

LAGOS, NIGERIA U.S. EMBASSY

by Herbert A. Igbanugo*

TIME DIFFERENCE

Lagos is six hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

KEY PERSONNEL

Mr. Brian L. Browne, U.S. Consul General
Ronald J. Kramer, Consul
Carolyn O. Brooks, Consul General, Office Management Specialist

COMMUNICATIONS

Street Address

U.S. Consulate General
2 Walter Carrington Crescent
Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria

Telephone/Fax

Lagos Consulate General Main: (+234) (1) 261-0050/0078
Consulate General Fax: (+234) (1) 261-9856
Direct Consular Information Center: (+234) (1) 261-5697/5699
Abuja: (+234) (9) 253-0916/0960/5857/2235

E-mail Addresses

usvisa@state.gov (indicate in subject line student visa, tourist visa, etc.)
U.S. Consulate General: *uslagos@pd.state.gov*
Lagos Consular Section: *Lagoscons2@state.gov*
Abuja Consular Section: *consularabuja@state.gov*

* **Herbert A. Igbanugo** is a founding partner in the 20-plus attorney law firm of Blackwell Igbanugo, P.A., in Edina, Minn. He is co-chair of the National Bar Association's Immigration Law Section, and a regular faculty participant and author for AILA and the Minn. Institute of Legal Education. Igbanugo has also served as adjunct professor at Hamline University and guest lecturer at William Mitchell College of Law, both located in St. Paul, Minn., and has a wealth of experience in federal court litigation of immigration matters. His published works include: *"Deportation Procedures and Relief Under the Immigration Act of 1990"* (1991); *"Federal District Court Litigation in the IIRAIRA Era (Why, When and How to Sue the INS in Federal District Court)"* (1997); *"Practical Hints in Mandamus and Declaratory Judgment Review Prayers in the IIRAIRA Era"* (2000), and *"The Impact of Security Related Priorities on Immigration Litigation..."* (NBA Publication) (2003). He is admitted to practice before numerous U.S. federal courts.

Website

http://nigeria.usembassy.gov

Inquiries

The embassy in Lagos has two information lines staffed by two consular personnel to deal with public inquiries. Public inquiries on visa matters are welcome Monday–Friday, 7:30 am–4:00 pm. The staff of the Telephone Information Center will not adjudicate cases over the telephone and will not entertain hypothetical inquiries. They will simply look up information contained in post computers to respond to public inquiries on visa cases in progress. The post prefers that attorneys not fax questions in advance of telephone calls regarding cases. The Telephone Information Center staff will respond immediately to inquiries from the public or attorneys, but can only relay information contained in their computer system.

The fax line is severely overburdened. One officer at the post is in charge of responding to e-mails and faxes. The post receives hundreds of facsimile communications and e-mails per day. Because of the post's inability to adequately staff e-mail and facsimile communications, the post strongly recommends that communication be done by courier service. All information sent via courier service such as Federal Express, DHL, U.S. Postal Express Mail, etc., is received in the normal course of business. If you communicate with the post by e-mail or facsimile, do so only once and allow five days for a reply. Be sure to indicate in the subject line the name of the client, type of case (H-1B, F-1) or if IV case, indicate the case number. Include the date of denial, if such is the case, and be succinct.

Interviews

All nonimmigrant visa (NIV) and immigrant visa (IV) interviews at the post are by appointment only. To obtain an appointment for NIV cases, simply send a short letter requesting an appointment. Upon receipt of this letter, it will be keyed into the computer, scheduled for an interview, and the applicant will be notified of the date and time of the interview. Procedures are subject to change; current or up-to-date procedure information is posted at the consulate visa gate. Request for appointments should be couriered or telefaxed to the post. E-mail communications are not reliable.

Congressional Inquiries

The Lagos post receives between 30 and 40 congressional inquiries per day. It does its best to turn them around quickly, but there are administrative delays, e.g., due to having to search for and pull the appropriate

files. Inquiries containing information supporting the applicant that the post has not previously reviewed ordinarily are the more effective than status inquiries.

