



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

غرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

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## U.S. – ARAB CHAMBER NAMES H.E. MADJID BOUGUERRA AS THE 2017 “AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR”

*First Algerian Diplomat to Receive This Distinction*

*Bouguerra Says the Drop in Oil Exports Creates “Real Opportunities” to  
Jump Start the Algeria – U.S. Commercial Relationship*

**Washington, DC** – The National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) this week named H.E. Madjid Bouguerra, Algeria’s Ambassador to the United States, as the 2017 “Ambassador of the Year.” One hundred business and government leaders participated in the awards ceremony at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, drawing VIPs from across the United States.

The annual award, which began in 2004, recognizes an Arab diplomat who has contributed significantly to U.S. – Arab commercial relations. Bouguerra is the first Algerian ambassador to receive this prestigious award.

The veteran Algerian diplomat said, “It is indeed an immense honor for me personally, as well as for the entire team at the embassy, particularly when this recognition comes from such a distinguished institution as NUSACC. This recognition is, I believe, strong testimony to the high quality relations between Algeria and the United States, with both countries resolutely committed to a confident, dynamic, and promising partnership.”



H.E. Madjid Bouguerra (center), Algeria’s Ambassador to the United States, accepts the Ambassador of the Year award from David Hamod (left), NUSACC’s President & CEO, and Nancy Ziuzin Schlegel (right), NUSACC Board Member and Vice President of International Government Affairs at Lockheed Martin, Lead Sponsor of the award luncheon.

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Ambassador Bouguerra (front row, center), with sponsors and other VIPs. Front row, from left to right: David Hamod, NUSACC; Amb. Joan Polaschik, U.S. Department of State; Ambassador Bouguerra; Nancy Ziuzin Schlegel, Lockheed Martin; Steve Brosnan, Raytheon International. Back row, from left to right: Dr. Ismael Chikhoun, U.S.-Algeria Business Council; Ambassador Amal Mudallali, Republic of Lebanon; Del Reneger, GE; Hon. Ken Hyatt, U.S. Department of Commerce; Lisa Schroeter, Dow Chemical Company; Mayor Josh Pope, City of Elkader; Noubia Gribi, Blumberg Grain; Brian Toohey, PhRMA.

Bouguerra received two distinguished guests from the City of Elkader, Iowa, which enjoys a Sister City relationship with Mascara, Algeria.

David Hamod, NUSACC's President & CEO, noted that the Chamber has been hearing from member companies about the extraordinary efforts that Bouguerra has been making to promote Algeria – U.S. commercial relations. "Madjid Bouguerra is sometimes passionate,

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H.E. Madjid Bouguerra, Algeria's Ambassador to the United States.

sometimes stoic, but always principled, bringing a quiet determination to everything that he does," Hamod said. "He has been working diligently and quietly behind the scenes as an 'unsung hero,' with few in a position to sing his praises . . . until today."

Bouguerra received accolades from many different quarters: Government officials, business leaders, and heads of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), reflecting his efforts to promote bilateral relations at government-to-government, business-to-government, and people-to-people levels. (For a sampling of testimonials, please see the inset box below and on subsequent pages.)

#### **Words of Appreciation for Ambassador Madjid Bouguerra**

"There are significant opportunities for U.S. companies in Algeria, and I am grateful to Ambassador Bouguerra for his key role in promoting the U.S. – Algeria commercial relationship. Our Department of Commerce staff in Algiers and Washington can assist U.S. companies in working through the challenges of doing business in the market."

- **Hon. Ken Hyatt, Deputy Under Secretary of Commerce**

"I am delighted to be here today to honor a great friend and colleague, Ambassador Madjid Bouguerra. It has been my honor and great pleasure to work with him in support of shared interests to deepen the U.S.-Algeria partnership. As we look forward to new areas of cooperation, I am grateful to have a strong partner in Ambassador Bouguerra."

- **Hon. Joan Polaschik, Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State**

"It was a pleasure working with Ambassador Bouguerra during a period of significant enhancement of the vitally important U.S.-Algerian bilateral relationship. Ambassador Bouguerra has played a critical role in strengthening cooperation on a wide variety of goals shared by both our countries, including the fight against terrorism, promoting regional stability, increasing economic and commercial exchanges and investment, and highlighting the bonds between the American and Algerian people. Ambassador Bouguerra's work represents the very best of the U.S.-Algerian partnership."

