

U.S. Embassy Outreach



March 13, 2009

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A Message from Ambassador Robert A. Bradtke



Robert A. Bradtke
Ambassador

**MAKE PLANS TO
ATTEND OUR
AMERICAN CITIZEN
OPEN HOUSE
MARCH 17, 2009
FROM 1700-1900
(SEE PAGE 8 FOR
ADDITIONAL INFO)**

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It is a pleasure to open our first newsletter of 2009 as President Obama's Ambassador to Croatia. Many of you, I am sure, watched his inauguration, with the same sense that I had, that we were witnessing a remarkable moment in American history, that the United States was demonstrating its unique ability to reinvent itself.

I would like to briefly mention what is happening in Washington under our new Administration, about the new directions in Foreign Policy the Obama Administration has launched and about what this means in Croatia and our relations with Croatia.

The President's first priority in Washington today is the economy, reestablishing confidence in our financial system, putting people back to work and enabling them to remain in their homes. President Obama recently signed a \$787 billion stimulus package and presented a housing plan to help nine million Americans save their homes. Treasury Secretary Geithner has also put forward a trillion dollar package to strengthen our banking and financial system.

Despite our economic problems, the Administration is pursuing a robust foreign policy agenda, reaching out to our friends and partners, setting new directions and establishing new priorities, particularly for our efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The cornerstone of our policy here will remain support for Croatia's efforts to join the Euro-Atlantic institutions of NATO and the EU. The United States is doing and will do everything it can to ensure that all NATO members complete the process of ratification of the protocols so that Croatia can be a full member when the leaders of the Alliance meet at the 60th Anniversary Summit on April 3.

U.S. relations with Croatia will also be strengthened by the considerable experience in and personal commitment to this region that Vice President Biden and Secretary of State Clinton bring to the new administration.

We at the Embassy are committed to promotion of trade and investment and we continue to work towards visa-free travel to the United States. In all these areas, I would caution that it takes time to see results, but we are committed to making progress in our bilateral relations, as partners and friends.

I also hope that you are able to attend our American Citizen Information Night, which will be held on Tuesday March 17 from 5-7pm at the Embassy. The event will be open to all U.S. citizens and will be an opportunity to see the Embassy and learn about our work. Croatian government officials, international educators, business leaders and Embassy staff will be available to answer your questions and discuss their services. Additionally, the Consular staff will be available and will offer notarial and other services.

This is an exciting time to be an American in Croatia. For one thing, Croatian-American relations have never been stronger or more productive. For another, as Croatia becomes a member of key Euro-Atlantic institutions, we will work together as partners to assure peace and security in the region and in the world.

Embassy Hosts Inauguration Reception At American Corner Zagreb

Embassy Zagreb hosted an inauguration event January 20 at the American Corner located at Bogdan Ogrizović Library in Zagreb. The reception targeted young Croatian leaders from academic, business, and political fields to give them the opportunity to see live inauguration coverage of President-elect Barack Obama, including his swearing in, inaugural address and other program events. Additionally, the library remained open during the event and other Croatian patrons including university students were able to watch the inauguration on televisions provided by the Embassy.

Approximately 75 Croatians to including guests from political parties, NGOs, government ministries, think-tanks, journalists, and previous fellowship awardees such as Fulbright, Ron Brown, and Ben Franklin awardees and students attended the event. The event was also covered by the major television station Hrvatska Radio Televizija (HRT) as well as radio station Nova and the major daily newspapers.

Ambassador Robert Bradtke gave interviews to the press after the inaugural address. This event gave young political, social, economic Croatian leaders the opportunity to witness the historic beginning of the Obama administration and set a positive tone with U.S.-Croatian relations under the new administration.



Croatian leaders and Embassy staff watch Obama Inauguration

Ambassador Bradtke Joins AmCham for Humanitarian Demining Dinner

Zagreb -- On December 5, 2008, Ambassador Bradtke joined with the American Chamber of Commerce and Canadian Embassy in celebrating the Night of One Thousand Dinners gala fundraiser for humanitarian demining. Additionally, Deputy Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor and Sabor Speaker Luka Bebic were present at the dinner.

