



American Center Newsletter



American Center

Colombo

March 2010

The American Center
Office of Public Diplomacy

US Embassy

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Sri Lanka

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Upcoming Events

**Wednesday, March 31
2pm**

Public Lecture Series:

“Domestic Violence: Who it Hurts & How to Stop it” The Hon. Justice Shiranee Tilakawardane at the American Center Auditorium.

**Saturday, March 27
2:30pm**

Reading Club:

“Readers are Leaders” reading club program. Embassy personnel will continue reading from current selection “The Phantom Tollbooth”. Appropriate children ages 10 -14 years with intermediate English skills.

See inside for more upcoming events

Theme of the Month: Women’s History Month



Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton met with schoolchildren in South Africa in 2009.

World Reflects on Women’s Progress, Remaining Obstacles

Equal opportunity, health and gender-based violence remain issues

In March, the world observes International Women’s Day, and, in the United States, Women’s History Month. And while women have made great strides in many areas where they once were marginalized, there is still much work to be done in areas including education, health and gender-based violence.

Continued on page 5



First lady Michelle Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton present the 2010 International Women of Courage Award to Jansila Majeed

Sri Lankan Recognized as an “International Woman of Courage” by the US Department of State

March 2, 2010: The United States Embassy is pleased to announce that Ms. Jansila Majeed has been selected by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to be one of ten recipients worldwide of the Department of State’s International Women of Courage award.

Ms. Majeed is the Managing Trustee of Community Trust Fund in Puttalam district. The Trust oversees a number of programs on minority and women’s

issues, including women’s rights, peace building, relief work, working with young people, and mine-risk education in the North and East. Ms. Majeed’s own particular focus is on uniting the Muslim and Tamil communities in her province.

Having lived as an internally displaced person (IDP) for almost 20 years, Ms. Majeed has become an energetic activist for displaced Muslim and Tamil civilians, focusing particularly on grassroots programs on life skills, health, and women’s empowerment. Her activism began in 1992 with a working group of five people. She overcame both the general neglect of the problem of IDPs in the Muslim minority as well as her own community’s parameters for women activists to build a broad-based organization that effectively works on minority and women’s issues throughout Sri Lanka. The annual International Women of Courage Award was started in March 2007 to recognize women around the globe who have shown exceptional courage and leadership in advocating for women’s rights and advancement.

Continued on page 2

US Embassy Congratulates young writers of Sri Lanka



Ms. Valerie Fowler, Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy Colombo presents a certificate to a winner

The fourth batch of winners of the "Learn About America" Essay Competition, conducted by the American Center in collaboration with the Sunday Observer newspaper, received their awards on February 5, 2010, at the American Center

auditorium. The winners for July and August 2009 were awarded at this event. Ms. Valerie Fowler, Deputy Chief of Mission of the US Embassy in Colombo graced the occasion as the chief guest, and made the welcome speech and presented the awards to the winners.

Since January 2009 this essay competition has been published in the Junior Observer section of the Sunday Observer in order to encourage young Sri Lankan writers to research America, its culture, people and values and share their thoughts with the Embassy.

The winners, together with their parents, family members, some school principals, Mr. Glen Davis, Cultural Affairs Officer, Mr. Dinesh Weerawansa, Editor, Sunday Observer and Mrs. Mary Anne Perera, Editor of the Junior Observer were present at this event.

US Embassy Hosts Booth at "Deyata Kirula" Exhibition in Kandy.

The United States Embassy in Colombo hosted a booth at the "Deyata Kirula" national exhibition held in Kandy during February 4 to 10.

Thousands of people visited the booth and learned about the US Government's activities and projects in Sri Lanka and about US culture and society.

Many activities took place during the event including a promotion of apples by the Washington Apple Commission, photographs with President Obama's life size cutout, information about USAID projects, the American Center and American Corners. Several documentaries were screened at the booth on USAID activities, biographies of US presidents, and 50 years of space exploration by the US.

In additions to these activities, the American Center presented American movie screenings every day

and the Consular office of the US Embassy conducted orientation programs on DV Lottery and US student visas.



