



Monday, December 17, 2007

UNITED KINGDOM IMPLEMENTS 10-PRINT BIOMETRICS REQUIREMENT IN CONNECTION WITH APPLICATIONS FOR UK VISAS

On December 3, 2007, the British government implemented new biometrics requirements for all visa applications submitted in the United States. The new requirements are part of a world-wide biometric identification initiative that began in 2003 at British Consulates around the world, which is meant to protect an individual's identity, facilitate future entry to the United Kingdom, and combat visa fraud and abuse of the United Kingdom's immigration and asylum systems. All applicants for UK visas in the United States, regardless of nationality, will now need to have digital fingerprints of all ten fingers and a digital photograph taken as part of the visa application process.

In order to facilitate this process, the UK government has entered into an arrangement with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security whereby all UK visa applicants will have biometric readings taken at one of the 120 Application Support Centers operated by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services across the United States. This will generally allow applicants to visit a location closer to their residence than one of the eleven British consular locations. The new procedures require applicants to make a biometrics appointment at the nearest Application Support Center after submission of their online visa application. After the biometric readings have been taken, applicants will send hard copies of all supporting documentation, including a biometrics confirmation notice, to the appropriate British Consulate for further processing of the application.

It is unclear at this time to what extent the new arrangement will affect the overall adjudication period of applications, if at all. However, UK visa applicants will need to allow time in the application process to travel and make a personal appearance at the closest Application Support Center, whereas most UK visa applications have in the past been completed solely by mail.

Travelers to the United Kingdom under the Visa Waiver Program will continue to be able to travel without a visa; however, all holders of work permits of longer than six months, and all nationals not falling under a visa waiver agreement with the United Kingdom, will be required to complete the new biometric process as part of the visa application process.

Should you have questions regarding global immigration strategies, country requirements, or specific visa or work permit applications, please contact your Tindall & Foster immigration attorney. Tindall & Foster's team of experienced outbound immigration legal experts is prepared to assist you in meeting your company's global migration needs through the development of comprehensive strategies and the pursuit of appropriate visa and work permit classifications no matter your employee's destination.