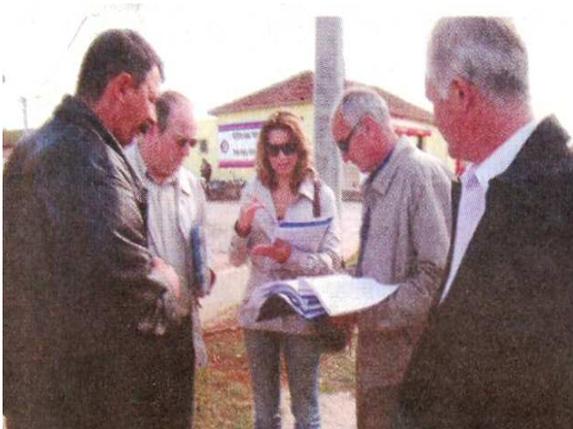
The United States Government has spent more than \$22 million on demining projects in Croatia and matches both foreign government and private donations through the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance.

The dinner is an annual event and has raised more than 3 million Croatian kuna in its seven year history in Croatia.



Ambassador Bradtke with DPM Kosor and Sabor Speaker Bebic

ODC Funds School and Playground Renovation Project



Embassy representatives with local officials discussing the project in the field

Debeljak -- U. S. European Command (EUCOM) Humanitarian Assistance (HA) branch financed the renovation of the Primary School and playground in Debeljak, Croatia with approximately USD 130,000.

This project is supported by the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) and US Embassy both as a humanitarian assistance project and a memorial for Croatian born U.S. Army Master Sergeant Ivica Jerak, who was a highly decorated U.S. Army Special Forces soldier assigned to the Joint Special Operations Command.

Master Sergeant Jerak was killed in 2005 by an explosive device while conducting combat operations in Husaybah, Iraq. Ivica Jerak was born and grew up in the small village of Debeljak, and his family still resides there.

The project included the repair of bad flooring in four school classrooms, renovations to the existing school playground, as well as perimeter fencing and putting up electricity poles and lights to allow for night community league play at the community playground.

The upcoming ribbon-cutting ceremony scheduled for 16 March 09 is also going to be another opportunity to demonstrate the highest US Government respect to any fallen soldier.



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U.S. Embassy Supports Heating Project For Roma Refugees and Displaced Persons

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In 2008 a group of Embassy Entry Level Officers received a grant from the J. Kirby Simon Trust to provide heating to a community of Roma refugees and displaced persons from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Roma community was uprooted when their previous collective center was closed and demolished.

The community of eight families with 33 members eventually received alternative housing which



Grant beneficiary with new heating and stove

lacked heating infrastructure. To survive the winter, the families shared one oven to heat the entire house and approximately one-third of the community included children who sleep in a single room above the oven.

The grant provided \$2,000 to purchase five stoves to distribute heat evenly throughout the housing and reduce the fire hazard posed by one stove running at high temperature. The stoves were delivered in early October 2008, at the start of one of the coldest winters in recent years.

The Roma community and Embassy participants discussed the social integration challenges facing this Roma community. One member commented, “we exist because you are here.” This statement emphasized the isolation felt by many such communities and the importance of outreach to local communities.



Political Officer Rhoton and DCM Walker with Roma children



U.S. Diplomat Talks about Presidents Lincoln and Obama with Students

Assistant Public Affairs Officer Kenneth Wetzel delivered three lectures to over 200 high school students in Zadar and Zagreb on February 12, 13 and 17. Wetzel marked the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln by presenting two lectures at the American Corner Zadar and at the American Corner Zagreb. Students were interested in the connection between Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Barack Obama.



Additionally, they were curious about President Lincoln's decision to free the slaves and what President Obama plans to achieve during his administration.

DCM Walker Speaks on Women in Diplomacy

Zagreb -- Deputy Chief of Mission Vivian Walker met February 8 with members of the Center for Women's Studies in Zagreb to discuss the history and role of women in diplomacy. The lecture also included a discussion using examples from not only U.S. history but also the experiences of women diplomats from countries including Croatia.

