

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 4

MAY - JUNE, 2008



U.S. EMBASSY SOFIA

Letter from Ambassador John Beyrle



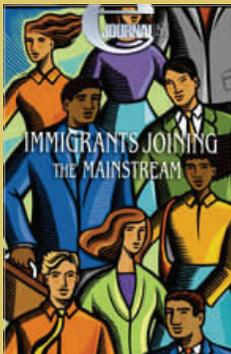
Upcoming Events

**July 4: Embassy Closed for
[Independence Day](#)**

**July 5: [AmCham Independence
Day Celebration](#)**

**July 6, Bulgaria Hall, 5:00 pm :
The Keystone State Boychoir
[\(KSB\)](#) and [Bodra Smyana
Children's Choir's Free Concert](#)**

Immigrants Joining the Mainstream



**An Electronic Journal of the U.S.
Department of State**

**Public Affairs Office
U.S. Embassy**
16, Kozyak Street
Sofia 1407, Bulgaria
Telephone: +359 2 937 5100
Fax number: +359 2 937 5320
<http://bulgaria.usembassy.gov>
General E-mail Box:
sofia@usembassy.bg



On June 18, I had the honor of participating in the Oval Office meeting between President Bush and Prime Minister Stanishev - truly one of the high points of my three years here in Bulgaria. President Bush praised Bulgaria for its constructive role in the

Balkans, for its support in Iraq and Afghanistan, and for its efforts against crime and corruption. Prime Minister Stanishev noted that Bulgaria and the United States have reached the level of a real strategic partnership.

The visit of the Prime Minister had concrete benefits. We signed an interim agreement to move closer to visa-free travel to the United States. Our Federal Aviation Administration announced that Bulgarian air travel standards have improved to a level that will allow direct flights between the United States and Bulgaria. And we agreed to strengthen our cooperation against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Prime Minister also met with American business leaders and investors in New York, making a strong case that Bulgaria, with its talented and educated work force, offered excellent opportunities for growth.

The Prime Minister's visit was a clear demonstration of what our two nations have achieved in the last three years.

We have become real strategic partners, working side by side in NATO, and fighting together against extremism and terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq.

We have become partners for greater stability in the Balkans. As President Bush said to Prime Minister Stanishev, "you've been a constructive force for stability, a constructive force for hope" in this region.

We are business partners - American investment has grown from the millions to the billions of dollars. The two largest foreign investments in Bulgaria today are American-led.

And we are partners in the fight against organized crime and corruption, against human trafficking and drug trafficking. Our FBI, Secret Service, and Drug Enforcement Agency work together with their Bulgarian counterparts every day. Our training and technical assistance is giving Bulgarian law enforcement the tools and expertise it needs to defeat organized crime.

I take great pride in the fact that my government played a leading role in helping Bulgarians modernize their judicial and administrative systems. USAID will close here this summer, but it leaves an enduring, sustainable institutional legacy, including the National Institute of Justice, the American University in Bulgaria, and a large cadre of officials in government, industry, and NGOs trained in better public service.

And again this summer, thousands of Bulgarian university students will travel and work in the United States. These are truly some of your best diplomats; they have introduced Bulgaria to countless Americans, who have marveled at their intelligence, industriousness, good humor, and curiosity about the world.

Obviously, great challenges remain, as you work to make Bulgaria more prosperous, diversify energy sources, fight crime and corruption, and strengthen the rule of law.

I know that Bulgaria can succeed, because I know that Bulgarians have overcome much greater obstacles in their long history. And today, you no longer face problems on your own. You are now truly re-integrated with Europe. You have a strong ally and partner in the United States. And we have a stake in your success as you work to make Bulgaria a stronger, more prosperous country. I thank you for considering me a friend, for honestly sharing your ambitions and frustrations with me, and helping me do a better job of supporting your efforts during these pivotal three years in your history.

Sincerely,

John Beyrle

Ambassador of the United States

In the News

Prime Minister Stanishev Celebrates U.S.- Bulgarian Partnership at White House

Security in the Balkans, energy issues, and the waiver of U.S. visas for Bulgarians were the main topics discussed by Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev and President George W. Bush at their meeting in the Oval Office on June 18.

President Bush praised Bulgaria's contribution to the missions in Afghanistan and Iraq, Bulgaria's role in the stability of the Balkans and Black Sea region, as well as the Prime Minister's own efforts in fighting organized crime.

Besides his visit to the Oval Office, Prime Minister Stanishev also met with Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, and spoke at the Woodrow Wilson Center. Prior to arriving in Washington, the Prime Minister met with business leaders in New York to promote investment in Bulgaria.

- [The White House Press Release](#)

- [See video](#) 



President George W. Bush (right) met with Bulgarian Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev at the White House on Wednesday, June 18. (Photo Ilin Stanev/Reuters)

Bulgaria Takes Step Toward U.S. Visa-free Travel

Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ivailo Kalfin and U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff signed an interim declaration under the U.S. Visa Waiver Program on June 17. The declaration outlines requirements Bulgaria must meet to join the program, including better information sharing about international travel and border screening, improvements in information exchange on known and suspected terrorists, and timely and comprehensive reporting of lost and stolen passports. In addition, before qualifying for the program, Bulgaria must develop biometric passports for its citizens and continue its fight against organized crime around the country.

