

AMBASSADOR

Marie Yovanovitch ■ Embassy Yerevan, Armenia



As U.S. ambassador to Armenia, Marie Yovanovitch is the chief of the diplomatic mission and the personal representative of the U.S. president there. The ambassador coordinates U.S. policy, including the operations of all the U.S. government agencies in Armenia, and represents the United States to the Armenian government, the business sector, and civil society. She is the chief executive officer of the mission and the inter-agency manager. She explains what is happening in Armenia to Washington policymakers. The ambassador is also the chief spokesperson for the United States in the country and the most visible U.S. government rep-

representative. “By telling America’s story on a daily basis, I explain American values, beliefs, and culture in order to promote mutual understanding between the two countries,” Ambassador Yovanovitch says.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 brought an end to the Cold War and created the opportunity for bilateral relations with the newly independent Republic of Armenia, a landlocked country in the Caucasus. The United States opened an embassy in Yerevan in February 1992 and has sought to help Armenia transition from communism and a command economy to democracy and open markets. Over the past 18 years, the United States has provided nearly \$2 billion in assistance to Armenia, the highest per capita amount for a post-Soviet state.

Because more than a million Americans are of Armenian descent, Armenia tends to draw more interest in the United States than most other countries its size. Yovanovitch meets regularly with representatives of the Armenian diaspora on issues important to the Armenian-American community.

Located on the shore of Lake Yerevan, the U.S.

mission occupies a 23-acre plot, one of the largest embassy compounds in the world. Ambassador Yovanovitch oversees a staff of almost 400 American and Armenian employees in an embassy that houses many U.S. government agencies, including the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Defense Department, the Peace Corps, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation. The U.S. mission supports efforts to build a stable, free-market economy in Armenia,

The ambassador coordinates U.S. policy and represents the United States to the Armenian government, the business sector, and civil society.

and promotes reforms that strengthen civil society, the rule of law, and democracy.

Armenia fought a bitter war with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region from 1988 to 1994, when a cease-fire was declared. As a result, Armenia's borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan have been closed since 1993. Although the borders with Georgia and Iran remain open, the 2008 conflict between Georgia and Russia temporarily restricted the flow of goods through Georgia to Armenia. This isolation creates serious challenges for Armenia.



Yovanovitch and her team work to advance regional stability, the opening of borders, and the normalization of relations among Armenia and its neighbors. They actively support the historic steps Yerevan has taken to improve relations with Ankara. Protocols signed by those two countries in October 2009 aim to restore diplomatic relations and reopen the Turkey-Armenia land border.

Yovanovitch engages with government officials and civil society representatives to promote human rights and democratic development. In 2009, she received the Secretary of State's Diplomacy for Human Rights Award, which cited her advocacy of due process and transparent investigations for those arrested following the contentious February 2008 presidential elections, as well as her efforts to improve the electoral process in Armenia while maintaining a positive relationship with the Armenian government.

One area of particular interest to Yovanovitch is the advancement of women. She launched the country's first mentoring program for women, and she has conducted a sustained dialogue with the Armenian government on trafficking in persons. She explains that, while high-profile Washington priorities such as Turkey-Armenia normalization keep her busy, "one of the privileges of being ambassador is being able to focus on issues of special interest, such as creating greater opportunities for young women."

Daily activities for the ambassador include speaking with the media on current issues, meeting with Armenian officials and civil society leaders, and visiting U.S. government-funded projects. "There is no typical day. That's why I love the Foreign Service—and this job," Yovanovitch says. Her days often begin early and end late following a public event or a reception. She says Foreign Service work captures the spirit of John F. Kennedy's call to "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country."

"I immigrated to the United States when I was three years old," says Marie, "and have had all the benefits of American culture and education. In almost no other country would an immigrant be able to represent that country as an ambassador." Yovanovitch is a career Senior Foreign Service officer. Depending on the administration, between



Amb. Yovanovitch volunteering at a community center supported by USAID.

60 and 70 percent of ambassadors are appointed from the career Foreign Service, and 30 to 40 percent are political appointees from outside the Service.

Marie Yovanovitch, 51, was born in Montreal and grew up in Connecticut. She has a B.A. in history and Russian studies from Princeton University and an M.S. from the National War College, a degree she earned while in the Foreign

Service. She joined the Service in 1986 after four years in the private sector. Prior to her appointment to Yerevan, she served as ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic. Yovanovitch has also been a senior adviser to the under secretary of State for political affairs in Washington, D.C., and deputy chief of mission in Kyiv, Ukraine. Previous assignments also include Ottawa, Canada; Moscow, Russia; London, England; and Mogadishu, Somalia.

DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION

Dan Piccuta ■ Embassy Beijing, China

The deputy chief of mission must be both Hindu and Buddhist at once, says Embassy Beijing DCM Dan Piccuta. Like the Hindu goddess Kali, the DCM must have many arms, with hands in dozens of pots across the full spectrum of U.S. government business inside the embassy, inside the Beltway, and inside the bilateral relationship. At the same time, he must project an unperturbed Buddha-like attitude that steadies the entire mission. The deputy must be the alter ego of the ambassador, ready to step into his or her shoes for an event, a day, or much longer. The DCM must be the ambassador's radar over the horizon, minimizing the number of surprises by working with the country team to assure the mission is ahead of whatever waves of activity are coming. The DCM must be the chief cheerleader for the embassy's employees, addressing quality-of-life and work-life balance issues. Finally, the DCM must be an honest broker on issues of both policy and management.

Embassy Beijing is one of the largest and busiest embassies in the world, with more than 950 employees, including the local Chinese staff. Adding the constituent posts—Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenyang, Chengdu, and Wuhan—the