The Royal Thai Embassy
1024 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W. Suite 401
Washington, D.C. 20007
Tel. (202) 944-3600 Fax. (202) 944-3611

No. 56001/05/28

15 January B.E. 2553 (2010)

Dear Mr. Willcutts,

I would like to thank you again for meeting with me on January 6, 2010. It was a pleasure to meet you and your team, and to have the opportunity to discuss with you Thailand's efforts to address and eliminate the problem of child labor and forced labor.

Allow me to, once again, stress with you the highest importance that the Royal Thai Government attaches to this issue, and that we are determined to confront this problem with resolve. I have attached herewith a copy of a letter from the Ambassador of Thailand to the Secretary of State registering Thailand's concern in the matter for your information.

I hope you will keep the Embassy apprised of any developments with regard to the final determination of the Executive Order 13126 List, and look forward to working closely with you in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Sek Wannamethee

(Sek Wannamethee)
Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.

Mr. Kevin Willcutts
Deputy Director,
Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking
Department of Labor
WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Royal Thai Embassy
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No. 56001/04/4

5 January B.E. 2553 (2010)

Dear Madam Secretary,

I am writing you to express the Royal Thai Government's concern about recent reports in the United States which unfairly targeted Thailand's labor practices and tarnished Thailand's reputation. This was related to the Department of Labor's release on September 10, 2009 of the "List of Goods Produced by Child or Forced Labor" and the "Initial Determination Proposing Updates to the Executive Order 13126 List", in which Thailand was labeled as using forced or child labor in the production of four products: shrimp, garments, sugarcane, and pornography.

While Thailand shares the United States objective of raising awareness of the labor trafficking problem and the determination to eliminate it, we believe that such problems must be addressed through international efforts in a cooperative manner. Any exercise to name or label a country as an offender must be based on solid investigation and clear evidence, otherwise it risks damaging the country's reputation and inflicting harm on the country's trade. Regrettably, the report by the Department of Labor did not fairly reflect the overall labor situation in Thailand nor Thailand's continuous attempts and the progress made in addressing the matter.

More recently, on December 3 2009, CNN network aired a report on the plight of the U.S. shrimp industry which accused Thailand, along with other countries, for using "slave labor" in order to gain competitive advantage over U.S. domestic shrimp industry. More disturbingly, the CNN report featured an interview with a high-ranking State Department official who made inaccurate and unsubstantiated statements about Thailand's treatment of shrimp workers. Such report and statement are tremendously damaging to Thailand's shrimp industry.

The Honorable
Mrs. Hillary Clinton
Secretary of State of the United States of America
WASHINGTON, D.C.

To set the record straight, I wish to point out that all shrimp from Thailand imported into the U.S. come from factories that are members of the Thai Frozen Foods Association which have strict guidelines and code of conduct with regard to labor standards. Their members are also subject to regular and stringent inspection by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to ensure that imported seafood from Thailand meet the USFDA standard for safety, hygiene and also work condition. Moreover, imported shrimp from Thailand complements the growing demand within the U.S. market as U.S. wild caught shrimp can only meet approximately ten percent of U.S. consumption. Hence, imported Thai shrimp allows American consumers to enjoy affordable, safe, and high-quality shrimp.

We are particularly disturbed by reports of a concerted effort on the part of U.S. shrimp producers and labor unions to project a negative picture of imported shrimp through various public relations and lobbying efforts. Such practice would run counter to your Administration's commitment to free and fair trade. Moreover, such unfair practices can well lead to resentment and tension between our peoples and undermine the cordial relations between our countries.

I trust that you will view these developments with a fair judgement and in the overall context of our bilateral relations. It would be most unfortunate should we allow the interest of a few to affect the friendship and cooperation between our countries that have been cultivated for more than 176 years.

Yours sincerely,

(Don Pramudwinai)
Ambassador