- [Remarks at the Signing Ceremony](#)



FAA Raises Safety Rating for Bulgaria

On June 18, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced that Bulgaria complies with international safety standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), following a reassessment of the country's civil aviation authority in January. Bulgaria is now raised from the Category 2 safety rating given in September 2003 to Category 1. A Category 1 rating means the country's civil aviation authority complies with ICAO standards. With this rating, Bulgarian air carriers can apply to operate their own aircraft in the United States, allowing for direct flights between the U.S. and Bulgaria.



In the News

Awards for Ambassador John Beyrle



On June 12, President Parvanov decorated Ambassador Beyrle with **Stara Planina First Class** medal for his exceptional contribution for the promotion and development of the relationship between the Republic of Bulgaria and the United States of America and in connection with his final departure from the country.

- [Remarks by Ambassador Beyrle](#)

- [See Video](#) 



On June 9, Chief Prosecutor Boris Velchev presented a **special award** to U.S. Ambassador John Beyrle for his support of judicial reform in Bulgaria. Ambassador Beyrle told Chief Prosecutor Velchev that "in the American Embassy, and in the American nation, you will always have a devoted ally for your efforts to make Bulgaria a stronger and more democratic European country."

- [Remarks by Ambassador Beyrle](#)



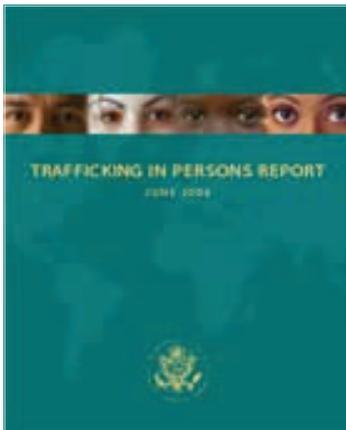
Ambassador Beyrle was awarded the **Saint George First Class** medal on May 20, for his role in strengthening ties between the United States and Bulgaria. He is pictured here with Defense Minister Nikolay Tsonev and CHOD General Zlatan Stoykov.

Ambassador Beyrle in an Interview on the BNT Show Panorama

May 16 - Ambassador Beyrle talked about the recent changes in the Bulgarian government, such as the proposal to close duty-free shops in Bulgaria, military reform and joint military facilities, and the return of the Bulgarian nurses imprisoned in Libya.

See excerpts from the interview [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), [Part 4](#) (in Bulgarian)

Trafficking in Persons Report 2008



On June 4, the Department of State released the eighth annual Trafficking in Persons report. Covering over 170 countries, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice deemed it the most comprehensive report analyzing trafficking trends and the governmental efforts to obliterate this crime. Countries are categorized by their compliance with international anti-trafficking standards in Tiers, with Tier 3 being the least favorable. Bulgaria was listed as a Tier 2 source, transit, and though to a lesser extent, destination, of human trafficking. The United States was considered a destination trafficking country.

- [Trafficking in Persons Report](#)

- [Country narrative for Bulgaria](#)

"Trafficking and exploitation plague all nations, and no country, even ours, is immune."

- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

AES - Maritza East One Power Plant Completes Boiler 1 Construction



At the AES-ME1 Power Plant, Ambassador Beyrle poses with Bulgarian government officials in front of newly-constructed Boiler 1. The plant is expected to bring great improvements in Bulgaria's economy and environment.

Ambassador Beyrle, Minister of Economy and Energy Petar Dimitrov, District Governor Mariya Neykova, and Mayor of Galabovo Nikolay Tonev commemorated the completion of Boiler 1 construction at the AES-ME1 power plant in a ceremony on April 29, 2008. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Beyrle said that "it is not so often when groundbreaking events yield such impressive results in just a couple of years." He said the "wonderful cooperation" between AES Corporation and the Bulgarian government serves as an example for other American business opportunities in Bulgaria.

- [Ambassador John Beyrle's Remarks](#)

"I think that the success we see now at AES-ME1 has been made possible because of the very good partnership between a big American company - AES - and the Bulgarian government.."

- Ambassador Beyrle

Issues

AUBG and American College of Sofia Commencement Ceremonies

On May 18 Ambassador Beyrle joined the celebration as the **American University in Bulgaria (AUBG)** graduated its fourteenth class since it was founded with financial support from the United States Government. During the ceremony, Ambassador Beyrle received a honorary degree. Then in his commencement address Ambassador Beyrle called AUBG a "successful experiment for change in the Balkans," and said that the graduating class was "an example and inspiration for what the people of the Balkans can, and with your help, will accomplish."