Members of the audience included representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NGOs, students and journalists.



Vice-Consul Discusses U.S. Education Opportunities in Pula



Pula -- Vice-Consul Todd Bullock visited with 70 students at the Byron Language School in Pula February 11 where he talked about life and customs of different regions and ethnicities in the United States. Bullock also used the opportunity to discuss educational opportunities in the United States and the visa process for students. The event was covered by two local television stations and two newspapers.

Consular Team Explains Visa Procedures for U.S. bound Croatian Students

The Consular Section in partnership with the Embassy's Public Affairs section recently participated in an education fair at the University of Rijeka January 17. Embassy personnel and representatives from Camp Counselors USA (CCUSA) and the Croatian based International Institute for the Development of Education organized an information fair for university students.

Consular employees gave information on the visa process for students while representatives from CCUSA discussed summer work and travel programs in the United States. Additionally, the International Institute for the Development of Education provided information to students on scholarship opportunities. The Consular section held another information fair for students March 10 at the American Corner in Zadar and. Additionally, there will be a presentation March 25 at the American Corner in Osijek.



Embassy Zagreb Consular staff with their educational partners

Internal Revenue Service (IRS)



In order to help U.S. citizens during this year's tax season, the Internal Revenue Service has published a brochure for distribution, available at the Embassy to U.S. Citizens living abroad. The brochure is designed as a resource to help taxpayers in locating tax information useful in the preparation of their returns and resolving account related problems.

For those U.S. citizens with access to Internet, all forms and instructions are available on line at: www.irs.gov. The IRS office in Paris, France, can also assist. This office can answer your federal income tax questions, help with ac-

count and refund problems, and assist with the preparation of current and prior year tax returns.

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United States Embassy/IRS

2 Avenue Gabriel

75382 Paris Cedex 08, France

US Consulate

2, rue St. Florentin, 75001, Paris

Walk-In assistance 9:00 a.m.- noon
Phone service: M-F 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Tel: [33] (1) 4312-2555

FAX: [33] (1) 4312-4752

Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

Taxpayers residing outside the U.S. may contact the IRS in the U.S. by mail at:

Internal Revenue Service
P.O. Box 920
Bensalem, PA 19020

You may also telephone or fax the Philadelphia Service Center office for immediate assistance from a taxpayer specialist at:

Tel: 215-516-2000 (not toll-free)
Fax: 215-516-2555

Phone service available from 6:00 am to 11:00 pm (EST) M-F

The regulations along with supplemental Revenue Procedure, available at http://www.irs.gov/irb/2008-29_IRB/ar13.html, contain updated rules and requirements relating to disclosure and use of tax return information.

You may also find Frequently Asked Questions at <http://www.irs.gov/efile/article/0,,id=188398,00.html> on irs.gov.

Please be sure to include all your contact information when requesting some sort of a response. All papers sent to the IRS office in Europe will be routed to the proper office in the United States via regular mail.

Filing Deadlines: U.S. Income Tax Returns are due on April 15. For people residing overseas are granted an automatic two months extension is approved.

Any tax though, must be paid by April 15 to avoid paying interest and possible penalties

Note: Payments are not considered received until the date of actual receipt by IRS, not the postmark date.

Vote!

Though there are no regularly scheduled Federal elections being held in 2009, there are a number of state elections and special Federal elections that will be held during the year. Here are the current list of elections scheduled as of March 1, 2009:

- **March 31st:** Special General Election in the 20th Congressional District of New York
- **April 7th:** Special General Election in the 5th Congressional District of Illinois
- **May 19th:** Special General Election in the 32nd Congressional District of California
- **June 2nd:** New Jersey State Primary Election

- **June 9th:** Virginia State Primary Election
- **November 3rd:** State General Elections in New Jersey and Virginia

Additionally, your state or locality may also be holding local elections during the year.

Information on state and local elections being held this year is available from your state election website. Links to these sites can be found at FVAP's website at <http://www.fvap.gov>.

