



Letter from the Ambassador



Dear Friends;

This has been a month of historic importance with events that riveted people around the world. Watching these events unfold together with Bulgarian colleagues has given us the opportunity to reflect on our partnership and how best to prepare for the future.

On November 4, the traditional first Tuesday of the month, Americans turned out in record numbers for an election that was like none other in the history of our nation. It was the longest, the most expensive, and perhaps the hardest fought campaign that we've ever experienced. With two superb candidates vying for the presidency, the American public witnessed many dozens of televised debates, along with literally hundreds of radio broadcasts and personal appearances. The policy positions and personal characteristics of the candidates were outlined for the public to analyze, discuss, and ultimately decide upon when they cast their vote. Extensive use of the internet and the so-called "new media" of blogging and web-chats introduced an extraordinary degree of transparency and immediacy on issues ranging from campaign financing to fact checking to party platforms. The result was more information more readily available to the people who deserve it the most – the individual voters.

President Bush heralded the victory of Barack Obama as a triumph of the American story. People everywhere around the world have taken encouragement from his personal sojourn through the issues of racial identity and social division. And world publics are now witnessing along with the American people the mechanics of transition from one Administration to the next – a true vindication of the democratic process.

Of course, this month has also seen the impact of the global economic crisis. Banks have defaulted, world markets have dropped dramatically, and national economies everywhere have begun to experience slowed growth and increased unemployment. In these difficult economic times, it is all the more important that we look to strengthen the commercial ties between our two countries. I believe that Bulgaria is uniquely poised to attract even more American investment and become a regional hub – if the government takes the steps necessary to remove impediments and implement new incentives. I know that American companies are ready to partner in this effort and are eager to bring innovation, state of the art technology, and a principled commitment to improve the well being of Bulgarian citizens throughout this country.

We close out the month of November with our celebration of Thanksgiving. A uniquely American holiday, this is a time when families and friends and colleagues throughout the Embassy come together to reflect upon the many opportunities that life has offered. It is a reflection that renews the spirit and strengthens our commitment to facing the challenges that inevitably arise.

With best wishes from my family to yours for health and happiness in months ahead.

Sincerely,

Nancy McEldowney

Ambassador of the United States

Visit the Ambassador's [video profile](#).

Visit the [Ambassador's](#) page.

Ambassador McEldowney Salutes Bulgaria's Participation in the Coalition in Iraq

I welcome Foreign Minister Kalfin's announcement that Bulgaria has fulfilled its mandate in the coalition effort in Iraq and offer profuse thanks for Bulgaria's support of the Iraqi people. President Bush has praised the heroism of the Bulgarian soldiers and the contribution of the Bulgarian nation are sources of pride for both our countries. The Iraqi people also highly value this effort to create a more secure Iraq and improve the development of Iraqi institutions.

We applaud the performance of the Bulgarian contingent in Iraq and honor the sacrifices of the Bulgarian people throughout this mission. Time and again, the Bulgarian armed forces demonstrate their professionalism and dedication to duty, and this mission has been a superb example. We are privileged to have such strong allies and trusted friends, and we look forward to welcoming the troops as they return home in December.

November 14, 2008

In the News

Ambassador McEldowney Reflects on the U.S. Presidential Election



In heartfelt remarks at the AmCham Business Breakfast Discussion following the election of America's 44th President, Ambassador McEldowney addressed Georgi Pirinski, Chairman of the National Assembly of Bulgaria, as well as a room full of businessmen, journalists, and media. She spoke about the most important internal issues for the U.S. – the economy, its social identity, and the definition of party politics – assuring everyone of the overarching American belief in the power of the U.S. democratic system. The Ambassador's remarks were followed by a cannonade of questions from the audience, covering important topics like the impact of the U.S. election on Bulgaria, the change that the new President-elect will bring to America and the world, and the economic and political stability of the Balkans.

- [Remarks by Ambassador McEldowney](#)
- [View Video](#)

Ambassador McEldowney highlights the U.S. election day as "a new day for the United States, a new day for friends and partners around the world."

U.S. Presents 53 HMMWVs to the Bulgarian Government



On November 3, the U.S. officially presented 53 new vehicles to the Government of Bulgaria to assist the Bulgarian Armed Forces as they modernize and strive to meet NATO standards of interoperability. Ambassador Nancy McEldowney presented the donation worth \$16 million to the Minister of Defense of Bulgaria Nikolay Tsonev with the words: "We do this with one goal and one only – as a NATO ally of Bulgaria, as a political partner, and as a close friend, we want Bulgaria to be as strong and as successful as it possibly can." Some of the vehicles, popular under the nickname Hummer and representing the most sophisticated and effective vehicles of that kind, will be used by the Bulgarian soldiers in Afghanistan.

- [Remarks by Ambassador McEldowney](#)
- [More photos](#)

Ambassador Nancy McEldowney speaks with Bulgarian and American soldiers during the HMMWVs donation ceremony in Varna Port West on November 3, 2008.