In addition, the **American College of Sofia** celebrated the class of 2008's graduation on May 22. When he delivered remarks to the graduates, Ambassador Beyrle congratulated the students and their families on their success and hard work. He also took time to thank the teachers, acknowledging the demands placed on their profession and believing that "there is no higher form of optimism than teaching." Ambassador Beyrle believes the diversity of this class will further prepare them for a career in a globalized society, especially since Bulgaria recently joined the European Union.

- [Ambassador Beyrle's Remarks at AUBG Commencement](#)

- [Ambassador Beyrle's Remarks at ACS Commencement](#)



The Class of 2008 from AUBG, a university founded in 1994 with American financial support, proudly displays their new diplomas.



American College of Sofia's Class of 2008 waits to receive their diplomas.

James Lindsay Visits Bulgaria to Discuss U.S. Missile Defense in Europe

James Lindsay, Director of the Robert S. Strauss Center for International Security and Law at the University of Texas, visited Bulgaria from May 14 to May 16 on a U.S. Speaker and Specialist Program. In Bulgaria, he gave two presentations on U.S. missile defense in Europe and an interview for Trud Daily. In speaking with university students and Bulgarian government officials, he discussed U.S. missile defense deployment plans for Europe and sought to increase awareness of existing and potential ballistic missile threats. Lindsay also enlightened the audience about the technology and operation of short-, medium-, and long-range missiles.



In a presentation on May 15, James Lindsay speaks to the audience about U.S. missile defense proposals in Europe.

Spotlight on Alumni



Anne and Roy Freed

A coincidence led **Roy and Anne Freed** on their first social visit to Bulgaria in 1987; however following this formative visit, the Freeds, at age 72, returned to Bulgaria in 1989 as U.S. Fulbright Scholars. Since their first experience in Bulgaria, the Freeds have been active exemplars of the Fulbright program's mission to bring, "a little more knowledge, a little more reason, and a little more compassion into world affairs." In 2007, the Freeds published a joint memoir, [Fulbrighters in Retirement: Networking with Bugarians Keeps Us Engaged](#), to tell in their words the "inspiring story of the opportunities Fulbrighters have to contribute to international amity" through their exchange experiences.



Anne and Roy Freed in Plovdiv, 1995.

In the Community



Jim Bigus, Lt. Commander Jake Daystar and other U.S. Embassy representatives discuss the joint Bulgarian/American military facilities.

On May 15, the U.S. Embassy Counselor for Political and Economic Affairs **James Bigus** took part in a town hall meeting with the residents of Kotel, organized by the NATO Defense College Anciens' Association (NDCAA). During the meeting, Mr. Bigus, along with LCDR **Jake Daystar** and Embassy Press Attaché **Stephen Lynagh**, answered the public's questions regarding the joint use of the Bulgarian military bases by Bulgarian and American soldiers. The meeting in Kotel was particularly notable due to the recent announcement of contract awards for the construction of a temporary facility at Novo Selo. The U.S. Army plans to spend approximately \$6.5 million in preparation for this summer's training, with much of the work being done by local Bulgarian labor.

On April 23, the State University for Library Studies and Information Technologies hosted a workshop on Information Literacy. Information Resource Officer **Michael Huff** talked to the future librarians on how American libraries are involved in the support of information literacy programs and how the U.S. Government actively supports such programs.

After the lecture, faculty, students and guests participated in an official ceremony for the inauguration of an American Corner at the university library named after the American journalist Januarius MacGahan. On behalf of the U.S. Embassy in Sofia, Public Affairs Officer **David Siefkin** received a plaque commemorating the contribution of MacGahan to Bulgarian history.



After an Information Literacy workshop, a ribbon cutting inaugurates the American Corner into the Januarius MacGahan library.



Michelle Hill (right) at the opening of the exhibition.

Fulbright Professor **Michelle Hill** and her Bulgarian students at the National Academy of Art of Bulgaria opened an exhibit of colorful textile designs, using traditional and contemporary Bulgarian themes combined with high-tech computer-aided design, at the American Corner at the Sofia Public Library on June 17. The opening highlighted the collaboration between American and Bulgarian artists made possible by the Fulbright program.

More than 100 volunteers gathered together in the South Park on Saturday, **May 17**, to take part in the **Community Service Day** organized by the American Chamber of Commerce and the Bulgarian Charities Aid Foundation. The volunteers planted flowers, painted benches, cleaned up cut grass, and picked up trash to help to beautify the South Park.



Volunteers from the U.S. Embassy gather in South Park for a day of planting trees and painting benches.



Myra Brown works to spread understanding about African-American culture and music to Bulgarians.

Information Resource Officer **Myra Brown** visited Bulgaria from May 19 to May 20 to deliver a presentation on the History of African-American Music in the United States. During her first stop, Myra Brown addressed a group of students at the Foreign Language School in Blagoevgrad. Her second presentation was hosted by the recently-opened American Center in Sofia. The audience was mixed, including high school and university students, teachers of English and other scholars, Fulbright Fellows, and other Embassy contacts.