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Technological Systems Issue

JUNE 25, 2015

Visa Systems Issues

The Bureau of Consular Affairs reports that 165 posts, representing more than 85 percent of our nonimmigrant visa demand worldwide, are now online and issuing visas.

Posts overseas issued more than 82,000 visas on June 24.

Posts overseas have issued more than 238,000 non-immigrant visas this week. For context, if systems had been operating normally, posts would have issued approximately 540,000 visas since the outage started.

We will continue to bring additional posts online until connectivity with all posts is restored. All posts worldwide are now scheduling interviews with applicants, including with those who applied after the systems problems began on June 9.

We deeply regret the inconvenience to travelers who are waiting for visas, as well as their families and U.S. businesses that have been affected.

We continue to post updates to our website, travel.state.gov.

Q: Reports indicate that your backlog is 700,000 visas. Is this accurate?

No. While there is a large backlog of cases to clear, it never approached that level, and we have already made good progress issuing those visas. Many posts are working overtime this week and during the upcoming weekend, and we expect to eliminate the backlog in a week or less.

Q: How old is this equipment? And does the age of the equipment and the need to have so many repairs to the hardware mean that this equipment should have been replaced? Is this a funding issue at the base of it?

The hardware that impacted the biometrics system is several years old. The Department was working to move the biometrics system off of this hardware.

The operational requirements to keep this database running for domestic and overseas passport and visa issuances caused delays in upgrading the database according to our planned maintenance schedule.

AILA Doc. No. 15061209. (Posted 6/26/15)

We have been working to upgrade our systems over the past year.

We will move ahead with planned migration and systems upgrades as soon as we fully restore service.

Q: How did you restore service?

We restored service using a redundant, secondary backup system and other sources. That data allowed us to begin to re-connect posts to the affected portion of the system and synchronize biometric data. This system is running on newer hardware, and has a synchronized standby system in a different Department data center.

In parallel, we are continuing to restore data from backups and overseas post databases. This process is ongoing.

Q: Do you know whether this is equipment that was acquired directly by the State Department, or was this acquired through a third-party contractor?

The equipment was acquired by the Department of State.

Q: What does this mean for travelers seeking visas?

All posts are now interviewing applicants. Please check the website of the nearest embassy or consulate for interview appointment availability and up-to-date messages.

Q: How many people were affected by this outage?

During the past two weeks, consular sections have continued to interview travelers who applied June 8 or earlier. Those posts reconnected to our system are now issuing visas for those applicants.

Q: How are cases being prioritized?

We continue to facilitate urgent cases for those individuals who need to travel imminently, and will continue to do so until the systems are normal.

We apologize to travelers and recognize that this has caused hardship to some individuals waiting for visas as well as families and employers.

Q: What about the foreign agricultural workers (H2A visa holders?)

More than 2,500 temporary or seasonal workers have been issued new visas in Mexico since last week.

We will continue to prioritize H-2 applicants as our systems return to normal, and issue as many approved cases as possible. However, we will not be able to process these as quickly as we typically do until our systems are functioning normally. We continue to ask that any employers with urgent needs contact the post which is processing their applicants and we will do everything we can to facilitate the cases.

We are no longer asking CBP to provide Port of Entry waivers, as we have now begun issuing visas at border posts.

Visa applicants, including agricultural workers, who have not received a visa should not report to the border. Please contact the nearest embassy or consulate.

Q: What about domestic passports?

Domestic passport operations are functioning, with some processing delays.

The technical problems have affected the intake of some mailed applications and same-day service at our passport agencies; however, we continue to issue routine and expedited passports to U.S. citizens for all overseas travel needs.

Q: What about overseas passports?

Overseas passport applications are being processed. There have been delays in some cases, but posts overseas are able to issue emergency passports in urgent cases.

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