

PORTRAITS OF PARTNERSHIP

Common Vision
Shared Values
Joint Action



U.S. EMBASSY SOFIA

Letter from the Ambassador



January 2009 was a month that many of us will long remember. It was a month of genuine precedents – some incredibly positive and other deeply troubling – with each offering crucial lessons for the future.

On January 20, millions of people around the world took inspiration from the words of President Barack Obama as he spoke following his inauguration as the 44th President of the United States. I have heard directly from many Bulgarians who voiced the feelings of so many – feelings of pride and empowerment and renewed hope for shared success. President Obama issued a call for action and responsibility as we come together to confront challenges to prosperity, stability and the global climate.



The United States will work closely with Bulgaria and other allies as we head toward NATO's 60th anniversary summit in April. We have an ambitious agenda for outreach, new tasks, and improved relations with Russia. With the appointment of Special Envoys on Afghanistan and the Middle East, we will bring new activism to bear on these critical conflicts.

Unfortunately, this January will also be remembered for the crisis over natural gas. Two weeks of a total gas cut off made it painfully obvious that Bulgaria is vulnerable to Russia as its sole supplier of this crucial commodity. In the height of winter cold, this crisis exerted a huge cost on the Bulgarian economy and the well being of ordinary citizens. It is a wake-up call for the European Union to proceed quickly to ensure that gas supplies are provided from a variety of sources. We are also working closely with Bulgarian authorities to expand use of alternative energies and to boost transparency of energy deals, which are essential steps to put this country on a pathway to energy security and independence.



Also on our agenda for 2009 is helping Bulgaria break free of corruption and organized crime. Working with government officials, civic groups and ordinary citizens, we are providing practical assistance as well as honest and constructive advice about the most productive ways forward.

2009 will be a busy and productive year. There is much that we can accomplish together that will make our relationship closer and make both our countries stronger.

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

Statement by the U.S. Ambassador on the Disruption of Natural Gas Supply to Bulgaria

January 7, 2009: The cutoff of natural gas to Bulgaria is completely unacceptable and we join the calls of the Bulgarian government and the European Union for the immediate resumption of gas supply. While the sources of the dispute between Ukraine and Russia are complicated, it is clear that the Bulgarian people should not be victimized as a result of this dispute.

This episode underscores the critical need to diversify sources of natural gas, as well as other energy supplies. Energy is a critical resource for all of society and it is imperative that supply arrangements are made in a direct and transparent manner that ensures security and avoids vulnerability to the manipulations of monopoly suppliers.



In the News



Ambassador McEldowney Addresses Bulgarian Public on Inauguration of President Obama

Ambassador McEldowney talked about the expectations of the American people and the world for President Obama and his administration in a post-inauguration interview aired on the Bulgarian National Television on the morning of January 21. The Ambassador said that President Obama would put the emphasis on dialogue and collaboration. Ambassador McEldowney said that the new administration would seek global solutions to global challenges through genuine dialogue, responsibility, and partnership.

(see the video) 

Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried on the Gas Crisis

Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried gave an exclusive interview for top-rated Bulgarian television bTV on January 7. The interview aired on the national news broadcast. In the interview, Assistant Secretary Fried reiterated the importance of the Nabucco project and the diversification of energy supplies to Europe's energy security.

(see the video) 



Live Broadcast of President Obama's Inauguration at the U.S. Embassy

On January 20, Ambassador McEldowney invited politicians, journalists and public figures to watch a live broadcast of President Obama's Inauguration. Speaking before the ceremony began, the Ambassador said she was positive that President Obama's team will strive to put the partnership between Bulgaria and the U.S. on a better level of cooperation and assured the guests that the Balkans and Southeastern Europe will be a key priority for the new administration.



U.S. Embassy Kicks Off the 2009 Summer Work and Travel Program

Last year, more than 8,000 Bulgarian students traveled to the U.S. for summer jobs, earning money while making friends and having a great international experience. Ten of those students attended a roundtable discussion of the program with Embassy Officers. The students discussed their experiences and their impressions of Americans. One student who participated noted the differences between people from the north and the south of the U.S., saying "I felt the growing warmth of the South, the southern hospitality, with all the smiling people on the streets. I also [was] touched by the organized and fine North with its more European behavior."

