

NEW AFCEA CHAPTER IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

On May 12, 2000, in Varna on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast new Chapter of the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) was founded. This second Bulgarian Chapter of AFCEA will pursue the objectives and abide to the principles of AFCEA International paying special attention to the Navy and marine technologies and, thus, contributing to the success of the Bulgarian military reform, as well as to strengthening the maritime power and national security.

Chapter "Varna" will try to spread its activities to the whole Bulgarian Black Sea coastal area and, in mutually supporting and complementing cooperation with Bulgarian Chapter "Sofia", to contribute to the wider dissemination of the ideas and activities of AFCEA throughout Bulgaria, South-East Europe and the Black Sea region, thus contributing to regional stability and peace.

The founding meeting elected in the Chapter's Board active and retired naval officers from the Bulgarian Navy HQ, from the Naval Academy and research institute, as well as representatives of the high-tech business community.

At the time of its formation, Chapter "Varna" had 28 individual chapter members and two corporate sponsors (Unimasters Logistics Group Ltd., Varna, and the Institute of Air Transport, Sofia). By the end of 2000, Chapter "Varna" had 34 individual members (among them the US Defense and Air Attaché in Sofia) and one more corporate sponsor (WESTEL Ltd., Sofia).

During the few months since its establishment, the AFCEA "Varna" Chapter proved its value as a center for defense and security related knowledge sharing, business contacts and personal development. It regularly holds meetings, lectures and discussions. Of particular interest to AFCEA members was the visit on board USS Hawes (FFG 53) allowing first-hand familiarity with the C4I systems and capabilities of the ship.

For less than six months AFCEA-Varna Chapter hosted the following speakers:

- Dr. Velizar Shalamanov, Deputy Minister of Defense for Defense Policy and Planning, "The Introduction of Contemporary C4I Systems in Bulgarian Armed Forces as a Vital Element of Bulgarian Defense Reform."

- Brian Shade, Partnership Marketing, Denver CO, "Use of Data in Contemporary Economy."
- Captain (BuN) Tchavdar Ormanov, "Combat Information Systems in Bulgarian Navy."
- Eberhard A. Mueller-von der Bank, Regional Vice President, AFCEA Central European Region, "Objectives, Organization and Functioning of AFCEA in Europe and in the Central European Region. The Role of AFCEA in the New Security Environment."
- Captain (BuN) Nikola Kolev, Varna Naval Base, "The 'EKTRAN' Project: Current Status and Future Prospects."
- Colonel Roger Fielding, UK Defence Attaché in Sofia, "The UK and the New NATO."
- Prof. Boyan Mednikarov, Naval Academy, Varna, "Improving the Combat-and-Information Capabilities of Bulgarian Navy Strike Forces."

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