



Common Vision
Shared Values
Joint Action



Letter from the Ambassador



I am delighted to welcome you to this electronic forum. I hope to use this platform to introduce myself as well as the programs and policies of this embassy to the widest possible audience throughout

Bulgaria. I hope that you find this material of interest and I encourage you to dialogue with us about what you see here. Your questions, comments and reactions are of great value to us, so please let us hear from you.

I would like to begin with a brief word about myself and my mandate here. It is an enormous privilege for me to serve as the new American Ambassador to Bulgaria. President Bush has instructed me to do everything possible to deepen and intensify cooperation across the full range of the vital strategic partnership between our two countries. In recent years we have made extraordinary progress in our relationship and, as a result, we are now on the threshold of a new phase, a new dynamic in which our countries collaborate on virtually every issue of importance. Whether the topic is political, military, economic, or cultural, we share similar perspectives and we work together to pursue our common interests. That is a crucial advantage for us both.

Though I only arrived in Bulgaria a few weeks ago, I have already seen vivid demonstration of the breadth of our partnership and the impact our partnership activities have on the lives of many millions of people. I was honored to swear in a new class of Peace Corps Volunteers and to talk with them about the life-long friendships they will make as they work together with Bulgarians throughout this country to help build a better future. There have been nearly a thousand young Americans serving as Peace Corps Volunteers in Bulgaria and I know that each one of them has made a positive difference, just as they have been positively changed by their experiences in this beautiful country.

I have also been deeply gratified to see Bulgarian and American soldiers exercising together here in Bulgaria. With the generosity of our Bulgarian hosts, we are using the joint training facilities at Novo Selo, Graf Ignatievo and Bezmer to ensure that our militaries are ready to stand together to face the challenges of today and tomorrow.

We have stepped up the pace of our training and recently conducted an Army exercise with over twelve hundred soldiers. In November we will conduct an Air Force exercise with two hundred and fifty airmen and a squadron of a dozen F-16 fighter aircraft. These exercises and our broad security cooperation help make Bulgaria stronger and safer.

My arrival in Bulgaria coincided with the one hundredth commemoration of Bulgaria's independence from Ottoman rule. As part of these commemorations and as my own personal tribute to the long history of this great nation, I traveled to Koprivshitsa to see with my own eyes the cobblestone streets and bridges where the April Uprising was so courageously launched. I also watched the Bulgarian flag rise over the ancient fortress in Veliko Turnovo and re-read the accounts of struggle and sacrifice that have defined this country. As I've reflected on these experiences and recalled the great works of Ivan Vazov and Vasil Levsky, I am struck by the fact that now, for the first time in many centuries, Bulgaria's fate and future are in its own hands.

The United States is honored to stand together with Bulgaria, as equal partners, as NATO allies, and as friends. We want this country to be strong and successful, because we know that Bulgaria's strength and success will accrue to the advantage of both our peoples. That is why we are also committed to helping Bulgaria deal with the problem of corruption and organized crime and to strengthen the institutions necessary to ensure democracy and rule of law.

We have an ambitious agenda ahead of us and the next several months promise to be quite exciting. The American elections in November and the Bulgarian elections next year will both be important turning points. In the midst of these changes and others that we've not yet predicted, one factor will remain constant and that is the enduring link between Bulgaria and America.

I look forward to meeting new friends and colleagues and to working closely with our many old friends throughout this fascinating country.

Sincerely,

Nancy McEldowney

Ambassador of the United States

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

In the News

Ambassador McEldowney Presents Her Credentials to President Parvanov



Ambassador Nancy McEldowney presented letters of credence from President George W. Bush to President Georgi Parvanov accrediting her as Ambassador Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary of the United States of America to the Republic of Bulgaria.

After the August 26 ceremony with President Parvanov, Ambassador McEldowney laid flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to pay her respects.

[\(more photos\)](#)

Accompanied by the President's Chief of Protocol, Ambassador McEldowney reviews the Bulgarian honor guard before presenting her credentials.

Ambassador Meets Plovdiv Mayor and Attends Official Opening of Plovdiv Fair

Ambassador Nancy McEldowney visited the city of Plovdiv on Monday, September 29. She met with Mayor Slavcho Atanasov, attended the official opening of the International Trade Fair, and explored some of the historical sites of the city.

In her remarks at the joint press availability with Mayor Atanasov, Ambassador McEldowney said she came to Plovdiv both to meet with the Mayor to talk about issues and to "try to do everything possible to advance commercial relations and the economic presence of the American companies here." [\(more\)](#)

- [Remarks at Eltrak/Caterpillar exhibition by Ambassador McEldowney](#)

Ambassador McEldowney gives remarks at the Eltrak/Caterpillar exhibition at the Plovdiv International Trade Fair.