- **Hon. John Desrocher, U.S. Ambassador to Algeria**

## U.S. Government Officials Praise Bouguerra's Efforts

Bouguerra has worked closely in recent years with numerous U.S. Government officials. Hon. Joan Polaschik, U.S. Ambassador to Algeria until July 2017, and currently the Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, offered keynote remarks at the awards luncheon.

"I am delighted to be here today to honor a great friend and colleague, Ambassador Madjid Bouguerra," she noted. "For several years, I have had the opportunity to work with Ambassador Bouguerra, and it has been my honor and great pleasure to work with him in support of shared interests to deepen the U.S.-Algeria partnership."

She continued, "We are working closely with Ambassador Bouguerra and his team on promoting closer economic and commercial cooperation, with the expectation that U.S. companies will be afforded the opportunity to compete fairly and transparently in Algeria. I know this is a top, personal priority for Ambassador Bouguerra and one that he began working on even before his arrival here in Washington."

She went on to say, "I greatly appreciate Ambassador Bouguerra's efforts to meet with U.S. companies to promote investment opportunities, as well as his personal involvement in making our Trade and Investment Framework Agreement meetings and trade delegations, advocacy, and networking opportunities into productive, regular exchanges."

"Ambassador Bouguerra also has placed a high priority on strengthening the educational and cultural ties between our two countries," Polaschik noted. "We have worked together to expand scholarships and exchange programs, which enable talented Algerians to visit the United States, and to reinforce the Middle East Partnership Initiative, Access English language Micro scholarships, and American Corners, in order to ensure that young Algerians have access to the skills required to succeed in today's complex and interconnected economy."

On the issue of security, Polaschik noted, Algeria has become a "highly effective counterterrorism partner, able to deny terrorists safe haven within its borders and, increasingly, to export its best practices across the region." She went on to say, "Forums like our Joint Military Dialogue and counterterrorism dialogue provide essential vehicles for sharing information on common threats and security challenges."



H.E. Madjid Bouguerra (right), Algeria's Ambassador to the United States, with the Honorable Joan Polaschik (left), Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, and the Very Revered Joseph Rahal (center), Senior Representative, Antiochian Archdiocese, St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church.

Polaschik concluded, “These are just a few examples of the diversity and strength of the U.S.-Algerian relationship, which continues to serve as a pillar for U.S. security and economic priorities in North Africa . . . I would like to extend my congratulations once again to Ambassador Bouguerra in recognition of his outstanding efforts to advance the U.S.-Algeria relationship.”

**Words of Appreciation for  
Ambassador Madjid Bouguerra**

“Ambassador Bouguerra has distinguished himself as a consummate diplomat, promoting economic and commercial opportunities and addressing complex security challenges facing both of our nations. Mr. Ambassador, this award luncheon serves as a reminder of how fortunate we are to have someone with your experience and credentials working to promote U.S.-Algerian political, economic and security interests in the region, and around the country.”

**- Ms. Nancy Ziuzin Schlegel, VP Intl. Government Affairs, Lockheed Martin (Platinum Sponsor)**

“Algeria is an extremely important market for PhRMA International in North Africa. Through the Ambassador’s outstanding leadership, we have established that pro-innovation frameworks and dialogue between our industry and government has provided important results. The fruits of your leadership, Ambassador Bouguerra, will be known for many, many years to come.”

**- Mr. Brian Toohey, Sr. Vice President, PhRMA International (Gold Sponsor)**

“I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere congratulations to our esteemed Ambassador, H.E. Madjid Bouguerra, for all the hard work that he is doing to strengthen U.S. – Algerian relationships. It is an honor and a pleasure to participate in this luncheon as a Gold Sponsor, and we thank the National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce for organizing this important event.”

**- Mr. Abdelmalek Sahraoui, CEO, Orus Group (Gold Sponsor)**

“Dow is very proud of our opportunities to work with Algerian universities to promote STEM education and to develop appropriate technical skills for young people. Working with the Algerian Government and with Ambassador Bouguerra has made all the difference to get Dow’s feet on the ground in Algeria.”

**- Ms. Lisa Schroeter, Global Director, Trade & Investment Policy, Dow (Silver Sponsor)**

“This year, GE has had tremendous success in Algeria, announcing over \$3 billion in energy deals. Regardless of what the numbers are, business success is about personal relationships, leadership, and commitment. Working closely with Ambassador Bouguerra, GE looks forward to many, many more opportunities with Algeria.”

**- Mr. Del Renigar, Executive Director, Global Government Affairs & Policy, GE (Silver Sponsor)**

## New Opportunities in Algerian – American Commercial Relations

In his acceptance speech, Bouguerra credited his embassy team and accepted the award on behalf of his country of Algeria.