Practice Tip: The author's personal perspective on the usefulness of congressional inquiries is that if a congressional inquiry will prompt the post to pull the file, research and/or review it to respond to the congressperson, it invariably leads to a more appropriate/timely adjudication.

Local Issues

The post has the most current up-to-date computer systems for IV, DV, and NIV available at the Department of State (DOS), and the latest in office support software. However, the system is seriously hampered by the underdeveloped infrastructure in Nigeria. For instance, the electricity supply is interrupted frequently.

ATTORNEY REPRESENTATION

The right to have counsel physically present at interviews is observed. Consular officers will discuss both IV and NIV cases with attorneys at the end of the interview, depending on time availability. The author's personal observation is that the Lagos post is attorney-tolerant. There are two entry gates at the Embassy, one for U.S. citizens and the other for non-U.S. citizens. A U.S. attorney may enter the post via the U.S. citizens' gate. If an applicant is represented by an attorney, the attorney is notified of the applicant's interview appointment at the same time as the applicant. The attorney will be allowed to accompany the applicant to the interview. Post-interview inquiries from attorneys should be made in writing and sent via courier service.

UNLAWFUL PRESENCE BARS: DETERMINATIONS OF INADMISSIBILITY UNDER INA §§212(a)(9)(B)(i)(I) AND (II)

The embassy is very cognizant of overstay issues. Applicants should be prepared to provide objective evidence to effectively demonstrate maintenance of lawful status during prior stays in the United States. The post indicated that even if I-94s are handed over to the airlines on the alien's exit from the United States, other relevant proof of authorized stay and timely departure from the United States, such as copies of the I-94 and original I-797 extension of stay approval notices should be retained and submitted to the consul. Regarding the effect of denied asylum applications, the post is normally contacted when an alien from Nigeria applies for asylum, and at the conclusion of the asylum hearing, they are normally notified as to the result of the hearing. In the author's experience, if no affirmative finding of frivolity is made by the immigration judge (IJ), the post would not put an applicant to task to demonstrate that they have not filed a frivolous asylum application in the United States.

NONIMMIGRANT VISAS

Students

Applicants seeking to enter the United States to study can obtain additional information at <http://travel.state.gov/visa/foreignstuden.html>. The site contains complete information about additional requirements for students, including I-20 forms, financial support, student qualifications, and electronic verification of admission. All student visa applicants must pay the nonrefundable USD \$100 (N14,000) visa application fee. The fee must be paid by eVAPS* (information on eVAPS can be found at the end of this section) or in U.S. dollars cash. Students may apply for a visa 90 days prior to the I-20 arrival date but may not arrive in the United States until 30 days prior to that date. If an I-20 has expired, the student must have a new I-20 or an extension letter from the school. It is the responsibility of the student and the school to ensure the student is registered in Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). It is suggested that students schedule an interview immediately after receiving the I-20. If there is not an appointment available that will allow you to arrive at school on time, please send an e-mail to lagoscons2@state.gov for priority processing. The embassy indicates that reasonable efforts will be made to schedule an appointment a few days prior to the scheduled arrival date.

Visitors

Applicants seeking to enter the United States to conduct business may present evidence of an ongoing relationship with a U.S. firm or provide a letter indicating the purpose of the trip, the intended length of stay, and the firm's intent to defray travel costs.

Applicants traveling to the United States for pleasure may submit letters of invitation from friends or relatives or confirmation of participation in a planned tour.

Applicants seeking to enter the United States for medical treatment must present detailed information about the medical condition, the duration and total projected cost of the proposed treatment, and evidence of their ability to cover all expenses.