AMERICAN CITIZENS INFORMATION NIGHT 2009

Tuesday, March 17, 2009
17:00 – 19:00 (Doors open at 16:30)
American Embassy, Zagreb

The U.S. Embassy in Zagreb cordially invites you and your family to attend the second annual American Citizens Information Night. We will have experts on a variety of topics important to you, an American Citizen residing in Croatia. Topics will include information on Croatian visa and residency requirements, U.S. immigration, federal benefits, and many others.

U.S. Ambassador to Croatia Robert A. Bradtke will make welcoming remarks. Thereafter, Embassy employees and guest experts will be available to answer your questions and offer consular services, such as notarial services and passport renewals.



Guest experts invited:

Croatian Ministry of Interior
Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European
Integration
American Chamber of Commerce
American International School of Zagreb
Croatian-American Society
Croatian Office of Vital Statistics (Matični ured)

This event is open to all U.S. citizens residing in Croatia as well as accompanying foreign-born spouses and/or immediate family members. All visitors will need to bring a U.S. passport or foreign government-issued photo ID.

The American Embassy is located near the airport at ul. Thomasa Jeffersona 2, Zagreb. Directions to the Embassy are available at <http://zagreb.usembassy.gov>

Doors will open at 4:30 p.m. Please allow extra time for security screening on arrival. Cell phones and any electronic equipment will not be allowed inside the Embassy. Parking will be available in the Embassy visitors' parking lot and on the street in front of the Embassy.

To expedite your check-in at the Embassy, please confirm your attendance by email at ZagrebACS@state.gov or by phone at (01) 661-2276 or 661-2233.

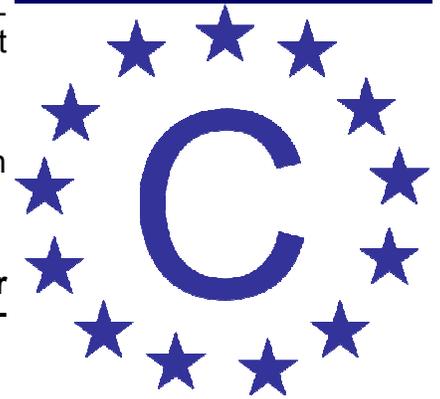
We hope to see you there!
American snacks and drinks will be provided.

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U.S. citizens visiting and residing in Croatia are encouraged to register through the U.S. Department of State's automated online registration system: <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. Registration allows the Embassy to contact you in an emergency or let you know if someone in the U.S. is trying to reach you.

Registration information



We also recommend that you leave a copy of your itinerary with someone in the United States.

Note: In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare or whereabouts will not be released without your written authorization.

For general information on traveling overseas, please see the Department of State's **Tips for Traveling Abroad**. You can also find other information useful for travelers as well as country specific information at <http://www.travel.state.gov>.

Warden System: The Warden System provides a way for the Embassy to contact U.S. citizens in the event of an emergency, disaster or threat as well as to distribute other information of interest to the private U.S. community. Wardens are U.S. citizens who volunteer their assistance to pass on information from the Embassy. In consideration of privacy concerns, wardens sign an agreement to safeguard any information about U.S. citizens in their warden district.

If you would like to serve as a warden in Croatia or have any other questions about our Warden System, please contact the Consular Section at the U.S. Embassy in Zagreb, Tel. 01-661-2276 or 661-2233.

Emails and Text Messages: We are modernizing our Warden System to use email addresses and cell phone numbers (for text messages) to reach U.S. citizens in case of an emergency. In an emergency, a consular officer will send a short text message to let you know what is going on and where you can find more information. Complete warden messages will still be posted on our website at <http://Zagreb.usembassy.gov>. To be a part of our network, please send us your cell phone number and email address if you have not done so already.

Contact us

If you have a question for the U.S. Embassy staff or an idea for an article in a future edition, write to us at:

ConsularZagreb@state.gov



US Embassy

**Ulica Thomasa Jeffersona 2
10010 Zagreb**

Phone: 385-1-661-2200

We're on the Web!

<http://zagreb.usembassy.gov>