beliefs, however, he has now decided to advocate the plantation of cannabis in order to boost the country's failing economy and provide farmers with additional income on the eve of municipal elections in Turkey.

Tremblay explained that for decades the Turkish government burned cannabis fields using the excuse that this was a fight against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Erdogan is now presenting the plantation of cannabis as resistance to the West!

"Drug wars are enforced with harsh punishment for users and dealers. [Turkish] government spending to prosecute drug dealers has gradually increased, reaching up to \$140 million. That is precisely why Erdogan's advocacy for cannabis cultivation in his campaign speeches surprised audiences," wrote Tremblay.

The Turkish government relaxed restrictions on planting hemp since 1990. The Parliament adopted even more liberal laws in September 2016. "It is already legal to grow hemp in 19 cities, but you need government permits," according to Tremblay.

Erdogan has suddenly realized that there is a big profit to be made by the cultivation of marijuana, at a time when the Turkish economy is sinking. As the saying goes, "desperate times call for desperate measures!" On January 9, 2019 Erdogan criticized the "enemies of Turkey who pretend to be friends," stating that they have forced Turkey to end its cannabis production. Amusingly, Erdogan recalled that in his ancestral hometown of Rize the locals used to make underwear from hemp which is more absorbent than any other material!

According to Tremblay, most Turks interpreted Erdogan's statement "enemies who pretend to be friends" as a reference to the United States, which pressed to ban opium poppy production in 1971. Up until then, Turkey was a major producer of legal opium, but farmers were known to produce also significant amount of the plants illegally. Currently, Turkey has one alkaloid processing plant in Central Anatolian province of Afyon, which means 'opium' in

Turkish. Afyon is known for its high-quality poppy seed production. The factory produces ingredients to be used in prescription drugs."

The Turkish media began obediently promoting Erdogan's declaration about the benefits of cannabis production to the health sector and the economy. Sabah newspaper even wrote about the use of hemp by the Ottoman Turkish Navy.

"Turkish government television TRT started airing infomercials about cannabis while referring to it as an 'Anatolian plant' and elaborating on countless uses of hemp. Islamist media particularly was quite eager to back Erdogan. For example, Mehmet Toprak, a columnist for Dirilis Postasi, wrote a piece titled 'Cannabis will make the US dollar weapon explode in their own hands.' Toprak emphasized that 'President Erdogan's decision on cannabis production is a turning point in our history. It is as revolutionary as the July 15 [2016 failed coup] victory. This decision shows us how crucial it is to stand behind Erdogan for the future of our country and the Muslim lands,'" Tremblay reported. "Cannabis production is now presented as a form of national resistance to the West," stated a Turkish Agriculture Ministry official.

However, several Turkish agricultural experts warned that the production of cannabis could have an adverse effect on the growth of food items. One government employee, an expert in this field, was quoted by Tremblay stating: "food prices have skyrocketed, particularly in the last year. For example, onion [which is a staple ingredient for most recipes in Turkish cuisine] prices went up 185% in 2018. While its population is increasing, Turkey is producing fewer basic crops like wheat, barley, chickpeas, beets, beans and potatoes now than it did five years ago. Plus, cotton and flax production, just like hemp, has been decreasing in volume gradually over the last 15 years. This can be blamed on the government's lack of planning for the impact of climate change on crops; its policies to lift tariffs on these goods, encouraging cheaper imports; and the rise in pesticide and fertilizer prices, making production more expensive. The government has failed to support farmers almost every step of the way, leaving them alone to the whim of the weather, cheap exports and inadequate storage disasters."

Another expert at an Istanbul university told Tremblay: "These great promises on cannabis cultivation as a form of ultra-nationalistic stand against the West are exciting for the crowds... but how about other staple goods people need to survive? The arable land and number of farming families are dwindling. In 2017, meat [red and white] consumption in Turkey per person was averaging around 30 kilograms. In the European Union, that average is almost 70 kilos per person. We are much more dependent on grains and vegetables in our diet. Now if we switch to cannabis, what will people eat?"

