

Waiver Notes by Foreign CIS Office

Date: August 21, 2007

Information subject to change without notice. Check back for updates.

OIC: The name of the Officer-in-Charge

Processing times: These times are estimates, subject to change without notice. Times are from filing of the waiver packet at the consulate to the issuance of a decision notice from CIS.

Special filing instructions: All packets should include an I-601 form, a G-28 (optional), brief, qualifying relative's letter and supporting documents. Many require a form G-325A for the applicant. Other offices have unusual requirements. These are noted. Not all locations have special filing instructions.

Likelihood of Approval: Each case is unique, but just to give you a very general idea of what to expect, I've rated them on a scale of Five to One, with a Five placing more emphasize on reuniting families, and a One placing more emphasis on punishing the alien for past mistakes.

Communications: Some offices are easier to communicate with than others and I've rated them from difficult to excellent. Mailing addresses are available online. I've noted if I also have an email address or phone number available to attorneys that facilitates communications. If you need this email or phone number, please contact me as I cannot post these publicly.

Administrative: I've listed unique administrative issues at each office, if any.

Post-denial tips: Whether your best option is to re-file, do an MTR or appeal may depend on the particular office.

Juarez

OIC: Warren Janssen

Processing times: For Pilot Program cases, two hours. For backlogged or referred cases, ten months and falling.

Special Filing Instructions: G-325A. Also, see my memo regarding the Pilot Program.

Likelihood of Approval: Five (But still not guaranteed. Prepare a good case.)

Communications: Excellent. I have a reliable email.

Administrative: Many backlogged and referred cases have been forwarded to Tijuana and Mexico City.

Post-denial tips: If you get a denial based on failure to prove extreme hardship on a waiver packet that you thought was well-prepared, you should consider an MTR, but be sure to make a convincing argument that the new evidence presented was not previously available. If the case was denied because it was a lousy waiver packet in the first place, email the consulate requesting a new interview so you can file a de novo packet. Starting over with a new petition is no longer required as long as you are within one year of the I-601 denial. A new interview may take 10-12 months.

Guatemala City

OIC: Joseph Roma

Processing times: Five months

Likelihood of Approval: Four

Communications: Excellent. I have a phone number.

Vienna

OIC: Marla Belvedere

Processing time: Seven months

Likelihood of Approval: Three.

Communications: Excellent. I have an email address.

Administrative: Many cases sent to Vienna are forwarded to either Frankfurt or Rome.

Post-denial tips: Re-filing is an excellent option for Vienna cases because (a) the consulates within Vienna's jurisdiction will allow an immediate re-file and (b) since Vienna forwards cases to other offices, the next time you file it might go to a different CIS office and would be reviewed with a completely fresh perspective.

Panama City

OIC: Donna Petree

Processing times: Eight to ten months and increasing.

Required in Filing: No notes.

Likelihood of Approval: Three

Communications: Fair. Faxes are sometimes responded to promptly.

Administrative: While normally the OIC signs all communications, recently communications have been mysteriously signed by the District Director instead. I'm not sure what this indicates.

Frankfurt

OIC: Jeffrey Sapko

Processing time: Two to five months. While it usually takes less than 90 days for Frankfurt CIS to adjudicate a waiver packet once they receive it, if the case is routed through Vienna, it may take an extra 2-3 months for the case to arrive in Frankfurt.

Cases filed at the Frankfurt consulate may only take one month for pre-adjudication procedures. If you file at a location other than the Frankfurt consulate, check to make sure the case gets to the Frankfurt CIS office in a timely manner.

Special filing instructions: You may have to complete a questionnaire at the consulate, which is not available online.

Likelihood of Approval: Three.

Communications: Excellent. I have a reliable email.

Administrative: I've never had a single administrative problem with the Frankfurt CIS office.

Post-denial tips: An MTR is frequently worthwhile if you can ascertain from the denial what would have changed the adjudicator's mind and led to an approval. Be sure that whatever evidence you provide is new evidence.

London

OIC: Karen Fitzgerald

Processing times: Six to eight months

Special filing instructions: Packet must include a letter from the applicant as well as qualifying relative. At the consular interview, the applicant must not only submit a divorce decree, but also all prior UK marriage certificates.

Likelihood of Approval: Two

Communications: Difficult. Emails bounce back. Faxes and mailed inquiries go unanswered for more than 30 days.

Administrative: London now posts cases status online by consular case number: http://www.usembassy.org.uk/dhs/forms/i601_status-web.pdf

Post-denial tips: Based on recent experience, an MTR is rarely worthwhile unless it's a clear, straightforward and important mistake of fact or mistake of law or if there has been a very significant new development. Best to either re-file or appeal.

Athens

OIC: Georgia Papas

Processing times: Five to Eight Months.

Likelihood of Approval: Two. The predecessor of the current OIC was punitive and some of the reputation persists. But the current OIC is more moderate.

Communications: Excellent by fax or phone.

Lima

OIC: Alonso Gonzales

Processing times: Five to eight months

Special filing instructions: Copies of all vital records with translation. Copy of police certificate with translation. G-325A.

Likelihood of Approval: Three for cases with no misrepresentation, Two for cases involving misrepresentation, One for cases involving more than one incident of misrepresentation.

Communications: Excellent by fax.

Administrative: Problems with communication/coordination between the consulates and the CIS office. Make sure the consulate sends the packet in a timely manner. Be sure to make waiver inquiries directly to CIS, rather than the consulate.

Post-denial tips: If you filed a good waiver packet in the first place and it gets denied, I am now recommending you go straight to an appeal for Lima cases. Don't bother re-filing or doing an MTR through Lima.

Vermont (Canadian cases)

OIC: Less significant at the Service Center.

Processing times: Twelve months and increasing.

Special filing instructions: Whereas most overseas offices will take a faxed G-28 signed by either the applicant or the petitioner/relative, Vermont insists on an original (not faxed) G-28 signed by the applicant

Likelihood of Approval: Two.

Communications: Difficult.

Brief notes on some other offices:

Manila: Reputation for being the most difficult office to get a waiver approved, but not enough recent information to give notes

Rome: Expect a blurb on Rome the next time these notes are updated.

Bangkok and Moscow: I have cases pending in these locations now. I will give information when I have some to provide.