*eVAPS

Beginning January 1, 2005, all nonimmigrant visa applicants must pay the non-refundable USD \$100 (N14,000) visa application fee using the eVAPS scratch-card system or pay U.S. dollars cash. eVAPS provides the following benefits to visa applicants:

- The service is free and quick (applicants queue in an express line before appearing before a consular office for a visa interview);
- The service is secure (each scratch-card is encoded with personal information and a hidden, random 16-character Private Identification Code (PIC) that allows consulate staff to verify that applicants have paid the visa application fee); and

- The service is convenient (applicants or their proxies may go to any Fountain Trust Bank (www.fountaintrustbank.com/branches.htm) branch and request an eVAPS card to pay the visa application fee). You will be asked for your appointment letter, passport, and N14,000 application fee in order to receive an eVAPS card. Applicant should NOT scratch the card themselves. The consular officer will scratch the card and use the unique PIC to verify that the individual who appears for the interview is the same one for whom the card was purchased. Once processing is complete, the applicant will receive a number and wait for the visa interview.

Processing Procedures

NIV applicants can schedule an interview at <http://nigeria.usembassy.gov> and select from listed available dates. Mail-in applications are not accepted and walk-ins are not allowed. Almost all visa applications are adjudicated at the time of applicants' appearance at the consulate, although some cases require additional processing that may delay completion. Issued visas are generally printed and returned within two business days of the applicants' appearance at the consulate. The maximum validity period for almost all categories of NIVs issued at the embassy is 24 months.

Applicants whose visa applications are denied may reapply by scheduling another appointment on the website. **Note:** subsequent applications will likely be denied unless applicant's family or economic situation changes significantly following the prior application. There is no limit to the number of times an applicant can apply for a nonimmigrant visa and there are no strict time periods between visa applications once an applicant is refused under INA §214(b). However, the post strongly recommends that if a visa applicant has been refused twice within one year, they should wait for at least a period of one year to reapply.

Practice Tip: The author's personal observation is that the post is inclined to expeditiously deny a visa reapplication that is filed shortly after the applicant has been refused twice within a year.

NIV applicants must submit all of the following that are relevant to their application:

- Electronic, bar-coded DS-156 nonimmigrant visa application (all applicants *must* complete this form);
- eVAPS receipt (all applicants);
- DS-157 (all men ages 16–45);
- DS-158 (students);
- Endorsed, valid I-20 (students);
- DS-2019 (exchange visitors);
- Family Form (applicants who are married or have children complete this form);
- International passport valid for at least six months after the intended date of travel; and

- Two (2 inches x 2 inches) studio quality photographs with full face forward against a white background, taken within the past six months. Do *not* provide photographs with dark eyeglasses or head covering (face should be uncovered for identity purposes)

NIV applicants must demonstrate that they are properly classifiable as visitors under U.S. law. Applicants may present evidence of the purpose of their proposed trip, their intent to depart the United States after a brief stay, and sufficient funds to cover the cost of the trip.

Depending on individual circumstances, applicants may provide other evidence substantiating the trip's purpose and specifying the nature of binding obligations, such as family ties or employment that would compel them to depart the United States after a brief stay.

Drop-box Facility

NIV applicants may renew tourist, business, student, exchange, crew, or temporary employment visas if the following conditions are met. **Note:** Participation in the drop-box process does not guarantee visa issuance:

- The visa to be renewed is a multiple-entry U.S. visa issued within the last three years;
- The visa's expiration date is within the most recent 12 months; and
- The required application forms are completed, including the electronic DS-156 form.

If all three above conditions are met, applicants must follow and complete the following steps. A proxy (authorized stand-in with appropriate photo identification) may perform certain steps as specifically noted below.

