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NEW BIOMETRIC REQUIREMENTS TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN JAPAN AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

Following the lead of the United States, over the past few years several foreign governments have set in motion plans to require that visitors have biometric readings taken prior to entry.

Changes to The United Kingdom's Visa Application Process

Beginning December 3, 2007, British Consulates in the United States will require all visa applicants to have biometric readings taken at a British Consulate as part of the visa application process. The biometrics reading will include having a digital scan of all ten fingerprints taken, as well as a digital photograph. The information gained from the procedures will be stored in a central government database in the United Kingdom and checked against UK government records prior to visa issuance. As the plan covers only visa applicants, visa waiver travelers, including most U.S. citizens traveling to the United Kingdom for tourism or simple business matters, will not be affected. However, the plan will affect all nationals who require visas to enter the United Kingdom, as well as applicants who require visas in support of long-term stays in the country. This would include most individuals who have been granted work authorization.

Because visa applicants will be required to appear at a British Consulate to have the biometrics taken, applicants will no longer be able to complete the visa application process entirely through the internet and mail.

Changes to The United Kingdom's Visa Application Process

Japan is also implementing new biometrics requirements. Beginning November 20, 2007, all foreign nationals arriving in Japan will be digitally fingerprinted and photographed by an immigration control officer prior to begin granted entry. There will be only limited exceptions to this rule, including children under the age of 16.

Biometrics requirements are becoming more widespread worldwide. All member countries of the European Union, for example, will be phasing in biometric visas similar to the new procedures in the United Kingdom over the next several years.

For more regarding international immigration requirements, please contact your Tindall & Foster immigration attorney. Tindall & Foster, P.C. will continue to monitor the progress of immigration-related legislative proposals, regulatory issuance and procedural changes and will make additional information available via future Email Bulletins and on the Tindall & Foster, P.C. web site at www.tindallfoster.com.