

IN BRIEF

Senate vote chokes off force-feeding practice

SALEM — A bill that would ban Oregon restaurants from serving a liver delicacy made by force-feeding ducks was passed by the Senate on Tuesday.

However, restaurant owners would be found in violation only if they knew that the delicacy — called foie gras — is made by force-feeding waterfowl to fatten their livers.

Supporters of the bill said force-feeding birds is cruel and shouldn't be supported in Oregon. Opponents said that it's ridiculous to make a delicacy illegal and that there's no evidence the force-feeding technique is harmful.

The bill, which would ban the force-feeding of birds in Oregon, passed 18-8 and will now move to the House. There are three farms in the nation that force-feed to produce foie gras. None is in Oregon.

The legislation would also make it illegal if someone "sells, offers for sale or delivers one or more food products

that the person knows to have been produced in whole or in part by force-feeding a bird."

Sen. Jeff Kruse, R-Roseburg, said the bill sets up a potential liability for meat distributors and restaurants.

But Sen. Joanne Verger, D-Coos Bay, the bill's sponsor, made an appeal for waterfowl.

"It is inhumane treatment in order to add a little pleasure to your plate," she said. "I ask you to be kinder, gentler and more considerate to our feathered friends."

— The Associated Press

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Syria's 29-year military presence in Lebanon ends

BY SAM F. GHATTAS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MASNA, Lebanon — Syria's last soldier in Lebanon walked across the border Tuesday, welcomed home with cheers and flowers after a modest farewell from the Lebanese, a quiet end to a once indomitable 29-year military presence that was the key to Damascus' control of its neighbor.

With the Syrians gone, Lebanon now look ahead to an election that should prove freer of Syrian influence but still runs the risk of sinking into violence. Lebanon's anti-Syrian opposition is hoping to defeat Damascus' political allies at the ballot box.

The withdrawal would have been unthinkable only a few months ago. But amid a series of strategic blunders by Syrian President Bashar Assad, Damascus came under relentless international pressure that intensified after the Feb. 14 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The United States in particular is keeping up demands for an end to Syria's influence.

After weeks of Syrians' vacating their posts, Lebanon's pro-Syrian leadership was eager to give a dignified finish to the pullout.

Top military brass from both sides exchanged medals at an hour-long

ceremony at an air base near their shared border, and they emphasized the nations' close ties will continue.

A Syrian commander told Lebanese troops at the ceremony: "Brothers in arms, 'til we meet again." The Lebanese replied, "'Til we meet again," using the Arabic phrase "ila liqaa," a breezier goodbye than the more formal "farewell."

"Brothers in arms, thank you for your sacrifices," a Lebanese commander then told the Syrians.

Lebanese army commander Michel Suleiman pledged continued cooperation and credited the Syrian army with ending the 1975-1990 civil war and rebuilding Lebanese forces.

"Together we shall always remain brothers in arms in the face of the Israeli enemy," Suleiman said.

The two dozen or so Lebanese who stood at the border were less charitable as they watched the last 250 Syrians leave — remnants of a one-time mighty force of 40,000 that ran the country virtually unchallenged since arriving as peacekeepers in 1976.

"I feel like someone who was suffocated and jailed and has finally emerged from jail," said Shaaban al-Ajami, mayor of the Lebanese border village of Majdal Anjar.

Syria ends military presence in Lebanon

Syria ended its 29-year military presence in Lebanon on Tuesday with the withdrawal of its remaining troops. Syria entered Lebanon in 1976 as peacekeepers in the country's civil war and remained after the war ended in 1990.

Major events in Lebanese-Syria relations

1975: Civil war broke out in Lebanon

1976: Syria sent troops to help keep peace; Arab League gave Syria a peace-keeping mandate

1978: Israel invaded Lebanon in pursuit of Palestinian guerrillas

1982: Israel invaded Lebanon again, drove Syrian army from several areas; President-elect Bashir Gemayel assassinated.

1983: U.S. warplanes hit Syrian positions in Lebanon in retaliation for Syrian-backed attacks on the U.S.

1987: Syria sent troops into west Beirut to enforce cease-fire

1988: Outgoing President Amin Gemayel appointed Lebanese army commander Gen. Michel Aoun as interim prime minister.

1989: Aoun waged "war of liberation" against Syrian forces. Pro-Syrian legislator Elias Hrawi elected president.

1990: Syrian forces defeated army under Aoun

1991: Hrawi signed Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination with Syrian President Hafez Assad.

1996: Israeli helicopters attacked Syrian forces near Beirut in offensive against Hezbollah.

1998: Pro-Syrian Lebanese army commander, Gen. Emile Lahoud, elected president.

2000: Syria began first of five redeployments

2004: U.N. Security Council demanded Syria withdraw all troops

Feb. 14, 2005: Former Lebanese prime minister killed by bomb in Beirut; Lebanese opposition blamed Syria; thousands demonstrate against Syria

March 5: Syria announced a two-stage pullback of its 14,000 troops

April 26: Last Syrian soldiers left Lebanon



SOURCE: ESRI

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