## Licenses suspended for Israeli drone maker accused of bombing Armenia

Israel's Defense Ministry on Sunday suspended the export licenses of three senior officials from an aircraft manufacturer suspected of testing one of its "suicide drones" against the Armenian military in 2017 at the behest of its client Azerbaijan in violation of Israeli law, the Times of Israel reports.

The publicly traded company, Aeronautics Ltd., informed the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange of the development on Sunday. Many details of the case remain under a court-issued gag order.

The Defense Ministry later confirmed that it was blocking the export licenses of three senior officials in the company — CEO Amos Matan, deputy CEO Meir Rizmovitch and a third, unnamed, employee — pending a formal hearing.

"They will not be able to work in marketing or defense exports with outside officials," the company said. This suspension will remain in effect until a verdict is rendered in the case against them. The announcement came two weeks after the Rafael defense contractor agreed to purchase Aeronautics for NIS 850 million (\$231.7 million).

In August 2018, the State's Attorney's Office announced that it intended to indict Matan, Rizmovitch and other senior officials in the company in connection with the alleged illegal live-fire test of its Orbiter 1K model unmanned aerial vehicle. A statement announcing the plans to summon the company members said they were suspected of fraud as well as other violations of the Defense Export Control Law, which protects against unauthorized exports of defense intelligence and equipment. In a statement responding to the hearing summonses, Aeronautics said: "We are convinced that after we first present our position at the hearing, the State Prosecutor's Office will reach an informed decision that there is no reason to put the company or any of its officials in court and will order the case closed."

In August 2017, the reports emerged that the company was suspected of using the Orbiter 1K kamikaze drone to attack Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh during a demonstration for Azeri officials. The Israel Police's Unit of International Crime Investigations, the Defense Ministry's investigation unit and the State Attorney's Office launched an investigation into Aeronautics's conduct, but a gag order has been placed over many of its details.

With the launch of the probe, the company said it had been barred from selling the Orbiter 1K model to its "central client 'A'" — not identifying the country by its name, per the gag order.

Aeronautics is accused of sending a team to the Azerbaijan capital Baku to demonstrate the Orbiter 1K unmanned aerial vehicle, which can be outfitted with a small explosive payload of 2.2 to 4.4 pounds (one to two kilograms) and flown into an enemy target on a "suicide" mission.

According to the complaint against the company, while demonstrating the kamikaze drone to the Azerbaijani military in July 2017, the company was asked to carry out a live-fire test of the system against an Armenian military position.



**City Spa**, one of the founders of Aesthetic medicine in Armenia, that was established 14 years ago, is still following the main principles that were implemented since the launch: to use only clinically and scientifically approved, highly effective and safe with FDA approval products and equipments imported mainly from UK and Europe.

**Depilation:** Last year City Spa launched a very safe, painless and fast acting new machine for permanent hair removal. It is the “Primelase” produced by Cocoon Medical. The machine has an innovative



international leading brands such as ZO Skin health (Beverly Hills US), GLO therapeutics (ColoradoUS). Skin Ceuticals (US) etc.

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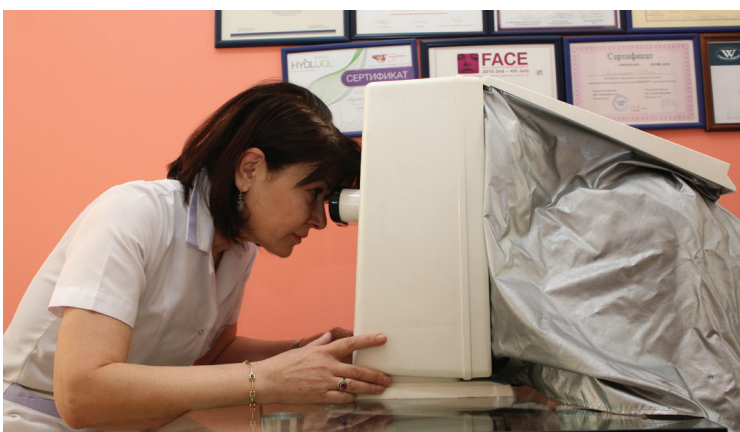
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method (dynamic mode) which allows to treat very large areas of the body within few minutes.