To see some of the comments click [here](#) for our YouTube channel.

In the News

ДЕСЕТИ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИ ФОРУМ СТВИЕ НА КОРУПЦИЯТА

я, 28 януари 2009 г.



Ambassador McEldowney Addresses Corruption Problems at CSD Conference

Ambassador McEldowney spoke January 28 at the Center for the Study of Democracy's presentation of its 10th annual report on corruption in Bulgaria. In her remarks, the Ambassador stressed the many positive and difficult steps Bulgaria has taken in the fight against corruption and organized crime. The country's many accomplishments demonstrate that it has the ability to overcome great challenges, such as those currently facing it.

Read the ambassador's [Remarks](#)

U.S.-Bulgarian Degree Program Opens Doors to Students

Bulgarian students will be able to take advantage of a unique degree program that will allow them to earn both a Bachelor of Science in finance from an American university and a Bulgarian degree accepted by European Union countries. On January 16, representatives of the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) and the Bulgarian Higher School of Insurance and Finance (VUZF) signed an agreement launching this degree program. Classes will begin in October 2009 and will allow Bulgarian students to study for all or part of their degree at a Sofia campus. They called the program "the future of education." UMUC enrolls more than 90,000 students in more than 20 countries.



Ambassador Discusses Military Cooperation, U.S. Visas, and the New U.S. Administration with Russe Residents

On January 23, Ambassador McEldowney participated in an open discussion of the joint U.S.-Bulgarian military facilities and other bilateral issues with the citizens of Russe. The Ambassador underlined the importance of the two countries' strategic relationship, noting that it highlights President Barack Obama's foreign policy principles of "strong friendships and strong alliances." Many Russe high school students attended the information forum and also discussed the issue of visas for Bulgarians and the new U.S. administration policy on "green issues" with the Ambassador.

Read the Ambassador's [Remarks](#)

See [photos](#) from the visit

U.S. Embassy Helps Needy Children During Gas Crisis

January 8, 2009 - Embassy staff joined Ambassador McEldowney to deliver coats, clothing, and blankets to a home for developmentally-challenged children. The group traveled 90 minutes outside Sofia to transport the donation for the several dozen children living at the home. The donations were collected through a clothing drive at the Embassy, and we hope will help a group of disadvantaged youths stay warm this winter.



In the Spotlight



New American History Course in Sliven

Josh Mickelson is a Peace Corps volunteer who has been in Bulgaria since April 2007. He is teaching a beginner English course for teachers and employees at his school in Sliven and looking forward to offering an introductory course in American history and politics for his students for the second semester of 2009. Most recently, Josh's fellow Volunteer Stacie Smith organized an event for the World AIDS Day for which local students made informative posters and participated in an essay contest.

Alum writes about President Obama

Stolmen Chakalov was a participant in the 2008 "Edward R. Murrow Program for Journalists" sponsored by the Department of State. He is a journalist with *Legal World Magazine*. Chakalov published two articles, one of them while in the U.S., showing deep knowledge of the pre-election process in the U.S. and comparing the U.S. elections to Bulgarian election practices. In the second article, written just after the election, he presented Barack Obama to the readers of *Legal World*. Here he again drew upon the facts learned through his visitor program both from the U.S. media and personal observation.



Fulbright Alum Reveals the Secrets of the English Language to Bulgarian Students

Carolyn Emigh is a Fulbright Alum who teaches English to students at the First English Language High School in Sofia. She is employed in the United States by Georgetown University in Washington, DC. Ms. Emigh is in Bulgaria under the Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program. Her tenure finishes in July 2009.

Other Information

The internationally acclaimed singer Janice Harrington will be in Bulgaria with her guitarist Dylan Vaughn from February 4 to 8. The dynamic vocalist and her guitarist will conduct workshops with high school and university students before finishing their visit with a free gospel concert on February 7 at the Bulgaria Hall in Sofia. Janice Harrington and Dylan Vaughn are visiting Bulgaria at the invitation and under the sponsorship of the U.S. Embassy in honor of Black History Month, which celebrates the achievements and contributions of African Americans to American History.



Please Note:

February 16: Embassy will be closed for Presidents' Day

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