

PORTRAITS OF PARTNERSHIP

Common Vision
Shared Values
Joint Action



U.S. EMBASSY SOFIA

Letter from the Ambassador



As we look to the beginning of a new year, we have the opportunity to reflect back upon all that has been accomplished in recent months. The partnership between the United States and Bulgaria is stronger than ever before. We have proven our commitment to each other and have emerged from political and economic crises with an unwavering determination to extend our cooperation even further.

The completion of the Bulgarian mandate in Iraq was a tremendous success. Throughout the five years of their deployment, Bulgarian soldiers performed superbly and earned the respect of partners throughout the coalition. Bulgaria's contributions to enhancing stability in that crucial region have again profiled this country as a reliable ally and indispensable friend. It was a true privilege for me to participate in the ceremonies that honored the duty and sacrifice of the Bulgarian soldiers and that welcomed them home to their families on the eve of Christmas.



Earlier this year, the U.S. Agency for International Development concluded its formal assistance programs to Bulgaria after having provided over 650 million dollars. One of the legacy programs that will continue for many years in the future is the America for Bulgaria Foundation – a multi-million dollar foundation that will provide grants and work to foster public-private partnerships. This Foundation is a vivid demonstration of our lasting commitment to help build a better future for the people of Bulgaria.

Of course, the global economic crisis will force all of us to make some difficult decisions. It also presents the opportunity – and the imperative – to take essential action. At this juncture it is vital that Bulgarian authorities take significant steps to combat corruption and organized crime and to make this economy one of the most dynamic and attractive anywhere in southeast Europe. The U.S. is eager to partner in this effort, working with both the government and the private sector to help propel Bulgaria toward greater transparency, effectiveness, and innovation.



In the United States, the new year will begin with the inauguration of President-elect Obama on January 20. As millions gather in Washington and around the world to hear the first official speech of our new President, we can expect sober words about serious challenges. And as we consider the months that lie ahead and the problems that will inevitably arise, we can also take solace in the fact that we do not face these problems alone. For ours is a lasting partnership and a genuine friendship – a tremendous asset in today's difficult world.

With best wishes for great happiness and shared success in the new year.

Sincerely,
Nancy McEldowney
Ambassador of the United States

Visit the Ambassador's [video profile](#) to learn more.
Visit the Ambassador's [page](#).

Ambassador's Statement on the Bulgarian Mission in Iraq

December 16, 2008: Tomorrow Bulgarian soldiers return home from Iraq, having completed their deployment and successfully fulfilled their mandate. They come as heroes and patriots who have served their country with courage and distinction. They have stood shoulder to shoulder with the United States and other coalition allies to bring peace and stability to Iraq and to build a better future for the Iraqi people.

In international peace and security, Bulgaria has proven itself an unwavering friend and invaluable ally. The decision to join the Coalition's efforts was not an easy one and it did not come without cost. Bulgaria's contributions, made with superb professionalism and dedication to duty, have accrued not only to Iraq and the Coalition but also to all who are committed to the security of this region.

For the Bulgarian people and for friends of Bulgaria, this is a very proud moment. The United States salutes the brave men and women who serve in the Bulgarian Armed Forces and is honored to stand as a genuine friend and true partner of this fine country.



Photos: Courtesy of Colonel Petko Lilov,
68th SF Brigade, Ploudiv

In the News



Marine Security Guards Deliver Toys and Smiles to Hospitalized Bulgarian Children

On Monday, December 22, U.S. Embassy Marines gave toys to children at the University Pediatric Hospital. The toys were donated by embassy staff members for the annual "Toys for Tots" charity drive. Ambassador McEldowney joined in the festivities, handing out toys to the children alongside the Marines. She gave an interview with national TV network bTV during the event, noting "this toy project is an important part of what we want to do here in Bulgaria - as good friends, good neighbors, and good partners."

Official Ceremony Marks the End of Bulgaria's Military Mission in Iraq

On December 22, Ambassador McEldowney attended the official ceremony marking the completion of the Bulgarian mission in Iraq. President Parvanov delivered remarks praising the soldiers for having served as part of the international coalition in Iraq and laid a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier. The ceremony included a minute of silence to honor the 13 Bulgarian soldiers who lost their lives in Iraq.



Ambassador in Darik Radio's Year-end Talk Show - *The Year*

On December 20, Darik Radio's show "The Year" featured Ambassador McEldowney, who talked about the major highlights of 2008. Ambassador McEldowney reiterated the significance of the U.S. Presidential elections and Barack Obama's historic victory, and said that for Bulgarians as well as for Americans the audacity of hope (as one of Obama's books is titled) is a very strong and captivating aspiration. Asked about her impressions of Bulgaria, the ambassador said: "I can tell you as an American diplomat and also as someone who has now become a resident, and a neighbor, and a personal friend to many Bulgarians that I think it is a terrific place."

[Listen to the Darik Radio interview](#)

Ambassador McEldowney Addresses U.S.-EU Transatlantic Relations

Ambassador McEldowney delivered a speech on the U.S.-EU transatlantic relationship and the global economic challenges in a business discussion organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria. French Ambassador Etienne de Poncins and European Affairs Minister Gergana Grancharova also participated in the discussion held on Tuesday, December 16. Talking about the U.S.-EU partnership in light of the global financial crisis, the Ambassador said that all of us "need to roll up our sleeves and get to work and look at ways to boost Bulgaria's investment climate, to guarantee greater transparency, to strengthen the judicial system, and to take concrete steps to defeat corruption and organized crime."

