

Ambassador Pardew's Remarks  
Coalition 2000 Awards to Journalists for Anti-Corruption Reporting  
Sofia, March 31, 2005

- Thank you and welcome to the new American Embassy in Bulgaria. My congratulations to Dr. Shentov and *Coalition 2000* for organizing this third annual ceremony to recognize outstanding achievements by Bulgarian journalists in fighting corruption.
- As I said when I hosted this event last year, corruption and organized crime siphon off the resources of Bulgaria and rob the honest people of the country in order to satisfy the appetites comforts of an unethical few. That is unfortunately as true today as it was last year.
- The EU is now calling for effective legal reform and I continue to be optimistic about the Rule of Law in Bulgaria over the long term because people like you will keep pressure on public officials to act.
- **Truth is the sunlight which enables democracy to flourish. An independent media, which seeks the truth free from intimidation is essential to free speech and democracy. This is why I have spoken out against the abuse of power in the use of the legal system in Bulgaria to intimidate the press from exposing corruption.**
- The media play a critical role in countering official corruption and organized crime by exposing criminal practices and behavior to the harsh judgment of the public. It takes dedication and courage to print the facts about corrupt officials and expose the truth about the poisonous influence of organized crime. The journalists we honor here today have taken personal and professional risks to tell their stories, and I salute all of you. I also commend Coalition 2000 for organizing this competition and for encouraging excellence among the media community.
- I congratulate this year's winners and all those in the Bulgarian media who are working hard to report on corruption and organized crime.