Economic Partnership in Times of Global Insecurity



On November 12, Ambassador McEldowney spoke at an AmCham luncheon on the topic of economic partnership in times of global insecurity to prominent representatives of Bulgaria's political, social, business, and government circles. The Ambassador presented her views on the challenges the new U.S. administration will be facing in the context of the global financial crisis and emerging new political tensions on the international scene. The audience listened with great interest to the Ambassador's views on how Bulgaria can deal with these challenges and to her vision of Bulgaria's prospects to become "one of, if not the easiest and most attractive places to do business in this entire region." Ambassador McEldowney also emphasized the importance of tackling corruption and organized crime, saying that "Bulgaria simply must break free of the iron grip that corruption and organized crime holds on this country. The strength of this economy and the well being of this society depend on it."

[Remarks by Ambassador McEldowney](#)

"An engine for growth and dynamism throughout the Balkans, throughout the Black Sea, and beyond," is Ambassador McEldowney's vision of Bulgaria, shared with the participants at the AmCham luncheon.

bTV Pulls Back the Curtain on Getting a Visa

The top-rated bTV Morning Show aired a report about visa-issuing procedures at the U.S. Embassy in Sofia together with an interview with Consul General Dan Perrone on Oct 22. The report demonstrated the greatly facilitated procedures of interviewing and fingerprints scanning, showed the friendly and welcoming premises of the Embassy's Consular Section, and praised the professionalism of the Consular Section's staff. bTV's informative account gave its audience a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the Consular Office's operation and dispelled many misperceptions about visa issuing procedures.

- [View bTV story on U.S. visa issuing process](#)

U.S. Consul General Daniel Perrone speaks on bTV about the visa issuing process.



In the News

Ambassador McEldowney Marks Opening of Joint Training with F-16 Flight



"It is so fabulous to be here with you all now. I have just had what I think is clear to say, the experience of a lifetime," said Ambassador Nancy McEldowney after her 50-minute flight in an F-16 in the skies of Graf Ignatievo near Plovdiv. Ambassador McEldowney visited the air base days before the start of the most recent joint training between Bulgarian and American pilots flying F-16, MiG-21, and MiG-29 fighters. During the visit, Base Commander Brigadier General Rumen Radev informed the Ambassador about the valuable training opportunities offered at Graf Ignatievo, as well as of the challenges that the pilots face.

[- More photos](#)
[- View video](#)

Ambassador McEldowney gives a thumbs-up as she prepares for her first flight in F-16 at the air base in Graf Ignatievo.

U.S. Embassy Officer Shares Investigative Journalist Experience with Bulgarian Journalists

"Freedom of the press is essential to democracy because it empowers the citizenry and holds governments accountable," said Sherry Keneson-Hall, Cultural Attaché of the U.S. Embassy, in her opening remarks to journalists participating in the October seminar on investigative journalism in Vratsa. The "Investigative Journalism as a Tool for Anticorruption Practices" seminar was organized by the Media Development Center as part of a winning project in 2008 Department of State Alumni competition. Mrs. Keneson-Hall and the seminar's facilitator, renowned investigative journalist Alexenia Dimitrova, shared their knowledge and experience of U.S. practices in fighting corruption through the power of the *fourth estate*. The representatives of local and regional media from the northeastern part of Bulgaria also learned that being a journalist carries a responsibility as well – to work with facts, to keep in mind people's differences, to appreciate variety, and to be honest.

Sherry Keneson-Hall (facing the camera, right) opens the discussion.



Ambassador McEldowney Talks about Life and Career on NOVA TV



On November 4, Ambassador McEldowney appeared on one of the most popular television shows – the Nova TV Morning Show – in a hearty conversation with anchor Lora Krumova, talking about her family, professional career, and her goals as Ambassador of the U.S. in Bulgaria. The Ambassador commented on the U.S. elections by saying two strong candidates were running for office, and they each laid out important decisions for the future of America. However, she explained, no matter who the U.S. people elect as President of the United States, the partnership between the two countries will remain strong.

[- View Video - Part 1](#)
[- View Video - Part 2](#)

TV screen shot of the Ambassador's interview for Nova TV Morning Show.

High School Students Learn about U.S. Politics

Gregory Houston, Regional Security Officer of the U.S. Embassy, visited the Jewish School in Sofia to discuss the outcome of the recent presidential elections in the United States with the students. Mr. Houston connected with the students by giving honest and straightforward answers to their questions about global climate change, U.S. politics, minority issues, and other hot issues raised by the students.

Mr. Houston also used the opportunity to motivate his audience, addressing larger issues such as the importance of education, of making the right choices in life, of contributing to the well-being of one's community, and working actively toward bringing about changes.

Gregory Houston, Regional Security Officer, in an engaging conversation with the students from the Jewish School in Sofia.



In the News

Ambassador McEldowney Opens the Week of American Food in Sofia

"The way to someone's heart is through their stomach," U.S. Ambassador McEldowney said at the opening of the American Food Week at Mall of Sofia's Piccadilly Market on November 10, and she rolled up her sleeves to prepare food for the spectators watching the exhibition. Ambassador McEldowney and Chef Uti cooked a number of delicious dishes made from genuine American products, many of which were showcased on the shelves of the Piccadilly Market.

