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US Passport/Visa System-wide Glitch Impacts U.S. Embassies Worldwide

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Before Vacation Takeoff, Buckle Up for Delays!

U.S. Embassies worldwide currently are experiencing serious technological problems with their passport and visa systems. As a result, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) has warned travelers to brace for delays in the issuance of U.S. passports and U.S. visas.

The global issue is impacting all overseas embassies and is not specific to any particular country or visa category. While the Bureau of Consular Affairs has not reported publicly on the precise cause of the outage, it has noted that there is no evidence of a cybersecurity breach or hacking.

The following applications are impacted by the glitch:

- U.S. passport applications received by overseas consulates between May 26 and June 14.
- DS-160 online nonimmigrant visa applications submitted after June 9th.

U.S. Consulates are managing this problem in different ways. Some consulates have proactively notified impacted visa applicants to reschedule appointments and submit new DS-160 applications. Others have asked visa applicants to monitor websites for updates before making any travel plans. We urge all travelers to regularly check U.S. consular webpages for alerts and to monitor the DOS newsroom page regarding the "Technological Systems Issue" (available here).

Despite the widespread delays, U.S. embassies continue to prioritize, and are able to process, emergency passports, adoptions, and humanitarian travel. Also, domestic processing of U.S. passports has not been impacted by the consular system failures.

This is not the first time that system-wide outages have impacted overseas processing. Last July, U.S. consulates experienced similar delays due to technical glitches in the DOS Consular Consolidated Database (CCD). While the problem was largely resolved in one week, the CCD was not back to its full operational capacity for one month.

The passport/visa outage is a reminder to all travelers that the best-made travel plans can be derailed by a number of uncontrollable factors. Employers also must be keenly aware that employees who are visa processing abroad may face delays in returning to the United States. Visa issuance can never be taken for granted as a simple administrative task. The return of passports and visas can be delayed for technical problems, additional security checks, and administrative processing reasons. As a result, the U.S. Department of State routinely advises visa applicants to not make travel plans until their visa is approved. While this is practically impossible for most individuals and families, it is important to prepare for the unexpected.