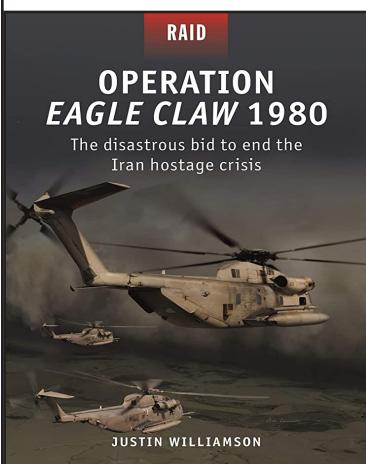


Book Recounts Operation Debacle in Tabas



TEHRAN -- A history book, 'Operation Eagle Claw 1980: The Disastrous Bid to End the Iran Hostage Crisis (2020) by the American diplomat Justin Williamson describes the U.S. futile military bid in Iran.

Iran Media Institute Press has released 'Operation Eagle Claw 1980' in 168 pages.

Following months of negotiations after the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran on November 4 1979, President Jimmy Carter ordered the newly formed Delta Force to conduct a raid into Iran to free the hostages. The raid, Operation Eagle Claw, was risky to say the least.

U.S. forces would have to fly into the deserts of Iran on C-130s; marry up with carrier-based RH-53D helicopters; fly to hide sites near Tehran; approach the Embassy via trucks; seize the Embassy and rescue the hostages; board the helicopters descending on Tehran; fly to an airbase captured by more U.S. forces; and then fly out on C-141s and to freedom.

Things went wrong from the start and when the mission was called off at the refueling site at Desert One, the resulting collision between aircraft killed eight U.S. personnel.

The book tells the full story of the botched operation, supported by maps, photographs, and specially-commissioned bird's-eye-views and battle scenes, which reveal the complexity and scale of the proposed rescue and the disaster which followed.

Justin Williamson is a career U.S. diplomat who has served in Iraq, Mexico, Spain, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, but calls Texas home. He has degrees from Texas Tech University, The University of Texas at El Paso, and has recently graduated from the U.S. Army Command and Staff College with a Master of Military Arts and Sciences.

Miraculous Story of Albania's Tiny Qur'an



The Prushi family have been guardians of the Qur'an for generations.

TIRANA (AFP) – The ritual is always the same. Mario Prushi carefully washes his hands and face before kissing and pressing one of the world's smallest copies of the Qur'an to his forehead.

For generations, the postage stamp-sized book has been passed down in his family -- surviving wars and one of the world's most fanatical "godless regimes".

Scholars say it is one of the smallest copies of the Qur'an on record, with the minuscule holy book held inside a silver case blackened with age.

"We have kept it from generation to generation with absolute dedication," Prushi, 45, told AFP at his home in Tirana.

Just two centimeters (0.7 inches) wide and one centimeter thick, the book almost disappears in the palm of Prushi's hand, and it can only be read with a small magnifying glass embedded in its case.

The Qur'an is difficult to date in the absence of scientific analysis, but according to Elton Karaj -- a researcher in Qur'anic studies at Beder University in Tirana -- the 900-page copy has been around since at least the 19th century.

"This Qur'an was printed in a very small format, one of the smallest in the world. From its appearance, its publication dates back to the end of the 19th century. It is an extraordinary work, very valuable. It is fortunate that this copy is in Albania," said Karaj.

But its size is not the only remarkable thing about the Qur'an. It is also responsible for converting the Prushi family from Catholicism to Islam.

"My great-great-grandparents were digging the ground for a new house in the Djakovica region of Kosovo when they found the perfectly preserved body of a man buried there," said Prushi.

"The Qur'an was found intact laying over his heart."

The family took the discovery as a divine sign and embraced Islam.

His grandfather, an officer in the army of Albania's King Zog in the 1930s, knew Arabic and would invite friends to his home every night to read verses from it.

Years later, under the communist dictatorship of Enver Hoxha -- who completely banned all forms of religion and sent all practicing believers to prison -- the book survived in part because it could be so easily hidden.

