

# Excerpts of video of Meeting between U.S. Congressional delegation and Lukashenka, June 30, 2009

---

## When Diplomacy Becomes Non Grata



*"I think Senator Gramm would be in serious consideration for ambassador to Belarus, although I'm not sure the citizens of Minsk would welcome that."*

*John McCain*

Minsk must be the worst place John McCain could think of off the top of his head when he was making fun of Senator Phil Gramm, a co-chairman of his campaign. The experiences of US diplomats serving in Belarus prove him right.

In March 2008, Belarus pulled its ambassador, Mikhail Khvostov, from Washington, DC giving US ambassador Karen Stewart 24 hours to leave before she would be declared persona non grata. Shortly afterward Belarusian authorities requested

that the United States cut the staff of its 35-employee embassy in Minsk by half.

The American diplomats were accused of setting up a spying ring in the country. A state television report claimed the embassy had recruited 10 Belarusians to collect information for the FBI. The embassy was alleged to provide the informers with an apartment near the embassy as well as cameras and binoculars.

A month later ten more US diplomats were ordered to leave Belarus within 72 hours. In an immediate response, the US State Department ordered Belarus to close its embassy in Washington and its consulate in New York withdrawing its six diplomats within fifteen days. The State Department announced shutting down the US Embassy in Minsk. Washington retreated at the last minute, and the embassies remained open, although barely functional.

Of course, it is not the protection of state secrets that explains the undiplomatic actions of the Belarusian government. On March 6, 2008, Washington issued a statement concerning the sanctions imposed in 2007 against Belarus' largest petrochemical company, Belnaftakhim over Minsk's deteriorating human rights record. The assets of the company's US subsidiary were frozen. The United States – along with the European Union – has also restricted the travel of Lukashenka and his ministers to urge the regime to free political prisoners, including Alyaksandr Kazulin, a runner-up in the 2006 presidential election, who was sentenced to 5 1/2 years in prison for leading a protest rally after the vote.

Although Lukashenka's defied sanctions saying that "if the Americans introduce new sanctions and think we will collapse, that's rubbish," the restrictions turned to be a major annoyance to Minsk because the Belneftekhim accounted for nearly a third of the country's foreign currency earnings.

The economic impact was strong as in 2008 the USA ranked 11th among Belarus' non-CIS trade partners in terms of the foreign trade volume, 17th in terms of Belarus' export, and 6th in terms of Belarus' import. Moreover, the United States is second to Russia only in the number of joint ventures and foreign companies set up in Belarus. The Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the sanctions "radically undermine[d] US trustworthiness as a partner." The website of the Belarusian embassy in Washington, DC rhetorically asked its visitors: "Can anyone trust the US after all, all the more so, in such a strategic cause as non-proliferation of nuclear weapons?"

Who really suffered while the governments argued were the people, however. The U.S. Embassy stopped issuing visas for Belarusian citizens and closed several "American corners" in local libraries that provide information about the United States.

Significantly, the row occurred when Lukashenka seemed to be edging closer to the West. In February 2008, Belarus freed six political prisoners and finally conceded to the European Commission's opening a branch in Minsk. In March 2008, with expelling America diplomats, the regime regained its anti-Western posture, however. Expelling the fiercest critics of his authoritarianism, Belarusian President proceeded to dispel street rallies and detain demonstrators. Interestingly, Belarus-US relations worsened at exactly the same time that Moscow's stance toward Washington hardened.

This year, the Belarusian leadership is again flirting with the West, and the relationship between the two countries is slowly improving. Visiting Minsk at the end of June, the US Congressional Delegation reminded Lukashenka that restoring the staffing of US embassy in Minsk is the first step toward improving relationship between the two countries. In the view of the Belarusian president, however, the first step is to lift sanctions, and only then may the restoration of

diplomatic relations with the United States become possible.

Michael Scanlan, the newly-appointed Chargé d’Affaires of the United States has a very difficult task to accomplish in Minsk.

Read more on [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#) and [BBC](#).

---

## **Flooded Streets of Minsk – 24 July, 2009**

---

## **The Art of Balancing – Cartoon by Volha Charnysh**



# Belarusians at the American University's International Week



Please join members of the Washingtonian chapter of BAZA at the AU's International Bazaar, April 8, from 1-3 pm.

AU's cultural clubs and International students will display their cultures out on the quad (main campus of American University). Learn more about other cultures, their music, foods, artifacts and even buy a souvenir!

Belarusian table will display books, crafts, traditional costumes, BAZA's leaflets, souvenirs, and snacks. Most Belarusian artifacts have been provided by Alesia Kipel, co-chair of the Washingtonian chapter of BAZA.

For more information please contact Slava Bortnik. Phone: 202.277.5278, e-mail: amnesty\_by@gmx.net.