Group of students pose with President Obama's life size cutout

Sri Lankan Recognized as an

From page 1

This is the only award within the Department of State that pays tribute to outstanding women leaders worldwide. It recognizes the courage and leadership shown as they struggle for social justice and human rights.

The other awardees this year are come from Afghanistan, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Iran, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Syria and Zimbabwe.

American Center celebrates African-American History Month



Dr. Paul Carter, Political Counselor at US Embassy Colombo delivers the presentation

February 18, 2010: In recognition of African-American History month, the American Center organized its 13th Public Lecture entitled, "Separatist Conflict in the United States,

1861-1865: Causes, Costs, and Aftermath." Dr. Paul Carter, Political Counselor at US Embassy Colombo delivered the presentation. Before becoming a diplomat, Dr. Carter was co-founder

and President/CEO of Accuracy Historical Productions, Inc., a consulting firm that supplied hundreds of costumed actors and historical experts to filmmakers and television producers for projects on the American Civil War.

Dr. Carter provided the audience with a concise history of the events that shaped America's political environment from colonial times through Reconstruction and the Civil Rights era. This is a very timely topic in Sri Lanka as it recovers from the aftermath of its own decades-long civil conflict.

During the Q&A session, Dr. Carter shared personal photos of Civil War reenactments in which he participated. Participants enjoyed the opportunity to see this very unique aspect of American culture.

US Visa Application Process Uses New Online Form

The US Embassy in Colombo, Sri Lanka will soon start requiring the use of the newly-developed DS-160 non-immigrant visa (NIV) application which incorporates existing NIV forms into one interactive, online form. For all NIV appointments starting March 17, 2010, applicants will need to fill out the DS-160 form, which will be available online March 12, 2010.



The US government is introducing this new application worldwide as part of a larger effort to use new technologies to improve the efficiency and accuracy of the visa application process. Over the past two years, select US Embassies have used the DS-160 on a test basis. It is now being deployed at US Embassies worldwide.

Visa applicants in Sri Lanka and the Republic of Maldives will need to access the Consular Electronic

Application Center website (<https://ceac.state.gov/GENIV>) to complete a new DS-160 application form. With the new form, the applicant will also be required to upload a visa photograph. The DS-160

will eliminate the need for paper application forms because visa applicants will submit the application electronically.

With the DS-160, applicants will print just a confirmation sheet to bring to their interviews. Currently, applicants complete their forms online but must print them out before their interviews.

The Consular Section reminds applicants that providing accurate and complete information on the DS-160 application before submission is essential. Incorrect or missing information will cause a delay in completing your interview. Applicants should save an electronic copy of their DS-160 application in case changes are necessary.

The requirement to use the DS-160 applies only to non-immigrant visa applicants. Persons applying for immigrant or fiancé visas should continue to use the existing application process.

The US Embassy emphasizes that only the visa form and the way applicants submit it has changed.

Eligibility and documentary requirements for all visas remain unchanged. Applicants must still demonstrate that they are qualified for a visa under US immigration law. More information about the DS-160, as well as links to the new application, can be found on the US Embassy Colombo's website:

<http://srilanka.usembassy.gov>

United States Successfully Links Farmers in the East with New Opportunities



Ambassador Butenis (left) checks out papayas with Neranjan Mudalige, Group Director of Anoma Agro Based Pvt. Ltd.

February 12, 2010: - The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is linking more than 2,000 farmers in Ampara and Monaragala Districts to new markets

for a special variety of papaya, providing supplemental income to participating families. US Ambassador Patricia A. Butenis and USAID Mission Director Rebecca Cohn met recently with some of the participants in Monaragala District.

USAID/Sri Lanka, partnered with Anoma Agro Based Products Pvt. Ltd., a member of the Daya Group of companies, on the project. Anoma

identified a demand in export and domestic markets for Red Lady, a high-quality hybrid papaya that sells for a higher price than traditional varieties. The project provides 50 free papaya plant seedlings and training on papaya cultivation and basic business practices to each farmer; Anoma purchases the crop from the farmers.

Of the 2,135 farmers participating in this USAID-funded project, more than 1,400 farmers have already planted 200 acres of papaya. Harvesting began in November 2009, with the two-month harvest valued at Rs 1.98 million (\$17,257) and farmers each earning Rs 11,000 (\$96) per month on average. The project will work with 3,000 farmers in 2010, increasing both the volume of papaya produced and the total value of the new crop.

