



AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF RUSSIAN

February 14, 2018

Ambassador Jennifer Z. Galt  
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs  
U. S. Department of State  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Ambassador Galt,

The Board of Directors of the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR) write to express grave concern on behalf of our 1,200 members and partner institutions across the US occasioned by the Department's recent designation of Russia as a "Category 3" risk-level country for US travel.

The new designation has taken the US academic and educational communities we represent by surprise, especially in light of the relatively stable exchange environment with Russia experienced by our various programs over the past three years, research and training activities that are both privately and federally sponsored, such as the Fulbright, NSLI-Y, CLS, Title 8, & Fulbright-Hays programs.

Whether or not Category 3 represents an actual change in the State Department's previous assessment of the risk for student and faculty travel in Russia, our school and university partners, and their respective legal offices, are clearly reading the new Advisory Level as indicating a significant increase of risk for travelers in Russia. For example, the New York Public School System has already cancelled all planned school travel to Russia, effective February 1, 2018, based on the Level 3 assessment, while a number of the major research universities (e.g., Indiana, Northwestern, Wisconsin/Madison) are instituting required waivers and additional conditions for granting permission for student and faculty travel to Russia. The New York Public School System and the university cases noted here are examples of the discussions about study and faculty travel to Russia which will now play out in one form or another in every school system and US college or university with students or faculty considering study or research in Russia.

At a time when the demand to fill language-designated positions for Russian across US government agencies is well documented and US national and economic security are dependent on the production of a new generation of Americans capable of understanding and dealing effectively with Russophone speakers throughout the world, the State Department's re-classification of Russia to Category 3 will have the serious, if unintended, effect of seriously restricting the most valuable civilian pipeline we as a nation have for preparing advanced-level experts and speakers of Russian across the professions.

We, therefore, respectfully urge the Department to reconsider the Category 3 designation and to adjust the status for Russia to Category 2, while maintaining the "no-travel" restriction, indicated in both current and past advisories, specifically for the North Caucasus and Crimea.

Should a change not be immediately possible, a written clarification of the Department's assessment of the current risk to students and scholars participating in sponsored educational and research



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programs in Russia (other than in the North Caucasus and Crimea) would be very useful for US schools and universities in their assessment of the relative safety and security of travel to Russia in 2018 in comparison with similar activity in 2017.

Many thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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