Historically, he said, Algeria – U.S. commercial relations rested almost exclusively on hydrocarbons. Since 2014, Bouguerra noted, “with the brutal decline in oil prices and the onset of the shale revolution in the United States, trade volume between our countries has dropped from \$22 billion to almost \$7 billion dollars.” However, he suggested, this “should not be perceived as a setback. On the contrary.”

He characterized this situation as a “real opportunity to resolutely reorient the country’s economic policy toward an effective economic diversification.” Algerians and Americans, he suggested, “have been working hard to successfully explore other ways of promoting their economic and trade relations . . . I am pleased to say that a new trend has emerged, which creates very promising perspectives in our relations in terms of business, investment and partnerships.”



From right to left: Joel Ogren, Board Member, NxtVn Group; H.E. Madjid Bouguerra, Algeria’s Ambassador to the United States; David Hamod, NUSACC’s President & CEO; and Lewis Shadle, Board Member, NxtVn Group. NxtVn is a Platinum Plus member of NUSACC.

Bouguerra continued, “Algeria today hosts more than 120 American firms, operating in such sectors as energy, industry, biopharmaceutical, ICT, agriculture and agri-industry, transportation, services, and others.” Agribusiness is one of the biggest success stories, he said, sharing stories about the growing appeal of U.S. agricultural products and expertise in Algeria.

For the first time, he said, “Algerian entrepreneurs have discovered the American model of farming, one that suits Algeria’s needs as one of the largest food importers in the region. This reflects the new priorities of our government.”

In the medical field, Bouguerra touted a partnership with Varian Medical Systems, whose objective is to supply anti-cancer centers with radiotherapy equipment, including medical linear accelerators. He also pointed out a new joint venture with Pfizer to manufacture that company’s products in Algeria.

As a trade and investment destination, Bouguerra said, Algeria boasts a fast-growing market of more than 40 million consumers. Seventy percent of these potential clients are under 35 years old, he suggested, highlighting Algeria as an attractive market for many years to come.

### **Five Distinguishing Features of Algeria**

Bouguerra pointed out that at least five attributes help to distinguish Algeria from other markets:

1) Despite a drop in revenues, he said, Algeria still boasts a strong economic foundation that enables Algeria to withstand economic shocks. This is based on Algeria's prudent management of its foreign exchange reserves, he noted, which still exceed \$100 billion.

2) In recent years, Algeria has finalized numerous structural reforms, aimed at transforming the nation's business climate, with a view to attracting more foreign partners.

3) Bouguerra characterized Algeria as a nexus among Africa, the Middle East, and two free trade areas within the European Union and the Arab world. Moreover, sharing a border of more than 1,500 km with Sub-Saharan Africa, Algeria is a gateway to Africa. This is a continent with a bright future, Bouguerra noted, with 1.7 billion consumers by 2025 and 2.5 billion consumers by 2050.

#### **Words of Appreciation for Ambassador Madjid Bouguerra**

"I am proud to pay tribute to H.E. Madjid Bouguerra for his dedication and constant efforts to build stronger and closer economic and political relationships. We thank him for his effective support and exceptional contribution to improve partnerships between Algeria and American businesses. I believe that the best is yet to come . . . "

**- Mr. Ali Haddad, Chairman, Forum of Business Leaders in Algeria (FCE)**

"This award is well-deserved, in recognition of your talents and achievements. Your selfless devotion is apparent in the tremendous progress you have shown in both the United States and Algeria."

**- Dr. Ismael Chikhoun, President & CEO, U.S. – Algeria Business Council**

"On behalf of the World Trade Center Algiers, I send my heartiest congratulations to H.E. Madjid Bouguerra for his success, particularly for this important achievement, which he duly earned through his passion to make U.S. and Algerian relations better than they have ever been. His professionalism and good nature has made him one of the best Algerian diplomats ever and a source of inspiration to us all. We wish him every success in continuing to promote Algeria's culture and economy in this world-leading nation."

**- Mr. Ahmed Tibaoui, General Manager & CEO, World Trade Center Algiers**

4) Algeria has shown a remarkable stability at a time when other countries in the region are going through troubled times. According to Gallup, Bouguerra said, Algeria is the seventh most secure country in the world.

5) Any American investor should take comfort, Bouguerra said, in the long history of friendly ties between Algeria and the USA, dating back to the early days of the American Republic. He reminded the audience that Algeria was among the very first countries to recognize the independence of the United States, signing the Treaty of Amity and Peace on September 5, 1795.