One farmer with 100 papaya plants expects to earn 200% more than her present household income through this project.

US Government Takes Sri Lankan Officials on Land Study Tour to Timor-Leste



Rebecca Cohn, USAID Mission Director in conversation with some of the participants of the study tour.

February 26, 2010: USAID is taking 13 government officials from central and provincial ministries on a 7-day study tour to learn how land ownership issues are being resolved in Timor-Leste

(also known as East Timor), a country recovering from conflict.

USAID supports efforts to address land ownership issues in areas of Sri Lanka affected by the conflict. This study tour will focus on land tenure issues in a post-conflict environment and highlight issues of ownership security and occupation of land by non-original owners. Sri Lankan officials will meet with Timorese government authorities, development

workers and community leaders, and will participate in site visits to local areas to gain many perspectives on the issue.

Rebecca Cohn, USAID Mission Director, said, "USAID is sponsoring this study tour to introduce Sri Lankan officials to some of the issues they will face as they work to address land ownership and tenure in the North and the East. Land ownership issues in areas affected by the conflict will be difficult to resolve, but stability and prosperity will depend on policies and practices that are fair and just. We hope that Sri Lankan officials will come back with some new ideas and best practices that they can use to develop policies that meet the needs of all Sri Lankans."

USAID invited government entities involved with land ownership issues to select representatives to participate in the Land Study Tour. Participants include land commissioners from the North and East, provincial council officials, justice sector representatives, and officials from the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and the Ministry of Nation Building & Estate Infrastructure Development.

World Reflects on Women's Progress

From page 1

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has vowed to make women's issues a centerpiece of her term as secretary. During her confirmation hearing, she spoke of her concern with the plight of women and girls, who make up the majority of the uneducated and unhealthy in the world.



Secretary Clinton speaks at the award ceremony held on March 10, 2010

"If half of the world's population remains vulnerable to economic, political, legal and social marginalization, our hope of advancing democracy and prosperity will remain in serious

jeopardy," she said. "We still have a long way to go, and the United States must remain an unambiguous and unequivocal voice in support of women's rights in every country, every region, on every continent."

The Obama White House has aggressively promoted women's issues both in the United States and abroad. Early in his presidency, President Obama created a new position at the White House — now held by Lynn Rosenthal — to advise the president and vice president on domestic violence and sexual assault issues in the United States. The president also created a new position at the US Department of State: ambassador-at-large for global women's issues. Melanne Verbeke, who has a long career working for the advancement of women, was appointed to that position to mobilize concrete support worldwide for women's rights and to combat violence against women and girls in all its forms.

In addition to ensuring that women around the world are safe from gender-based violence, the State Department under Clinton is focusing on promoting women's economic opportunities — from which other rights and freedoms often follow.

"When women are accorded their rights and afforded equal opportunities in education, health care and gainful employment, they drive social and

economic progress," Clinton made clear in a commentary last summer.

First lady Michelle Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton honored women human rights activists from around the world with this year's Women of Courage awards at a special ceremony March 10 at the State Department.

The Women of Courage award was established in 2007 by then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to recognize and honor women around the globe who have shown exceptional courage and leadership in promoting women's rights and advancement.

Clinton said the stories of this year's honorees are a reminder of how much work there is to do before human rights are respected and protected by all governments. She told the Women of Courage awardees: "We are standing with you. ... We here at the State Department and [the Obama] administration are trying to be good partners. ... We look forward to building relationships with you."

Clinton emphasized that the United States will be watchful of the awardees' safety. "We send a message to your governments, who may not be thrilled that you are here, that we will be watching them as well."

Michelle Obama lauded the awardees for taking risks and facing hardships few people are willing to endure. She noted that among the invited guests in the room were young women from a local school and from the White House mentoring program, which pairs young people from area high schools with White House staff mentors for a year.

"Listen closely," Obama told the young women, "because if these women can endure relentless threats, then surely you can all keep going. ... None of you are too young to start making a difference." She urged the young American women to take inspiration from the Women of Courage awardees.