American and Bulgarian Communities Honor the Victims of September 11 Terrorist Attacks



Ambassador McEldowney, U.S. Embassy staff, and representatives of the American and Bulgarian communities attended a service commemorating the seventh anniversary of the terrorist attacks aimed at New York and Washington, DC. The service was held at Sveta Nedelya Church on Thursday, September 11, 2008. Talking before the media after the ceremony, the Ambassador said that as we honor the innocent victims of the terrorist attacks, we are reminded that we do not walk in this world alone. Ambassador McEldowney said that Bulgaria and America remain together in their determination to succeed in the quest for peace and tolerance and for a safer world for all our children. [\(more photos\)](#)

- [Remarks by Ambassador McEldowney](#)

Ambassador McEldowney (center) reflects during the September 11 memorial service in Sveta Nedelya church.

Ambassador McEldowney's First TV Interview on BNT's Panorama

Boyko Vassilev, host of Bulgarian National Television's critically-acclaimed Panorama program, spoke with Ambassador McEldowney in her first TV interview in Bulgaria. In a wide-ranging conversation, Ambassador McEldowney highlighted the importance of the situation in Georgia, noting President Bush's pledge of \$1 billion for reconstruction efforts, as well as praising Bulgaria for its support of Georgia.

- [View Video](#)

TV screen shot of the conversation between Boyko Vassilev and Ambassador McEldowney. The interview took place in the Information Resource Center of the U.S. Embassy.



In the News

Ambassador McEldowney Discusses Future Global Challenges with Atlantic Club



On October 8, Ambassador McEldowney gave her inaugural speech in Bulgaria at a meeting of the Atlantic Club. She discussed many of the challenges she saw ahead in the world, but expressed optimism that Bulgaria and the United States can help confront those problems as strong allies and partners – especially in light of the many successes the two countries have already achieved. Following the speech, the Ambassador answered questions from the overflow crowd in attendance, including questions from other members of the Atlantic Club, journalists, and from students from some of Sofia's English-language high schools.

- [Full-text of Ambassador McEldowney's remarks, as delivered](#)

Ambassador McEldowney answers a question from the audience after her speech.

New Information Center at the Headquarters of the Bulgarian Prosecution Service

On Tuesday, September 9, Deputy Chief of Mission Alexander Karagiannis and Chief Prosecutor Boris Velchev attended the opening ceremony of a new Information Center at the Headquarters of the Bulgarian Prosecution Service. This USAID-funded project worth more than USD 15,000 is an important acquisition for Bulgarian citizens. The Information Center aims to improve transparency and accountability by providing information and quick access to law enforcement institutions. Deputy Chief of Mission Karagiannis said this Information Center demonstrates the desire of the Prosecutor's Office to build trust and confidence in the judiciary. ([more photos](#))

Deputy Chief of Mission Alexander Karagiannis speaks before the media at the opening of the USAID-sponsored Information Center at the Bulgarian Prosecution Service.



Ambassador McEldowney Visits the Historic Town of Koprivshtitsa



In her first trip outside Sofia, Ambassador McEldowney visited the historic town of Koprivshtitsa on September 16. The Ambassador met with Mayor Lyubomir Tsekov, donated a small book collection to the Koprivshtitsa Chitalishte, and toured of some of the most prominent Koprivshtitsa landmarks, such as Lyutov's House, the First Gunshot Bridge, Kableshkov's House, the Old Church, and the Mausoleum. In comments to local media, the Ambassador said she was thrilled to visit the town where the Bulgarians began their struggle to control their own destiny and live freely and in peace.

([more photos](#))

Penka Alexieva, Chair of the Koprivshtitsa Chitalishte Board of Trustees, reviews some of the American books that Ambassador McEldowney donated to the Koprivshtitsa Chitalishte. Koprivshtitsa Mayor Lyubomir Tsekov looks on.

DCM Karagiannis Talks About the U.S. Electoral System in Sofia

Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) Alexander Karagiannis talked about the U.S. Electoral System at a discussion on "U.S. Presidential Elections 2008: Sofia Perspective" organized by the American Chamber of Commerce on October 16. DCM Karagiannis explained the mechanisms of the Electoral College, the uniqueness of the current presidential elections, and the expectations that both Europe and the United States may have of one another. Alexander Karagiannis said that America will ask more from its friends in terms of the challenges lying ahead of us because "we have to consult together, we have to coordinate together, and we have to take actions together."

([more](#))

Learn more about the 2008 Elections:

[ejournal: "The Candidates"](#)

[ejournal: "The Long Campaign"](#)

[ejournal: "The Electoral College"](#)

DCM Karagiannis (center) with Bulgarian journalist Boyko Vassilev (left) and AmCham in Bulgaria Executive Director Valentin Georgiev (right).



News from the Joint Military Facilities

Joint U.S.-Bulgarian Training Bulgarian Panther 08 Completes at Novo Selo Training Area



DCM Karagiannis and General Carter Ham, the Commanding General of U.S. Army, Europe and Seventh Army, receive a traditional welcome from little girls at the kindergarten renovated with U.S. funding by U.S. and Bulgarian soldiers, in the village of Mokren, near Novo Selo Training Area, during the Distinguished Visitors' Day on October 15, 2008.