- [Remarks by Ambassador McEldowney](#)



In the News



Ambassador Praises Donors' Philanthropy

Addressing the Fourth Annual Philanthropic Conference of the Bulgarian Donor's Forum, on December 18, Ambassador McEldowney commended the participants, saying that "each act of philanthropy, each instance of charity that is performed, goes far beyond the specific need that it fills." The Ambassador said that philanthropy was one of the very few things in the world that had the capacity to renew the human spirit and to strengthen the fabric of society.

AES Launches Largest Geo Energy Project in Bulgaria

Ambassador McEldowney attended the December 16 launch of Kavarna Geo Energy Project, which is the largest project to use renewable and environmental-friendly sources in Bulgaria. Ambassador McEldowney called the signing of the project a "tremendous success" and said this is "a sign of confidence in the Bulgarian economy and a sign of the continuing strong commercial partnership between Bulgaria and the United States."



U.S. Remains Committed to the Security and Prosperity of the Balkan Region

On November 23, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Stuart Jones granted an interview for nationwide Nova TV addressing issues related to the Western Balkans and Bulgaria. DAS Jones reiterated the commitment of the U.S. government to the Western Balkans, Kosovo's independence, and the security and prosperity of the whole Balkans region. His interview aired on one of the most popular political talk shows in Bulgaria - Na Chetiri Ochi (One on One), reaching a widespread audience.



DCM Alexander Karagiannis: Entrepreneurs Are the Country's Driving Force

Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) Alexander Karagiannis addressed an audience of about 100 university students, professors, and academics at an Entrepreneurship Forum organized by the University of National and World Economy (UNWE), Microsoft, and the Business Foundation



for Education which took place at UNWE on Wednesday, December 3. DCM Karagiannis told the participants in the forum that entrepreneurs broaden the base of participation in the economy, create jobs, decentralize economic power, and give people a stake in the future.

In the Spotlight



Alum Teaches Investigative Journalism

Alexenia Dimitrova is an Alum of the World Press Institute (1996) and BBG University of Missouri Internship (1998). She is also a leading investigative journalist with the widely-circulated daily newspaper *24 Hours*. This year, the Department of State gave a grant titled *Investigative Journalism as a Tool for Anticorruption Practices, Transparency, and Civic Participation* to Ms. Dimitrova. Under the grant, Ms. Dimitrova served as the main lecturer at two seminars – in Vratza and Veliko Turnovo – that provided practical advice and lessons learned from her U.S. experience.

Hamlet Lives at Pazardzhik Language School

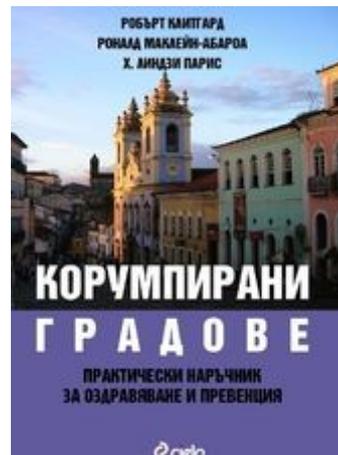
Since September 2008, **Helen Keezer** has been teaching English at the Bertolt Brecht Language School in Pazardzhik. Thanks to the Fulbright Teachers' Exchange Program, Bulgarian students have the opportunity to be led through American and British literature by a native English-speaking professional. Ms. Keezer's students wrote their own *Pazardzhik Tales*, describing typical Bulgarians using heroic couplets. Ms. Keezer holds a M.A. in English from Idaho State University, and after the one-year term at the Bertolt Brecht Language School in Pazardzhik she will return to her home institution, Century High School, in Pocatello, Idaho.



Books by American Authors Tackle Corruption

A book launch and discussion, based upon two books by Robert Klitgaard – *Corrupt Cities* and *Controlling Corruption* – published in Bulgarian by Ciela Publishing House with the support of the Embassy's Book Program, took place on December 17 at the American Center. Sherry Keneson-Hall, Cultural Attaché of the U.S. Embassy, addressed the guests at the event as well.

Key participants in the discussion were investigative journalist of *Dnevnik Daily* Hristo Hristov, corruption expert Prof. Nikolov of Sofia University, member of Parliament's Anti-Corruption Committee Ilko Dimitrov, and radio journalist and publisher Kalin Manolov. The discussion was supported by Reneta Nikolova, of the NGO "Journalists Against Corruption." Attending the launch were prominent National Radio and TV journalists and students of law and political science. The event was covered by Re:tv and is extensively presented at the site of the prestigious law journal *Praven Svyat* [The World of Law], which will also dedicate one of its future issues to the problem of corruption.



Celebrating Native American Heritage

On November 29, the American Corner at the Sofia City Library celebrated Native American Heritage Month 2008. Public Affairs Officer Katherine Ingmanson addressed the audience of high school students and guests interested in Native American Culture and spoke about the importance of this heritage. Members of Eagle Circle Society, Bulgarian Society for American Indian Studies, performed songs and dances of different Native American nations and presented a slide show and lecture about American Indians.

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