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## Zodiac Weekly Forecast



**Aries (March 20–April 19)**

This is not the best week for mechanical objects. Breakage or failures are highly possible. Your reflexes are strung too tightly so make an effort to relax muscles and concentrate on steady, but consistent forward motion. This is the advice whether driving the car or running a mile. Anxiety is a signal to stop and reconsider.



**Taurus (April 20 – May 20)**

You are feeling restless and need to try something new. Commute by a different route or go somewhere you have never visited before. Take your partner on a picnic. Try an entirely different restaurant. Maybe you will need to find something outrageous to perk up a room or your clothing.



**Gemini (May 20–June 20)**

You may have fortunate circumstances related to the internet, travel, and publishing. Help and information comes from those at a distance. Your relationship to partner(s) is going well. There is a positive repartee (or vibe) occurring between you now.



**Cancer (June 21–July 21)**

You may have a tendency during this period to slide into old and outmoded patterns of emotional behavior. Maybe this will be brought on by the re-entry of someone in your life. While it may be fun for a short time, very quickly you will become fatigued with it and shake loose of that outdated habit.



**Leo (July 22–August 21)**

The new Moon in Aquarius occurs in the sign of your partnerships, whether business or personal. It offers a time to create a fresh beginning together. This includes personal consultants, such as doctors or other caretakers. It may bring a new sidekick into your life.



**Virgo (August 22–September 22)**

Those who travel this week will find it a pleasure. Conditions related to both home and career/job are favorable. Your attitude is positive toward exercise and other self-care regimens. You likely feel better physically than you have recently. Interactions with family members go smoothly.



**Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)**

You have favorable aspects related to home, property and family matters. You may have a desire to improve the appearance of the environment around you, whether at home or at work. You may be attracted to activities that allow you to play or work with your favorite colors.



**Scorpio (October 23–November 21)**

You may be in the middle of a controversy. In fact, it is possible that you are among the leaders in a conflict at your job, school, or normal daily habitat. The main danger here is that you could become ungrounded and lose your good sense. Stand still, deep breathe, and feel the ground under your feet one or more times per day. Think carefully before you speak.



**Sagittarius (November 22–December 20)**

Make it a point to remain objective and stand aside from over-reacting to slights. You could be feeling a pain that comes from long ago rather than what is in the present. Don't leap to conclusions.



**Capricorn (December 21–January 19)**

Make it a point to remain objective and stand aside from over-reacting to slights. You could be feeling a pain that comes from long ago rather than what is in the present. Don't leap to conclusions.



**Aquarius (January 20–February 17)**

We have a new moon on Monday, Feb. 4, this week. It represents a time for making a new commitment to expand our global awareness and develop a more inclusive attitude toward our fellow humans. As individuals we might evaluate what beliefs we retain that cause us exclusive postures and promote prejudicial attitudes. Seeing our flaws gives us the opportunity to change them.



**Pisces (February 18–March 19)**

The asteroid Vesta moves into your sign. It will be with you through March. The name Vesta is borrowed from the Vestal Virgins of Rome. Certain female children were committed to tend the flame from age 6 to around 30. They were allowed to do little else. You may become devoted to someone or something of value during this period. This is your time to "tend the flame".



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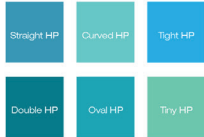
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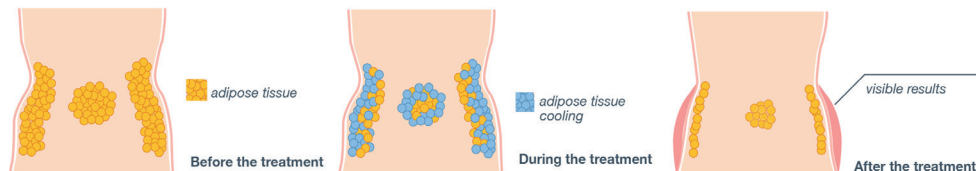
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