Day 1 (any business day except Wednesday)

Noon

- Arrive at visa gate
- Pay non-refundable USD \$100 (N14,000) visa application fee. Fee must be paid by eVAPS
- Submit completed application forms:
 - Electronic, bar-coded DS-156 nonimmigrant visa application (all applicants complete this form);
 - DS-157 (men ages 16–45 also complete this form);
 - DS-158 (students also complete this form);
 - Endorsed, valid I-20 (students must present this form);
 - DS-2019 (exchange visitors present this form);
 - Family form (applicants who are married or have children complete this form);
 - International passport valid for at least six months after the intended date of travel;
 - Two (5cm x 5cm) studio quality photographs with full face forward against a white background, taken within the past six months. Do *not* provide

photographs with dark eyeglasses or head covering (face should be uncovered for identity purposes)

- If all payments and supporting documentation is correct, applicants (or proxies) will receive a numbered, colored ticket. Applicants will use these tickets to continue processing. Applicants with incomplete forms will be asked to return another day

Day 2 (any business day except Wednesday)

6:30 am

- Arrive at visa gate
- Present colored ticket issued on Day 1
- Allowed entrance and immediately processed. When business is completed, applicants are free to leave the building

Two Business Days After the Interview

2:00 pm

- Successful drop-box applicants (or proxies) return to the visa gate to collect their visa(s)
- Must again present colored ticket issued on Day 1

Visa Issuance Rates

Due to perceived widespread fraud, visa issuance rates are quite low. The post maintains an anti-fraud unit. This Diplomatic Security Crime Investigations Unit is one of three most heavily equipped in the entire world. The other two are located at the consular posts in Kingston, Jamaica and Manila, Philippines. The post has experienced significant fraud in both NIV and IV applications, and contends with fake documents on a daily basis, which adversely impacts visa issuance rates. Immigrant and professional work visa cases such as H-1B, L-1, etc., are investigated whenever possible. The post remains vigilant in order to curtail the claimed widespread fraud in visa applications.

Visas by Mail and Waiver

Due to fraud concerns, the post does not accept any visa applications by mail, including applications from the United States. Therefore, mail-in, and travel agency filings in Lagos are very rarely permitted. The post will make an exception in extraordinary circumstances, but the applicant must be physically present in Nigeria. However, drop-box procedures are in effect in Lagos.

Additional Documents and Special Forms

The post does not use any special forms but provides information sheets regarding medical examinations and NIV applications.

Post Acceptance of USCIS Approval Notices, Cables or Attorney Certified Copies

The post will generally process H, L, and K visas upon the presentation of the Notice of Approval from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The

post will also process cases based on USCIS cables. H and L visa applicants must present a copy of the Form I-129 packet, as well as evidence of the applicant's qualifications for the visa status for which he or she is applying. The post will accept any appropriate and credible documentation to process these cases. Applicants must present original degrees, transcripts, and *notarized* employment letters.

THERE ARE NO CABLES OR TELEGRAMS on I-129 approvals where the petition directs NIV processing at a post. As to I-129 approvals, each service center notifies the Kentucky Processing Center (KPC) and the KPC sends an e-mail notice to the post. This process is the same whether the case was processed through the Premium Processing unit or regular processing. This e-mail process takes 24–48 hours. In the event the Internet connection is not working, or for some other reason the post does not receive the e-mail notice, the post may be notified by the KPC by fax. Applicants still should be encouraged to follow the post-by-post procedures and bring in the “official copy” of the I-797 (usually the I-797A) and the requested portions of the petition package and supporting documents. But it is important in expedited or emergency situations for members to know how the KPC notice system works. If you wish to find out more, the KPC numbers (**DO NOT DISSEMINATE TO THE PUBLIC**) are (606) 526-7425/7500.

On a service center-by-service center and post-by-post basis, sometimes USCIS will fax the I-797 to the post directly in expedited situations.

Policy on B-1 in Lieu of H-1

B-1 visas will normally be issued to employees of Nigerian companies who travel to the United States for training or consultation with U.S. business partners or subsidiaries, assuming they continue to receive their regular salary from Nigeria and will not receive any benefits from the U.S. business partner that could be deemed salary from a U.S.-based source. B-1 in lieu of H-1 visa applications will be scrutinized closely. Applicants should present detailed information demonstrating they will receive no U.S. sourced income. In order to substantiate such claims, it is helpful if applicants' present credit cards issued on the Nigerian employer's account in the name of the B-1 applicant. Such cards are evidence that even spending money will be obtained with the Nigerian employer's credit card from ATM machines in the United States.

