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**From:** PIR [REDACTED]  
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From your clips:

US Responds To Sri Lanka Protest Over Clinton Remark (AFP) Monday, October 5, 2009 AFP

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The United States, responding to protests from Sri Lanka over remarks by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, said it had no recent evidence of women being raped while in Sri Lankan government custody.

In a letter addressed to Sri Lanka's Minister of Foreign Affairs Rohitha Bogollagama, the State Department noted that the US government and international human rights groups over the years had detailed "numerous cases of rape and sexual violence in Sri Lanka, particularly acts committed against women held in detention by the government."

However, the letter signed by Melanne Verveer, ambassador at large for global women's issues at the State Department said that "in the most recent phase of the conflict, from 2006 to 2009 ... we have not received reports that rape and sexual abuse were used as tools of war, as they clearly have in other conflict area around the world."

"We hope that this clarification puts the issue in its proper context," the letter said, adding that Washington remains concerned about extrajudicial killings, disappearances and detainee abuse in Sri Lanka.

"Secretary Clinton believes that Sri Lanka must focus to the future and move forward on the promotion of peace and the protection of human rights," the letter said.

Sri Lanka lodged its protest with the US embassy in Colombo over the remarks made by Clinton last month to the United Nations Security Council.

"We've seen rape used as a tactic of war before in Bosnia, Burma and Sri Lanka and elsewhere," the US secretary of state had said during a resolution calling for an end to sexual violence in armed conflict, according to published reports of Clinton's remarks.

Her comments sparked an outcry across Sri Lanka, where government forces in May crushed Tamil Tiger rebels after decades of fighting.

Colombo faced condemnation for its handling of the final stages of the war against Tiger rebels and managed to stave off a Security Council resolution calling for war crimes investigations thanks to the vetoes of China and Russia.

The United Nations has said that over 7,000 civilians perished in the first four months of intense fighting this year.

Sri Lanka is now facing international pressure to free 250,000 ethnic Tamil civilians who managed to escape the fighting but are now held in internment camps while they are screened to see whether they were rebels.