The event will take place on the main AU's campus: 4400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20016.

---

## World Bank to provide Belarus with \$125mn loan



Washington – According to Belarusian news agency Belta, the World Bank and Belarus have agreed on a \$125 million draft loan for a new energy-effectiveness project.

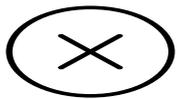
The draft loan agreement is subject to approval by the Board of Directors of the World Bank before it will be officially signed. Belarus has not gained much aid from the World Bank in recent years and, if approved, this will be one of the largest projects sponsored by this intergovernmental organization in Belarus.

The \$125 million World Bank loan will be used to assimilate energy-effective technologies at municipal boiler plants and at major power installations. The project envisages modernizing energy generating equipment in Barysau, Mahiliou, Ruba, Ashmiany, and Rechytsa.

The initiative was preceded by successful accomplishment of previous World Bank projects in Belarus. In particular, the modernisation of social infrastructure (the first loan totalled \$22.6 million, the extra loan – \$15 million) and rehabilitation of Chernobyl-affected areas (\$50 million).

---

# Eurasia Daily Monitor: Lukashenka Lashes Out at Opposition



WASHINGTON – David Marples in his recent piece in Eurasia Daily Monitor analyzed how Belarusian authorities view the opposition and concluded that

*the government is unprepared for and unwilling to participate in any dialogue with the opposition. To brand the UDF's leaders as "enemies of the people" not only tries to exclude them from the discussions, it indicates that in the president's mind they are criminals. The phrase itself has echoes of Stalinism and indicates a deeply inherent fear within the Belarusian leadership that it might lose control over the Eastern Partnership process.*

Read the full text in [Eurasia Daily Monitor](#).

---

## Dr. Andrei Fedarau at Georgetown on March 24th, 2009

# U.S.-Belarus Relations: Current Issues & Future Directions

Dr. Andrei Fedarau Fulbright Scholar  
**Tuesday, March 24th at 12pm, Room ICC 462**

This talk will illuminate the current state of Belarus-US relations and consider possible scenarios for the future. The Republic of Belarus and the United States do not enjoy a positive diplomatic relationship. This is surprising, given the potential that existed in the early 1990s. The main reasons for the strained relations are the lack of democratic and market transformations in Belarus. Yet though many post-Soviet states can be described in this way, their relationship with US is not affected in this way.

Dr. Fedarau was awarded the PhD in Physics. He worked at the Institute of Physics of Belarus' Academy of Sciences, then in the Supreme Council (parliament) of Belarus, as a head of International Relations Department. Since 1997, he has worked as an independent journalist and analyst of international relations and security.

[Click Here to RSVP](#)

Center for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies  
Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service  
Georgetown University  
Box 571031, ICC 111  
Washington, DC 20057-1031  
Ph. 202.687.6080  
Fax. 202.687.5829  
[ceres.georgetown.edu](http://ceres.georgetown.edu)

---

# Schedule of Events in Washington on Belarus Freedom Day



March 25 will be the 91st anniversary of the Declaration of the Belarusian Democratic Republic. On this day, Belarusian-American Association will organize and take part in the following events in Washington, D.C.:

## **12:15 PM – Wreath-Laying Commemoration at the Victims of Communism Monument**

The VOCCM is at the intersection of Massachusetts and New Jersey Avenues, NW.

March 25 will be the 91st anniversary of the Declaration of the Belarusian Democratic Republic. On this day, Belarusian-American Association will organize and take part in the following events in Washington, D.C.:

## **12:15 PM – Wreath-Laying Commemoration at the Victims of Communism Monument**

The VOCCM is at the intersection of Massachusetts and New Jersey Avenues, NW. [Map](#)

## **1:30 PM – Congressional Office visits handing out information about Belarus**

Meeting place at the Cannon House Office Building corner at the intersection of Independence Avenue and 1st Street SE. [Map](#)

## **5:00 PM – Central and Eastern European Coalition (CEEC) Policy Reception**

BAZA is a member of the CEEC. In honor of NATO and its enlargement and supporting U.S. engagement in central and eastern Europe, with Senator Voinovich and other speakers from Congress and current and former Administration officials (materials about BAZA will be distributed and displayed).

Caucus Room in the Russell Senate Office Building (Room 325) at the intersection of Constitution Avenue and 1st Street NE.

[Map](#)

Please RSVP to [baza.dc@gmail.com](mailto:baza.dc@gmail.com) by March 20 if you are interested to participate in all or any of these activities.

---

# **Solidarity Day in Belarus**

---

## **Nice catch!**



The volunteer fish wardens of Belarus Dubrovskoe Lake inspect an ice fisherman's catch