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State Department Deploys Additional Staff to Process Record U.S. Visa Demand

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Media Note

Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC

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The U.S. Mission to Brazil processed a record number of visa applications – 820,000 – in fiscal year 2011, a 42 percent year-over-year increase.

To meet the surging demand for U.S. visas in Brazil, the Department of State is deploying waves of temporary employees to the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia and U.S. Consulates in Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Recife. These employees are helping to process extraordinary numbers of visa applications until permanent staff members arrive. The Department will double consular staffing in Brazil over the course of 2012, adding 50 new officer positions.

With the help of additional personnel, U.S. Mission Brazil has reduced the average wait time for visa interview appointments in Brazil to less than 50 days. While the Department always puts security first, visitors to the United States make critical contributions to economic growth and job creation. That is why shortening visa interview wait times is also a priority – to encourage even greater numbers of Brazilians to visit the United States, a premier destination for travelers from around the world.

The United States and Brazil, the two largest economies and the two largest democracies in the Western Hemisphere, share one of the most important trade and economic relationships in the world. According to the Department of Commerce, more than 1.2 million Brazilians visited the United States in 2010, contributing nearly \$6 billion to the U.S. economy. By 2016, the United States could host a record 2.8 million Brazilian visitors.

The United States is also experiencing unprecedented growth in demand for U.S. visas in China, where consular officers processed more than one million applications during fiscal year 2011, a 34 percent increase over 2010. The average wait for visa interview appointments in China is now less than ten days. The U.S. Missions to Brazil and China will continue to reduce visa interview wait times to the greatest extent possible by adding staff and eliminating inefficiencies wherever possible.

More information about wait times for visa interviews and processing can be found online at travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html.

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