

R O M Â N I A



Prim – Ministru

06 December 2004

Dear Mr. President

I am writing to express my personal concern about a tragic incident that occurred in Bucharest this past Saturday morning. A U.S. Marine assigned to the U.S. Embassy compound, Christopher VanGoethem, was driving a sport utility vehicle that rammed a taxi, killing a passenger named Teo Peter. It happens that Mr. Peter, a famous musician, was a friend of mine and an admired figure to many Romanians; but my concern transcends the identity of the particular victim. Rather, I am most concerned by the circumstances surrounding the accident and the response of your Government.

The evidence suggests this was not simply an unfortunate traffic accident. There are reports that Mr. VanGoethem was under the influence of alcohol, and that he had been involved in a previous traffic accident in Bucharest, after which he similarly refused to have his blood alcohol checked.

Immediately after the incident, your Embassy removed Mr. Christopher from Romania. This action greatly intrigued me, and it has outraged public opinion here in Romania.

While we have full respect for the American people, we must insist that Mr. Christopher face a full investigation and possible charges here in Romania.

**The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington D.C.**

Mr. President, just as I have the highest respect and admiration for you personally, the Romanian people have the highest respect and affection for the United States and the American people. This is why we are so proud to be your allies in NATO, and to have our troops fighting alongside yours in Iraq. Our affection for the American people stems not least from our admiration for your commitment to the principles of justice. Now, after this tragic incident, justice requires a full investigation and legal proceeding here in Romania.

We are determined to demand a waiver of diplomatic immunity in order to make possible a fair trial according to the Romanian law.

I fully understand that US authorities acted under Vienna Convention provisions. The fact is that the same international convention gives us the right to ask for an immunity waiver and for a trial in Romania. I can assure you that the Romanian judiciary guarantees a fair trial and adequate legal treatment.

I ask you in friendship to lend your personal efforts to help resolve this troubling situation.

Very sincerely yours,

Adrian NĂSTASE