Fraud

The post reports that attempts to acquire NIVs and IVs through misrepresentation or fraudulent documents such as false bank statements, invitation letters, job letters, and tax returns are common. Attorneys should use the “reality test” when representing Nigerian applicants. Worldwide, there is a governmental presumption of fraud by Nigerians; thus, attorneys must be cognizant of this and should always over-document the case. Beware of customary tribal

divorce and marriage documents. The post and USCIS almost uniformly suspects such documents. Do not be naive. Question all documents. Nigerians applying in third-countries confront the same issues.

Lagos is a training post because of the vast array of issues encountered there; thus, there is frequent rotation of consular officers through the embassy. Complications commonly encountered by visa applicants that delay visa adjudication include missing documents, inconsistencies and inadequate financial data/resources to meet the public charge requirements.

General Practice Tips

The author's experience with this post over the past 15 years has been somewhat positive. In spite of the large volume of cases and fraud issues, the consular staff seems dedicated to aiding U.S. citizens and their relatives, when appropriate.

Attorneys dealing with the Lagos post must be courteous and respectful in communicating with the post in order not to trigger the frustrations of consular staff due to the difficulties of the post. Being polite in approaching the consular officers will do a lot towards achieving the interest of your client.

Also, all communications to the post should be concise and to the point. Avoid writing lengthy letters because consular officers do not have time to read them. Just say what you want to say in as few words as possible. To avoid delays in the immigrant visa process, make sure you update the post with change of addresses and advise your clients to courier mail to the post, whenever possible, as opposed to using the local postal system in Nigeria, which is inefficient.

Visa applicants are advised to use local courier services, whenever possible, as opposed to personal appearance at the post to drop off mail or documents, unless specifically requested by consular officers. Make sure that all documents are labeled, tabbed, and include a table of contents for easy reference during the adjudication of the case. Making it easier for the consular officers to access information in the packet will create good will for your client and expedite an approval in appropriate cases.

The post denies virtually all maintenance of status or departure bonds in nonimmigrant visa cases. Applicants should concentrate their efforts on overcoming the grounds contained in INA §214(b), which is the main reason for most nonimmigrant visa refusals.

Nigeria has spent most of its 42-year history under military dictatorship and Nigeria's former military generals raided the country's coffers to their heart's content. The Nigerian economy is still in shambles despite return to civilian rule and the infrastructure remains poor. A high number of the country's citizens desire to leave the country at all costs. Thus, nonimmigrant visa applicants bear a heavy burden of

proof in overcoming the presumption of immigrant intent under §214(b), where it applies. It is this post's perception that document fraud is prevalent in both NIV and IV cases. Practitioners should stress to their clients the importance of submitting credible and easily verifiable documents because the post frequently investigates primary (birth and marriage certificates, etc.) and other critical documents.

Deal with this post nicely. Be kind and willing to provide all information requested, and do not blindly argue with consular officers. The frustration level at the post is high due to inadequate infrastructure and the rampant fraud by visa applicants. Be forthcoming with information and insofar as it is possible to do so ensure that your client is being completely honest and forthright with you, because if the post discovers any sort of deception, it will be difficult to overcome and the case will be denied. It is very difficult to cure deception, so that it is crucial that attorneys warn their clients about providing false or deceptive documents. Approach this post with "clean hands" and be candid in all your dealings with them.

IMMIGRANT VISAS

Processing Procedures

An immediate family member or an employer in the United States initiates most immigrant petitions. The family member in the United States files the petition. Although the USCIS branch of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is responsible for processing immigrant visa petitions all final visa approvals are done at the U.S. Consulate in Lagos. After initial review of an approved petition, applicants will be notified by the consulate about documentation requirements and how to schedule the final interview. Required medical examinations for immigrant visas are conducted only in Lagos and only by doctors certified by the consulate.