Source: www.america.gov

Free Group Advising for the Month of March 2010

Date & time	Program	For whom	Comments
March 22 nd 3:00 p.m.	Orientation for graduate studies	Prospective students for post-graduate studies	Covers background information, entrance requirements, how to select universities, opportunities for financial aid, and application process

At the American Corner, Kandy (D.S. Senanayake Public Library): March 19th, 8:30a.m. - 2p.m.

At the Mahinda College Old Boys' Association building in Galle: March 26th, 8:30a.m. - 2p.m.

Admission free! Please note that prior registration is necessary to attend the above.

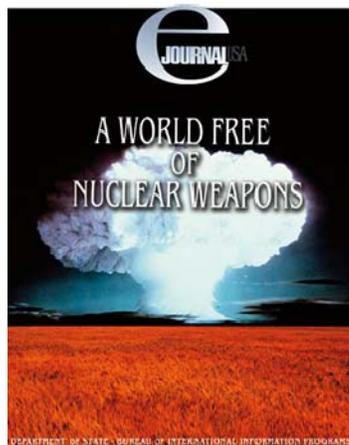
Please contact by visit, phone, fax or e-mail:

United States - Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission, 22, Flower Terrace, Colombo 7

Phone: 094-112-564176, 4718744

Fax: 094-112-564153

E-mail: advising@isplanka.lk



e-Journal USA - FEBRUARY 2010

A World Free of Nuclear Weapons

Since the first atomic bombs exploded in 1945, some have tried to rid the world of nuclear weapons. President Obama has embraced this goal with new vigor. This issue of eJournal USA examines the challenges to achieving nuclear disarmament.

It conveys the hopes of some thinkers, and explains the doubts of others.

Inside this publication:

- [Obama's Commitment](#)
- [The Transformation of U.S. Nuclear Policy](#)
- [Playing Percentages](#)
- [Nonproliferation's Contribution](#)
- [Fission, Fusion](#)
- [Beyond Existing Treaties](#)
- [Successes and Failures](#)
- [Why the Stockpiles?](#)
- [U.S.-Russia Balancing Act](#)
- [Megatons to Megawatts](#)

Read Online at: <http://www.america.gov/media/pdf/ejs/0210.pdf#popup>

Monthly Essay Competition



Learn about America



Essay Competition for School Children on the theme of Learn About America

The American Center has organized an essay competition for school children which is published in Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer.

The monthly essay topic is for children in three age categories 12-14 years, 15-16 years and 17-18 years.



Winners of the Essay Competition held in July 2009
From Left to Right : Mr. Dinesh Weerawansa, Editor, Sunday Observer; Mrs. Mary Anne Perera, Editor Junior Observer; Jayani Wickrama Seneviratne; F. Zafra Fuaiz; Ishani Divajini Chandrasena; Piumi Madumali Jayalath; Ms. Valerie Fowler, Deputy Chief Mission, U. S. Embassy, Colombo; Madara Madushani Wijesooriya; M. A. B. Randilini; Linda Warnakulasuriya; I. L. Asmath Rahna; Devmini Thilakshi Perera and Mr. Glen Davis, Cultural Affairs Officer, US Embassy, Colombo

Each age group is given a monthly topic related to the United States of America and is asked to write an essay with a minimum word count. The students can conduct research for their essay at the American Center Library in Colombo, at American Corners in Kandy and Oluvil, or from sources on America.gov, a very good internet resource with information on the United States, its culture, history, literature, politics, tourist attractions and much more.

The first three winners in each age group will be given a selection of American books, a lifetime membership to the American Center Library, and a certificate signed by the US Ambassador. A prize giving ceremony will be held at the American Center Colombo every two months.

