

Meeting the Challenge: Update on Passport Production

Media Note

Office of the Spokesman

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Americans are seeking passports in record numbers and the State Department is taking extraordinary action to ensure that this demand is met. Should they so desire, Americans who need passports within two weeks, to travel or to get a visa, may check the status of their application online at <http://travel.state.gov> or call the National Passport Information Center at 1-877-487-2778. We have assigned additional staff to our call center to answer urgent inquiries. The call center is open from 7 a.m. to 12 midnight, Eastern Time, Monday-Friday, except federal holidays.

Because of the unprecedented demand for passports, travelers should allow ten (10) weeks for routine processing and four (4) weeks for expedited processing.

January through April is our normal peak season, as travelers prepare for spring and summer holidays. This year, a new law requiring Americans to have passports when traveling to or from the United States by air has increased passport demand and production to record levels. The passport requirement for land and sea travel has not yet taken effect. In Fiscal Year 2006, we issued 12 million passports, and we are on track to adjudicate up to 17 million passport applications in Fiscal Year 2007. Over 74 million Americans now have passports, and over one million more get passports every month.

The State Department is committed to meeting the challenge of increased demand for passports. In the past three years, we have hired and trained new staff - 250 new adjudicators in the past two years, with plans to hire 150 more in 2007-08. Our production centers are working extended hours, including around-the-clock operations at the National Passport Center in Portsmouth, NH, and we have increased our overtime staffing at the other 16 passport agencies. In April, we will open a mega-processing center in Arkansas that will produce as many as 10 million passports a year. We recognize that Americans have unprecedented travel document needs, and we are dedicated to producing passports in time for their travel.

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