Medical Examinations

Applicants should obtain a medical examination from the following clinic:

Dr. K.A. Omotosho
KAMORASS Specialist Clinics
238 Muri Okunola Street,
Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria
Tel.: (+234) (1) 261-2799
E-mail: omot@hyperia.com

The post uses only the above clinic to conduct medical exams.

Vaccination Policies and Procedures

Regarding vaccination documentation and procedures for complying with vaccination requirements, once Dr. Omotosho conducts a review and verification of vaccination documentation, the post will consider the vaccination requirement satisfied.

Discretionary Cases

Only discretionary cases presenting significant humanitarian issues will be considered for acceptance for visa processing. The post does not encourage discretionary cases due to its high volume of work. Humanitarian concerns should always be highlighted in every application of this sort. However, it is usually not a good idea to seek discretionary acceptance of an NIV or IV application at a high fraud post.

Affidavit of Support Issues

Always submit Internal Revenue Service (IRS) *certified copies of tax returns* to prove that the returns were actually filed with the IRS. Tax returns should be checked to see that they meet the poverty guideline requirements. They should also be checked carefully to ensure extra “children” or other dependents were not improperly claimed. All tax returns should be properly arranged with the latest year in front followed by the two previous years. Alternatively, obtain IRS printouts to substantiate authenticity of uncertified returns. All pages should be intact and in order. The form should be properly completed and executed, and evidence of employment (notarized letter) should be attached. Sloppily prepared affidavits of support make processing more difficult and delay approval in many cases.

The post does not look behind the cosponsor and make judgments on whether or not they can be relied upon for support, but they do take a look at the whole picture. The post follows the law as indicated on Form I-864 and will approve an affidavit of support that meets the requirements of the law. They do not look for any more or any less than what is required by the law. Therefore, an affidavit of support from a relative or friend who has bound himself by the contractual terms of Form I-864 will be accepted.

Additional Documents and Special Forms

The post does not use any special forms other than those commonly used by the DOS and other consular posts around the world.

What the Post Will Accept in Lieu of Originals for Following-to-Join and Derivative Cases

The post will accept a USCIS cable or other direct evidence of eligibility for following-to-join cases and process applicants without the necessity for the petitioner to processing an I-824 at USCIS or requiring involvement of the National Visa Center (NVC), including the scheduling of interviews. In IV cases based upon employment, the post will accept an attorney-authenticated copy of the labor certification and the I-140 (Original Notice of Approval); proof of adjustment of status; and proof of relationship between principal and applicant, as appropriate. The post is generally amenable to using appropriate documentation to initiate the process and will request original documents when necessary. It is

therefore recommended that originals be readily available for presentation at the request of the post.

Adjudication of Immediate Relative Visa Petitions

Because of local conditions and workload, the post will usually only accept immediate relative visa petitions from petitioners who are *resident* in Nigeria, as opposed to being merely physically present in Nigeria. Adjudication of I-130 spousal petitions is usually expeditious when all appropriate documents are available. Adjudication could be accomplished in just a few weeks when the petitioner and beneficiary are both resident in Nigeria and the case is clearly approvable.

LOCAL ADVICE

Practice Tip: When you deal with this post, you should know the law and know the “dos and don’ts” of the post. Be professional and knowledgeable, but also be diplomatic in the way that you communicate with the post. It creates good rapport for you and your clients if you come to the post with humility, as opposed to arrogance. You are free to present legal arguments, but do not make it appear as if you are trying to teach them U.S. immigration laws. This should go without saying, given the fact that consular decisions are not generally reviewable in U.S. federal courts. Therefore, you must make the best of it for your client by using a gentle approach.

