

**Press Statement Ambassador Lawrence E. Butler
Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

February 27, 2004

We just had a meeting with the Foreign Minister and the entire diplomatic core and I wanted to say a few words about my friend Boris Trajkovski and also about the situation in Macedonia. Let me start with the easier one: We have full confidence that the Macedonian Government is responding according to the Constitution. I would congratulate Macedonia for its display of mature democracy- despite the loss of the Head of the State the country functions. Specific organizations continue working according to the law despite the tragedy and the sorrow that we all feel. Boris Trajkovski was a man of rare political vision and sense of humanity. He took political risks for the people of Macedonia, that I have seen very few politicians anywhere take. Things he did, he did because he felt they were right and it was good for the people of Macedonia, all of Macedonia's communities. Along the way, he became the biggest friend of the United States that we have ever had, and he did it without compromising his efforts to advance Macedonia's issues. We didn't always agree but we were always friends and we always appreciated that. I want to use this opportunity to extend my condolences to Vilma and his children, his brothers, his father, his entire family as well as every person in Macedonia for the terrible loss that you have suffered. We share your loss and we stand with you as we come to terms with what this means. We will continue the work of Boris Trajkovski's legacy.

Question: Mr. Ambassador, do you expect a peaceful elections process?

Ambassador Butler: If there is one thing I know that Boris Trajkovski would want would be that what comes now will be dignified and with respect to democracy and the strength of this country that he worked so hard over 4 and a half years to achieve. yes, we expect peaceful and democratic elections.