



## Entrevista com Embaixador de EUA



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### How would you analyze the bilateral relations between Portugal and the U.S. over the last ten years?

The United States and Portugal have been close, historic partners on all matters spanning bilateral ties, including geopolitical, strategic, and commercial issues. Those ties have remained strong, and indeed strengthened, during the last ten years as Portugal has continued to grow as an active Member of the European Union. Recent years have seen an impressive demonstration of the values both countries share in ensuring prosperity, peace, and economic growth and opportunities for U.S. and Portuguese citizens alike.

### Do you think that the commercial relations between the two countries might be intensified? If so, in what areas?

There is plenty of room to strengthen commercial relations with Portugal in the years to come. As it assumes the EU Presidency in 2007, Portugal will serve as an important voice for the many small to medium size countries that are the bulk of the EU's 25 members. Portugal has expertise and an excellent reputation for manufacturing and has the infrastructure and labor to easily

manufacture for U.S. Brands. Portugal also has two free trade zones, one in Madeira and one in the Azores, where U.S. firms can benefit from tax incentives. It is a great time to make Portugal more visible to American companies. Unfortunately, some Americans still see Portugal as part of Spain, and not as an individual and competitive country. We would like to see more U.S. companies establish a presence here.

In the end, strengthened U.S. Portuguese commercial relations will rest upon a continuation of the Portuguese government's courageous efforts to increase opportunities for U.S. companies to contribute to Portugal's economic growth and to project a stronger, more confident image of Portugal and what it has to offer onto the world stage.

### How many American companies are currently headquartered in Portugal?

We have over 150 American companies operating in some capacity in Portugal, and we encourage more firms to take advantage of Portugal's excellent labor force, its geographic proximity to the U.S., and its membership in the EU. As with all EU countries, Portugal's border

is open to the free flow of trade with other EU member countries. We are telling American companies and investors about these benefits and other important efforts underway in Portugal that are making it an increasingly attractive destination for investments and exports.

### What can Portugal do to capture more American investment? Which is its "value-added" compared to other markets (namely emerging markets like China and India)?

The United States is trying to get the word out to American investors to encourage them to take note not that, while the economic climate is important, the political and security environment is also increasingly important. Portugal's role as an important ally in the international war on terrorism thus enhances the market strengthening measures taken on the economic front in recent years. Portugal has a strong role in the international community, particularly in Brazil and Portuguese-speaking Africa. U.S. companies can readily find avenues into these markets via Portugal. However, there is room for improvement. Portugal needs to work on

making itself a more attractive destination for investors (American and non-American alike); and it is undertaking serious efforts to achieve this goal. In addition to continuing such efforts, Portugal must not be shy about selling itself to the world community and explaining to would-be investors why it is an attractive destination.

**How can the Embassy support American companies which are willing to come to Portugal and how does it support those that are already here?**

Our team at the Embassy is eager to help companies as much as possible. Our Commercial Section assists U.S. companies enter the Portuguese market by locating suitable Portuguese business partners, identifying trade opportunities and advising on the market potential for U.S. products and services. This is especially important as firms face competition from savvy European competitors. In instances where companies need assistance on deeper political, economic, and market access issues, the Embassy's Economic staff is also available to assist, in tandem with the Commercial Section's efforts. To take advantage of some of our great programs to help U.S. companies enter Portugal, visit the Embassy's commercial section website at [www.buyusa.gov/portugal](http://www.buyusa.gov/portugal).

**How would you characterize the American community residing in Portugal?**

The American community in Portugal is a diverse population, representing persons from a wide range of backgrounds and of numerous occupations and interests. While we don't know precisely how many American citizens reside in Portugal, as many citizens fail to register with the Embassy when they arrive in Portugal or forget to notify us when they return to the U.S., the total number is probably in the area of 15,000. Many have Portuguese ancestry, or are dual nationals of Portugal and the United States. For example, many were born in Portugal, immigrated to the U.S., where they lived and worked for many years, became naturalized U.S. citizens, and then returned to Portugal to retire. Others were born in Portugal, but acquired U.S. citizenship at birth because one or both of their parents were U.S. Citizens. There are also several thousand U.S. citizens resident in Portugal who are not of Portuguese background, but who have chosen to be here for work or education-related reasons, or simply to learn more about this lovely country and people.

**How would you analyze the promotion of Portugal as a tourism destination in the U.S.?**

Portugal is only a 6-hour flight away from the USA (Azores only 3 hours). The weather and the beaches are excellent. People are friendly, most especially towards Americans. There is no terrorism. Then, there is the gastronomy, the culture, the beautiful countryside, etc. I believe that the Government of Portugal can increase the visibility of Portugal as a tourism destination and understand that such efforts are underway.

*[note... the Commercial Section promotes the U.S. as a tourism destination. Promoting Portugal is the task of Instituto de Turismo de Portugal (ITP).*

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**Which are your short and mid term priorities?**

Our short and medium term goals are to increase the level of contact between Portugal and the United States to take full advantage of the potential synergies. This includes business, academic, and cultural interactions, all of which pay benefits. The recent agreement with MIT for an MBA program and the new Entrepreneurship Forum will pay dividends in increased competitiveness and a brighter economic future. More importantly, the more extensive contact between our students, professors, and business leaders will deepen the mutual understanding between our societies. On specific policy endeavors, we are extremely pleased that in 2007 Portugal will assume the leadership of both the European Union and the Community of Democracies. Each of these critically important institutions will be well served by Portugal's leadership and we look forward to extensive policy coordination to resolve contentious issues in Darfur, Afghanistan, Lebanon and elsewhere.

**Goals and results of the Florida trip?**

The September 10-15 visit to Florida by 61 distinguished Portuguese government, legislative, diplomatic, education, technology, and business leaders provided an extensive overview of the factors driving Florida's current economic expansion and putting the state in the best possible position for future economic opportunities. Florida is one of the fastest growing states in the U.S., gaining about 1,000 new residents per day, with about 18 million people in an area of 54,136 square miles. Participants in the Florida visit

noted several areas in which Portugal could benefit by adapting the principles and techniques of Florida's successful innovation to the context of Portugal.

Focus areas of the Florida visit included entrepreneurship, education, innovation, public-private partnerships, environment-friendly development, attracting and retaining science and research facilities, tourism, a favorable legal and regulatory climate, and transportation infrastructure development. U.S. Senator Mel Martinez opened the week's activities and Florida Governor Jeb Bush concluded the visit, engaging with delegation members in lively discussions about the state's initiatives. Speaking with the delegation during the week's final session, Governor Bush challenged the group by noting that "Success is never final, reform is never complete." It is in that light that we plan to continue to meet and discuss innovations and initiatives that can help build the economy and improve the quality of life in Portugal for many years to come.

**What is the connection between the Embassy and associations, namely with the American Chamber (CCAP)?**

Associations in foreign countries, particularly Chambers of Commerce, can play an important role in providing U.S. embassies abroad with a real time, continuous source of feedback on the successes and challenges that businesses - U.S., Portuguese, EU and others alike - are experiencing in a particular market. In practice, the Chambers at times play a greater role in promoting the interests of local, domestic companies rather than U.S. and other foreign companies operating in these markets. Nonetheless, the Chambers provide an important pipeline of information to American Embassies on the experiences of its members in that country. They also can provide important venues for U.S. embassies to communicate their concerns, on behalf of U.S. businesses, and also to raise the awareness of U.S. policy priorities - both economic and political - in these countries.