TRAVEL TIPS

DOS warns U.S. citizens against unnecessary travel to Nigeria. U.S. citizens who choose to travel to Nigeria should avoid being out at night and should stick to the cities in every region of the country. Armed robbery is rampant in the country and it is generally unsafe. Security may improve in the future with the new civilian administration. Entry or visa information for travel to Nigeria may be obtained at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2201 M Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, telephone (202) 822-1500; or at the Nigerian Consulate General in New York, telephone (212) 808-0301.

The weather in Lagos is usually hot and humid all year round. The national currency is the naira, which exchanges very favorably with the U.S. dollar. As of the writing of this article, the rate of exchange is USD \$1 to 140 naira. (\$1 to 138.21 naira).

The two best hotels in Lagos are the Sheraton Hotel and Eko Lé Meridian. They are both four to five star hotels. There is good shopping around the hotels and local markets for artifacts, local woodcarvings and semi-precious stone jewelry.

Banks are open Monday through Friday, 9:00 am–4:00 pm. Do not look for ATM machines because you will not find any. Financial transactions should be conducted at the “bureau de change” located at the hotel.

This author strongly recommends that you not venture to deal with local “black market” currency dealers.

Power outages are frequent in Nigeria, but the two hotels described have generators which come on automatically upon a power outage. In the hotel vicinity, you are generally safe, but outside the hotel vicinity, you must be very careful. Use the hotel’s taxi service only as opposed to regular street cabs.

Hotel taxis are registered and are safe. Do not drive a car in Lagos. Most car rentals will provide you with a driver as part of the rental for reasonable rates that are much less than you would pay for just renting a car for yourself in the United States. You should not drive in Lagos unless you are a Lagotian. In this regard, think 10 times worse than driving in New York City.

U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES

Accra is a suboffice of the Rome District and has responsibility for immigration matters in the following countries: Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Cote d’Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

Michael Wing, Officer-in-Charge
Consular Section, USCIS
American Embassy
Department of State
2020 Accra Place, Washington, DC 20521-2020
Tel.: (+233) (21) 776-601/775-348 ext. 109
Fax: (+233) (21) 769-260

Street Address

U.S. Embassy
Annex Building
6th & 10th Lane, Embassy Road
Osu, Accra, Ghana

Mailing Address (from outside the United States and Express Mail)

Officer-in-Charge
USCIS
American Embassy
Ring Road East, Accra, Ghana

Hours of Operation

The office is open to the public Monday–Thursday, 7:30 am–12:30 pm, and 1:00 pm–5:00 pm; Friday, 7:30 am–11:30 am. It is closed on Ghanaian and American holidays. The best way to contact the Consular Section is via e-mail at consulateaccra@state.gov.

The U.S. Embassy in Lagos advises that G-325A forms should be prepared and submitted with all waiver applications. The post will use either e-mail, cable, or hard copy. Consular officers and USCIS investigate local cases as appropriate. Although they are different agencies

of the U.S. government, they are housed together and aid one another. Therefore, investigations into the *bona fide* nature of family and employment-based petitions and many other matters may be investigated by consular officials, as well as USCIS.

WAIVER POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND TIME CONSIDERATIONS

All inquiries regarding the status of waiver requests that cannot be answered by the Lagos consular information center should be directed to USCIS at U.S. Embassy, Ghana, after Lagos has transmitted the waiver application to that embassy. Lagos will not have information on the status of such cases unless it has been adjudicated by USCIS in Ghana.

U.S. AND NIGERIAN HOLIDAYS FOR 2005

December 31	New Year’s Day
January 17	Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birthday
January TBD	EID-EL-ADHA
February 21	President’s Day
March 25	Good Friday
March 28	Easter Monday
April TBD	EID-EL-MAULUD
May 30	Memorial Day
July 04	Independence Day
September 05	Labor Day
October 10	Columbus Day
November 11	Veterans Day
November 24	Thanksgiving Day
November TBD	EID-EL-FITR
December 26	Boxing day/Christmas Day (observed)