Essay topics for March are as follows :

12-14 years : Although a shy child, Eleanor Roosevelt became one of the greatest humanitarians of the 20th century. During President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s administration, she used her position as First Lady of the United States to promote reforms to help women, minorities, and poor people. Write an essay discussing Eleanor Roosevelt’s humanitarian work. How can you follow Roosevelt’s example now, and in the future, to make your community a better place? (500 words)

15-16 years: Elizabeth Cady Stanton spearheaded the demand for equal rights for women and made gaining suffrage (the right to vote), ownership of property, and guardianship of children some of the rights of women. Write an essay discussing the rights and roles of women in both the United States and in Sri Lanka. How are they similar? How are they different? What steps can be taken in order to improve the roles of women in both countries? (750 words)

17-18 years: Maya Angelou is a famous American poet. On January 20, 1993 she recited her original poem, “On the Pulse of Morning” for President Bill Clinton’s inaugural ceremony. Carefully read this poem and write an essay discussing the poet’s main themes. What does this poem, especially the final 11 stanzas, mean for you as a Sri Lankan and for your country as it enters a post-conflict era? (1000 words)



Winners of the “Learn About America” Essay Competition – August 2009.
Left to Right: G. P. Tharindu Randika; Dinidu De Silva; T. Nazmi Mahamood; Ms. Valerie Fowler, Deputy Chief Mission, U. S. Embassy, Colombo; W. P. Nirmani Samarasekara; Menushi Hasara Rajapakse; A. D. Niranthara Tharika and Mr. Glen Davis, Cultural Affairs Officer, US Embassy, Colombo

Please see the Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer for more details.



"Readers are Leaders" reading club program



Lot of kids participated at the inaugural program

The American Center, has initiated a new project called "Readers are Leaders".

It's a monthly program that is held every 4th Saturday of the month targeting children of 10-14 years of age. This reading club is a collection of readers who participate in the regular discussion of books. The objectives of initiating this Reading Club Project are:

- To develop a taste for reading in young adults, in order to consolidate what they learn in school;
- To strengthen their reading skills, foster new reading habits, and encourage young adults to visit the library regularly; and
- To allow members exposure to new ideas and differing viewpoints, and to provide an opportunity to socialize with other book lovers.

The inaugural program was held on January 23, 2010 with 51 members and Mr. Glen Davis, Cultural Affairs Officer at the American Center read a story to the children who came for the inaugural reading club program.

The 2nd program was held on February 27 and Ms. Sina Jones, Public Diplomacy Associate of the American Center read the story to the members of the reading club. The new arrivals of IRC that are suitable for young audience were displayed and some of the reading club members obtained the IRC membership and borrowed the books.

This Reading club will offer the benefit of having all members in the same room, which makes for a much more personal and intimate experience. Children are invited to share their reading experiences. In this way, this program would help them to improve their knowledge in English language, develop their oral communication, summarizing and reading skills. By listening to their friends, they also broaden their horizons to encompass new books, ideas, writers and collections.

In March the reading club will meet Saturday, March 27, 2010 at 2.30 p.m. Mr. Glen Davis, Cultural Affairs Officer, US Embassy, Colombo will read to children on that day.

THE AMERICAN CENTER PRESENTS A PUBLIC LECTURE

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: Who it Hurts & How to Stop it

a discussion with
Hon. Justice Shiranee Tilakawardane

Wednesday, 31 March 2 p.m.
American Center Auditorium

We encourage students, counselors and young women activists to attend

The presentation will be linked via Digital Video Conference to the American Corners in Kandy and Oluvil

RSVP: 2498169/2498146 - Seating is limited

Movies for Youth at the American Center

American Center Newsletter
March 2010

March 2010

March 20 - The Wizard of Oz (1939, 101 minutes)

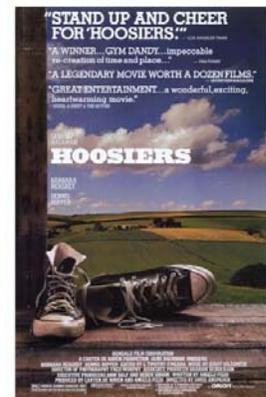
The third and definitive film adaptation of L. Frank Baum's 1900 children's fantasy, this musical adventure is a genuine family classic that made Judy Garland a star for her heartfelt performance as Dorothy Gale, an orphaned young girl unhappy with her drab black-and-white existence on her aunt and uncle's dusty Kansas farm. Dorothy yearns to travel "over the rainbow" to a different world, and she gets her wish when a tornado whisks her and her little dog, Toto, to the Technicolorful land of Oz. Having offended the Wicked Witch of the West (Margaret Hamilton), Dorothy is protected from the old crone's wrath by the ruby slippers that she wears. At the suggestion of Glinda, the Good Witch of the North (Billie Burke), Dorothy heads down the Yellow Brick Road to the Emerald City, where dwells the all-powerful Wizard of Oz, who might be able to help the girl return to Kansas. Won 2 Oscars. Another 4 wins & 8 nominations