U.S. and Bulgarian troops completed a seven-week joint training at Novo Selo Training Area (NSTA) near the town of Sliven in Southeast Bulgaria, which began on September 1.

In total, 900 U.S. and 300 Bulgarian soldiers took part in the Bulgarian Panther 2008 training at NSTA, which aims to achieve interoperability in joint anti-terrorist operations. The exercise, which took part in five stages between August 28 and October 30, was led by Lieutenant Colonel Michael Lefebvre on the U.S. side and Colonel Bisser Petrov on the Bulgarian side.

Bulgaria and the United States signed in 2006 a Defense Cooperation Agreement on the shared use of several military facilities on Bulgarian territory. The U.S. troops training at the shared military bases are known as Joint Task Force-East. [\(more\)](#)

- [U.S.-Bulgarian Training "Bulgarian Panther 2008"](#)
- [Defense Cooperation Agreement](#)

U.S. Army Awards \$61 Million Construction Project for Novo Selo

On September 17, the U.S. Army awarded a two-year, \$61.15 million project for construction at the Joint Training Facility in Novo Selo, Bulgaria. Eleven of the thirteen companies winning contracts for the project are Bulgarian. The other two companies are American and Italian. The project provides funding for simple structures to be used in future joint military training activities. Primary facilities include 23 barracks to support about 2,500 soldiers, as well as administrative, operational, storage, maintenance, dining, and medical facilities.

Work on the contract is expected to begin in November and be completed by summer 2011.

The U.S. Army and the U.S. Embassy do not hire directly to fill vacancies in the joint U.S.-Bulgarian military facilities. The companies awarded contracts for goods and services will be responsible for hiring personnel for work. Prospective applicants for vacancies can apply for jobs with the companies that have won contracts for goods and services. [\(more\)](#)

U.S. Provides Medical and Engineering Expertise in Humanitarian Assistance

Joint Humanitarian Projects are conducted during the joint training with the participation of SEABEEs service members from the U.S. Navy, together with service members from the Bulgarian Army 55th Engineer regiment. These activities also include medical assistance projects by joint U.S.-Bulgarian medical teams. Six humanitarian engineering projects took place in Sliven, Kotel, Padarevo, Mamarchevo, and Mokren, with Bulgarian units joining the effort in four of them.

Joint U.S.-Bulgarian medical teams provided medical services, including dentistry, optometry, and preventive medicine in the town of Sungurlare and the villages of Bezmer, Zimnitsa, Padarevo, Chubra, Grozden, Slavyantzi, and Mokren. Bulgarian medical teams from the Military Medical Facility in Sliven joined their American colleagues for this part of the mission. [\(more\)](#)

Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion cut a ribbon, marking the end of renovations in Zdravets Kindergarten, Sliven, October, 2008.



Spotlight on Alumni



Venelin Petkov

Venelin Petkov studied at the University of Missouri at Columbia's School of Journalism as a participant in the Fulbright Program from 1996 - 1997. A little over one decade later, Mr. Petkov stands as a leading opinion maker in Bulgaria, primarily through his extensive work as a journalist at one of Bulgaria's most influential TV channels, bTV. His professionalism, objectivity, initiative, and energy contribute to raising journalism standards in the country and to informing Bulgarians about current global political realities.

As a testament to his high-quality work, Mr. Petkov won the George Foster Peabody award for broadcasting excellence in news and entertainment for his TV documentary *A Journey across Afghanistan: Opium and Roses*. He received this prestigious honor at a ceremony in Washington, DC in June 2008.

Mr. Petkov's professional achievements and contributions are a testimony to the value State Department programs bring to the ever-growing range of education and training possibilities in Bulgaria.

Other News

Democracy Video Challenge



[Democracy Video Challenge](#)

Create a video short that completes the phrase "Democracy is ..."

The Prize

An all-expense-paid trip to Washington, New York and Hollywood to attend gala screenings of the winning videos.

Submission Deadline - January 31, 2009.

Learn [more](#).

New Publications from America.gov



eJournal USA

[The Candidates](#)

Every presidential campaign is dramatic and historic, but as the fervor surrounding the 2008 election continues to build, U.S. voters and the rest of the world will want to consider the candidates' personal histories more closely. What sort of people rise to the top in the U.S. political system, what are their attributes, their sensibilities, and their strengths?



eJournal USA

[The Electoral College](#)

More than 100 million voters are likely to cast ballots in nationwide U.S. elections November 4. But only 538 men and women will elect the next president of the United States, and those elections will take place in 50 state capitals and in Washington, D.C., December 15. This indirect election system, called the Electoral College and devised in 1787 by the framers of the Constitution, puzzles Americans and non-Americans alike. It reflects the federal governing system of allocating powers not only to a national government and to the people but also to the states. We hope that this issue of eJournal USA will improve your understanding of the historical reasons for the Electoral College system and how it functions.

Other Information

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Please Note:

November 4: Election Day in America

November 11: Embassy Closed for [Veterans' Day](#) - American Holiday

November 27: Embassy Closed for [Thanksgiving Day](#) - American Holiday