"Someone had notified the secret police that we had a Qur'an in our house, but it was so small that my father managed to hide it. The agents moved heaven and earth without finding it," said Prushi.

Following the incident, Prushi's father Skender decided to entrust it to friends in neighboring Kosovo after smuggling it across the border hidden in a lorry full of coal.

He only recovered it only after the war in Kosovo in 1999, where it was buried during to save it from the fighting.

Prushi then inherited the Qur'an shortly before his father's death in 2012.

"This little book carries so many stories, blessings and miracles. It is very dear to me," said Prushi.

The Arabic text can only be read with a small magnifying glass embedded in the Qur'an's case.

"Every time I touch it, I am moved," his wife Blerina told AFP.

"When something goes wrong or when our daughter is sick, we feel reassured, we know that the Qur'an will protect us, it is a real talisman," she added.

The family has received numerous offers to buy it, including from museums.

"I never think of selling it," said Prushi. "This Qur'an belongs to our family and it will always stay with us."

Paris Festival Awards Iranian Animation

TEHRAN -- The 2023 edition of the Bridge of Peace Film Festival, an online event organized in Paris, has awarded Iranian animation 'This Side, Other Side'.

The acclaimed Iranian animation was picked as one of the three best animations at the French online event.

'Shoom's Odyssey' by the French director Julien Bisaro and 'Life on the Move' by Osbert Parker from the UK were the other animations awarded at the Bridge of Peace Film Festival.

The war drama 'The Blizzard of Souls' by Latvian director Dzintars Dreiberis won the special jury prize and 'The Blizzard of Souls' and 'Reveille' were awarded as the best feature films.

'A Soldier', a short war film by Nikesh Limbu from the UK, won the audience award and the award for best documentary was given to 'The Third and Fourth Generation' by Lukas Zund from Switzerland.

Directed by Lida Fazli, 'This Side, Other Side' shows some kids from the two sides of a borderline that make friends and play games with one another.

This amity between the kids enrages the adults and triggers them to start a war.

However, the kids continue to play with each other while the adults are fighting.

According to an iFilm exclusive interview with the director, the short film is made to convey the message that no border can limit friendship and love.

Fazli emphasized that love and kinship between kids are so pure and innocent that nothing can destroy them, even the dark shadow of war.



'This Side, Other Side' has gone on screen at many global events, including the ifva Awards in China, the Cartoon Club Festival in Italy, the International Animation Film Festival - Golden Kuker Sofia in Bulgaria, and the 2019 Smile International Film Festival for Children & Youth in India, where it won the awards for Best Story and Best Short Film, and the Neum Animated Film Festival in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where it received the best award in the category of 2D and 3D animation.

It has also won UNICEF Award at the Festival Biennial of Animation Bratislava in Slovakia, best animation award at the XXII Scrittura e

Immagine Short Festival in Italy, best animation award at the 2020 C (H) ORTA - Short Film Festival of Faial in Portugal, and special award at the International Film Festival of Children and Youth in Serbia.

The organizers say the Bridge of Peace Film Festival was established "to focus the audience's attention on the pressing problems of humanity, in order to seek and find an answer to the question of how to live in a world without wars, without oppression, how to learn to respect the traditions and culture of other peoples, how to preserve nature and its diversity for new generations."

Australian Film Festival Screens 'Zalava'

TEHRAN -- Iranian feature 'Zalava' has been taking part in the 10th edition of the Persian Film Festival Australia.

'Zalava', directed by Arsalan Amiri, is one of 11 features competing at the event.

The film is co-written by Amiri, Ida Panahandeh and Tahmineh Bahramalian.

The film is about a military officer who investigates claims of villagers that there is a demon among them.

But anger escalates in the village named Zalava as Masoud arrests an exorcist on charges of fraud.

'Zalava' previously won the grand prize at the 36th Venice International Film Critics' Week.

Some nine short films are also competing at the Persian Film Festival Australia.