March 27 - Hoosiers (1986, 104 minutes)

An unexpected late-1986 box-office hit, Hoosiers tells the true story of a group of underdogs who become champions. Set in the 1950s, Hoosiers is about a hard-luck, unemployed college basketball coach (Gene Hackman) who gets a chance to coach a small-town Indiana high-school basketball team. Facing resentment from the community and the team itself, Hackman manages to inspire his young athletes, leading them to the state championship with the help of the assistant coach (Dennis Hopper), who happens to be a recovering alcoholic. Nominated for 2 Oscars, another 3 wins and 3 nominations.

Reviews were drawn from DVD covers

Movies start promptly at 3:30pm every Saturday. Seating is limited and is first-come, first-served. Please contact the American Center at amcentersl@state.gov or at (11) 249-8146 with any questions.



"AWA"

Association of Women Artists

2010

11th March - 8th April, 2010

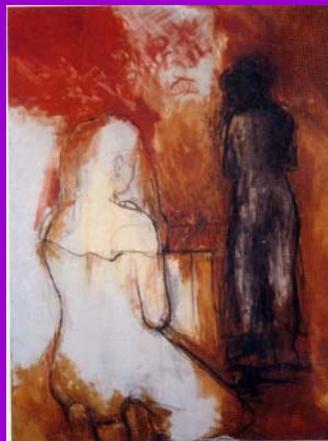
9am - 6pm

@ the

American Center

Colombo

Art Exhibition to commemorate
International Women's Day



Entrance
free!



Film Screenings at the American Center

American Center Newsletter
March 2010

March 2010 - Women's History Month

March 16 - Erin Brockovich (2000, 130 minutes)

A real woman. A real story. A real triumph. Julia Roberts stars as Erin Brockovich, a feisty young mother who fought for justice any way she knew how. Desperate for a job to support herself and her three children, she convinces attorney Ed Masry (Albert Finney) to hire her, and promptly stumbles upon a monumental law case against a giant corporation. Now, Erin's determined to take on this powerful adversary even though no law firm has dared to do it before. And while Ed doesn't want anything to do with the case, Erin won't take "no" for an answer. So the two begin an incredible and sometimes hilarious fight that will bring a small town to its feet and a huge company to its knees.

March 23 - Real Women Have Curves (2002, 90 minutes)

Set in the vibrant environs of East Los Angeles, with a breakthrough performance by Latina newcomer America Ferrera, this comedic drama takes a familiar subject--a bright teenager struggling to define her identity--and turns it into an authentic celebration of feminine empowerment. Eighteen-year-old Ana (Ferrera) has scholarship potential, her first boyfriend, and a chubby figure that her similarly overweight mother (Lupe Ontiveros, perfectly cast) won't stop harping about. Mom insists that Ana work in her sister's dressmaking sweatshop, continuing a family tradition that can only break her spirit. How Ana defies this fate--and how director Patricia Cardoso captures the proud tenacity of several full-figured seamstresses--is what makes this film (adapted from a play by Josefina Lopez) so uniquely refreshing.

March 30 - Freedom Writers (2007, 123 minutes)

Hilary Swank stars in this gripping story of inner city kids raised on drive-by shootings and hard-core attitude - and the teacher who gives them the one thing they need most: a voice of their own. Dropped into the free-fire zone of a school torn by violence and racial tension, teacher Erin Gruwell battles an uncaring system in a fight to make the classroom matter in her students lives. Now, telling their own stories, and hearing the stories of others, a group of supposedly "unteachable" teens will discover the power of tolerance, reclaim their shattered lives, and change their world.

Reviews drawn from MSN movies, All Movie Guide and Amazon

Entrance free!

Movies start promptly at 6:00pm every Tuesday. Seating is limited and is first-come, first-served. Please contact the American Center at amcentersl@state.gov or at (11) 249-8146 with any questions.