- [Remarks by Ambassador McEldowney](#)
- [More photos](#)

The biggest sandwiches in the hands of the skillful chefs - Ambassador McEldowney and Uti.



U.S. Embassy Reaches out through Rock and Roll



Ambassador McEldowney addresses the energized crowd in NDK Hall 1.

Ambassador Nancy McEldowney rocked the audience at the opening of the 22nd Kinomania Film Festival on November 7 at the National Palace of Culture in Sofia. The Ambassador officially opened the festival by introducing the Martin Scorsese documentary about the Rolling Stones, "Shine a Light." Ambassador McEldowney received boisterous applause from the crowd of nearly 4,000 when she announced that she was a fan of the legendary band. The opening ceremony was covered in the daily papers the following day along with quotes from the Ambassador. Public Affairs Officer Katherine Ingmanson introduced all the American films at the official press conference on October 29. The U.S. Embassy sponsored the rights, transport, and translation of 7 of the 13 American films in the Film Festival.

- [View Cinemania 2008 program \(pdf\)](#)

Navy Ceremonial Band Rocks Bulgarian Music High School

The U.S. Military Band that performed on November 17 at the Varna Music School caused an outburst of excitement from the students, who gave warm rounds of applause to the American musicians following each piece. The Bulgarian music students cheered with exaltation as the U.S. band played some of the most popular songs of Elvis Presley and Stevie Wonder, American jazz, and Italian "canzone," and both the members of the U.S. band and their Bulgarian audience had a great time together. The Principal of the Varna Music School, Mr. Hristo Dipchikov, invited the Band to visit their school again the next time they returned to Varna.

The U.S. Military Band in action at the Varna Music School.



American Maestro Charles Ansbacher Conducts Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra



Maestro Ansbacher at the rehearsal with the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra.

Maestro Charles Ansbacher, an esteemed American conductor and founder of the Boston Landmarks Orchestra, visited Bulgaria on the occasion of the 80th Anniversary Season of Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra. On November 6, Maestro Ansbacher conducted a concert featuring American music under the Honorary Patronage of the U.S. Ambassador, Nancy McEldowney. Separately, at the American Corner at Sofia City Library, Maestro Ansbacher met with directors and leaders of major cultural institutions in Bulgaria to share his knowledge about how such institutions function as non-governmental organizations in the United States – a valuable exchange of information, as arts programs in Bulgaria are searching for alternative sources of funding besides government support.

- Read more about Charles Ansbacher [here](#).

In the Spotlight

Peace Corps: Helping Communities Make a Difference



A group photo of the young performers of the anti-trafficking play "Maria's Story."

If you [want to know more](#) about anti-trafficking activities in Bulgaria:

- Visit the website of the Bulgarian Anti-Trafficking Commission:
<http://www.antitrafficking.government.bg>

- Find out who else is working in this area:
Animus www.animusassociation.org
Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation: www.bgrf.org
Bulgarian Red Cross www.redcross.bg
Face to Face www.facetoface.org
International Organization for Migration Bulgaria:
<http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/pid/816>

- Remember:

October 18 - European Day against Human Trafficking.
November 25 - International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.
December 10 - International Human Rights Day.

Nobody becomes a victim of human traffic voluntarily. Anyone who is not satisfied with what they have, anyone who wants to travel and has ambitions for a better job, more money, and a better life, could practically become a victim. Many communities in Bulgaria lack knowledge and support in preventing and fighting human trafficking, and the devoted work of a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) can make a difference. Many PCVs in Bulgaria help develop decision-making skills in young people and educate them about the risks of human trafficking. PCVs are in a unique position to partner with and help strengthen local anti-trafficking organizations and to reach some of Bulgaria's most vulnerable citizens in their communities to help them understand that the right to choose their own future is entirely within their grasp.

Peace Corps Volunteer Kelsey Dippold and her youth organization, AYIT: "Just Friends" of Topolovgrad have worked together since 2007 to learn about human trafficking and to share their knowledge with other youths. An anti-trafficking training camp in Topolovgrad, held in 2007, engaged the participants in interactive activities about human trafficking and motivated them to develop and produce the anti-trafficking play "Maria's Story." The play follows Maria, an average teenage Bulgarian girl with typically concerned parents, who wants more out of life. This desire for larger world experience throws her unknowingly into the path of human traffickers and an outcome that no one would wish for.

"Maria's Story" has already traveled extensively around the country and AYIT: "Just Friends" looks forward to future performances in even more municipalities. Maria and her story have already reached hundreds of people, inspiring them to think about the reality of human trafficking and be more vigilant in their future endeavors.

- [Visit the Peace Corps official site](#)

- [More information about the Peace Corps in Bulgaria](#)

To contact AYIT: "Just Friends" please e-mail prosto.priateli@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

December 8: The official launch of the book *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* by Barack Obama (Ciela Publishing House).

Other Information

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Please Note:

December 24 - 26: Embassy closed for the Christmas holidays.
December 31: Embassy closed for New Year's Eve.
January 1 - 2, 2009: Embassy closed for the New Year's holidays.