All over the United States, Bouguerra suggested, are symbols of this Algerian – American friendship. In Iowa, for example, one may find the town of Elkader, named after Emir Abdelkader of Algeria. In Florida, one may find the city of St. Augustine, named after Saint Augustine, a great Algerian philosopher. And in California, one may find the city of Santa Monica, named after the mother of Saint Augustine.

“Today, our relations are strong, varied, and dynamic,” Bouguerra said, “promising a brighter future for Algeria and the United States, as we work hand-in-hand to advance our shared values, including democracy and freedom.”



H.E. Madjid Bouguerra (center), Algeria’s Ambassador to the United States, received three commendations: “Ambassador of the Year” award from David Hamod (left) and Nancy Ziuzin Schlegel (right), a NUSACC Board Member and VP at Lockheed Martin; an “Honorary Citizenship” award from Hon. Josh Pope (second from right), Mayor of Elkader, Iowa; a commemorative brick from Kathy Garms (second from left), Executive Director of the Abdelkader Education Project.

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## Significance of Elkader, Iowa

Two guests flew to Washington DC from [Elkader, Iowa](#) to participate in the luncheon: Hon. Josh Pope, the Mayor of Elkader, and Ms. Kathy Garms, Executive Director of the [Abdelkader Education Project](#).

In the mid-19th century, the founders of Elkader named the community after Emir Abdelkader of Algeria, who had impressed the world with his bravery, decency, and humanity. Elkader today is the only city in America that is named after a Muslim and Algerian.

“On behalf of our citizens, I want to extend to Ambassador Bouguerra the warmest greetings of peace and friendship,” noted Pope. “Emir Abdelkader is the foundation of our Sister City Exchange. As we grow together, I will strive to build on this foundation through sustainable friendships and collaborations. Together, we will move forward in unity.”

He continued, “Our communities intensify and strengthen our connection. I am convinced that this partnership sets an example for the world that two cultures can live and work together in peace and understanding. Today, we honor Ambassador Bouguerra for his friendship, trust, mutual respect, and the values that characterize our relations.”

Pope named Bouguerra an Honorary Citizen of Elkader, presenting him with a customized, framed certificate in honor of his new “citizenship.” But it was not the only gift that Bouguerra received from Elkader.

Ms. Kathy Garms, on behalf of the Abdelkader Education Project (AEP), presented Bouguerra with a photo of a commemorative brick bearing his name. (The brick was unable to travel from Iowa.)

### Words of Appreciation for Ambassador Madjid Bouguerra

“Our Sister City communities intensify and strengthen our connection. I am convinced that this partnership sets an example for the world that two cultures can live and work together in peace and understanding. Today, we honor Ambassador Bouguerra for his friendship, trust, mutual respect, and the values that characterize our relations.”

- **Hon. Joshua Pope, Mayor, City of Elkader, State of Iowa**

“Mr. Ambassador, it is a privilege and an honor for me to be here today to acknowledge not only your distinguished years of service, but also your humanitarian spirit, kindness, and wisdom that inspires such goodwill.”

- **Ms. Kathy Garms, Executive Director, Abdelkader Education Project**

AEP is dedicated to reviving the legacy of Emir Abdelkader, known for his prowess fighting French colonialism, but also for his humanitarian efforts that saved thousands of lives. Upon Abdelkader's death in 1883, *The New York Times* opined, "The nobility of his character won him the admiration of the world . . . He deserved to be counted among the few great men of the century."

In her remarks, Garms said, "Mr. Ambassador, it is a privilege and an honor for me to be here today to acknowledge not only your distinguished years of service, but also your humanitarian spirit, kindness, and wisdom that inspires such goodwill." She concluded, "I am extremely grateful for your support of the Abdelkader Education Project, which extends far beyond Iowa and the United States."

### **The Last Word**

In his closing remarks, NUSACC's David Hamod referenced the famous bridges of Constantine, Algeria as a metaphor for the Algeria - U.S. relationship: Historic, unshakeable, and spanning two complementary cultures.

But the very last word went to Ambassador Bouguerra: "I wish once again to say how grateful I am to NUSACC for this award, which I humbly accept from the bottom of my heart. I want also to thank each one of you for honoring me with your presence at this ceremony today, which I view as a testimony of your friendship and consideration for my country."

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To learn more about the benefits of membership in NUSACC, please click [HERE](#).



Constantine, Algeria. (Photo credit: Dreamstime)

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