Earlier reports said Iranian short animated film 'The Sprayer', directed by Farnoush Abedi, is one of them.

This year's edition of the Persian Film Festival Australia kicked off on Wednesday and will run until May 7.

'Inside the Skin' to Compete at Cannes



TEHRAN -- An Iranian short film directed by female filmmakers has been selected to compete in the La Cinéfondation at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival. For its 2023 edition, La Ciné

selected among 2000 films submitted by film schools from all around the world, 14 short fictions and two animated short films, among which 10 films are directed by women and sev-

en films by men.

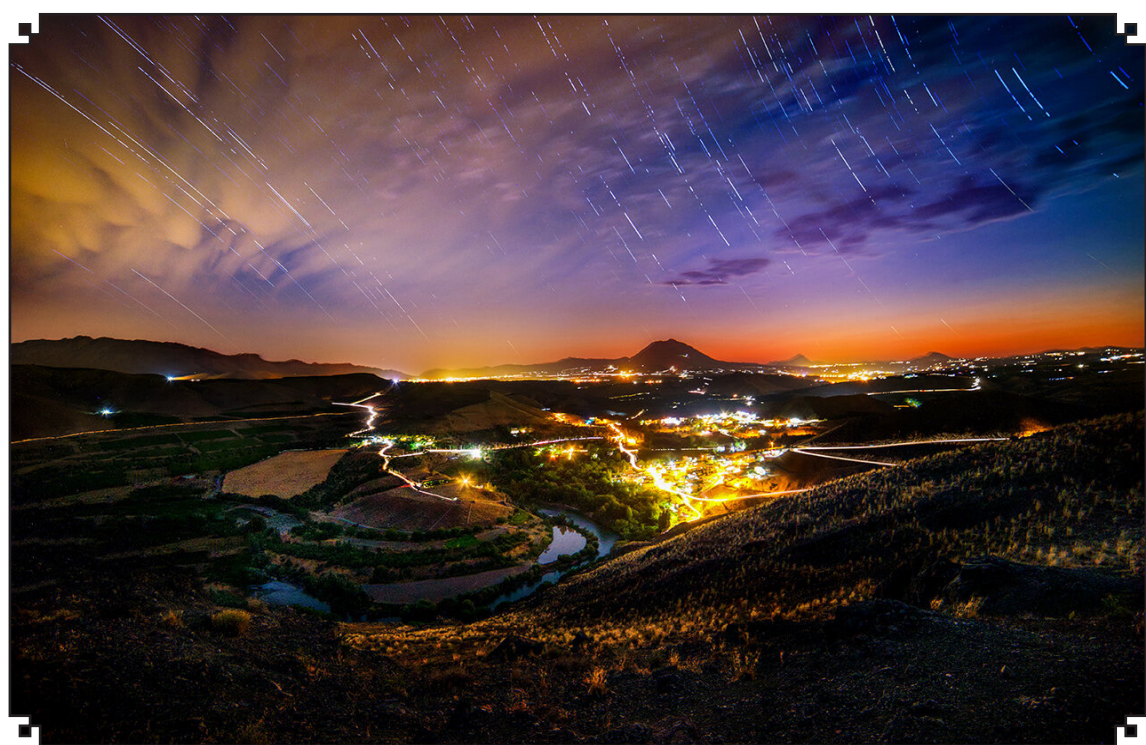
The jury chaired by Ildikó Enyedi will give out three La Ciné awards, during a ceremony that will be followed by the screening of the awarded films in May.

The 'Inside the Skin' is co-directed by Shafagh Abousaba and Maryam Mahdiye. The short follows an unexpected encounter that draws Ali closer to a picture of his true self.

Ario Amiri, Behrad Salah-Varzi, Hani Salehi, and Payam Moutab make up the film's cast.

This is a remarkable achievement for the Iranian film industry as it continues to make its mark on the global cinema scene.

Picture of the Day



Traces of stars over Zayanderud, the largest river of the Iranian Plateau in central Iran.

Photo by IRNA