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State Department Explains Visa Process for Entertainers

Nearly 44,000 visas for artists issued in fiscal year 2005

Department of State assistance available to entertainers seeking to obtain visas was explained in a media note issued by the department April 6.

"Consular sections around the world go to great lengths to facilitate travel for visiting entertainers," the note says. "We often arrange for entertainment groups to appear outside regular processing hours to streamline processing. In addition, performers can apply at any consular section worldwide, not just in their place of legal residence."

In the fiscal year that ended September 30, 2005, the Department of State issued nearly 44,000 visas for entertainers and artists, many of them expedited to meet performance schedules.

For more information on U.S. policies, see [Visas, Passports and Immigration](#).

Following is the text of the media note:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
April 6, 2006

MEDIA NOTE

Facilitation of Visas for Entertainers

The Department of State has long recognized the importance of cultural exchange and strongly supports the travel of international entertainers to this country. Performances by international artists provide enriching and rewarding experiences for both American audiences and the visiting entertainers.

Consular sections around the world go to great lengths to facilitate travel for visiting entertainers. We often arrange for entertainment groups to appear outside regular processing hours to streamline processing. In addition, performers can apply at any consular section worldwide, not just in their place of legal residence.

In fiscal year 2005, the Department of State issued nearly 44,000 visas for entertainers and artists, many of them expedited in order to meet performance schedules. For example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, we were able to help several large musical groups obtain visas in three days in order to play in benefit performances for hurricane relief. CNN recently reported on a rock band from Iran that participated in the famous South by Southwest festival in Austin, Texas. The Department of State coordinated the complex visa application process for the band members that enabled them to participate in the festival. Our embassies and consulates in Europe spend significant amounts of time supporting the travel of orchestras and dance troupes from all over the world.

By law, each applicant for a visa, even if part of a larger group, must be personally interviewed and their fingerprints collected. In addition, entertainers require special visas processed on the basis of a petition filed with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). All 211 of our visa processing offices recognize the importance of processing these visas in a timely fashion, once we receive the approved petitions from USCIS. Our consular officers recognize that managing the personal appearance of all members of a large group can be challenging and work with performers to help coordinate this process.

All of our efforts to assist international artists are informed by the desire of the United States to welcome entertainers, as we welcome all legitimate international travelers.

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