



SPECIAL ISSUANCE AGENCY

The U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs

WHAT TO KNOW

Understanding the SIA Lingo

Comebacks? Suspense? Not Issued? Not sure what all this means? Understand our passport vocabulary to help navigate the application process effectively!

[GET THE SCOOP](#)

Elimination of Visa Page Inserts

Effective January 1, 2016, the U.S Department of State no longer adds additional visa pages into U.S. passports.

[GET THE SCOOP](#)

Passport Day at The Special Issuance Agency

October 24th marked the annual Passport Day at SIA in support of Passport Awareness. The day's success yielded the highest numbers yet!

[GET THE SCOOP](#)

YOUR GUIDE TO PERFECT PASSPORT PHOTOS



Did you notice the photo on the left is over exposed and is not acceptable as a passport photo? Visit [Photo Requirements](#) on our website for detailed guidance on perfect photos every time!

2016 DOD 1st Edition

WHAT'S INSIDE

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- Training Class Q&A Session P. 4
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Need-to-Know Emails

DoD Passport & Visa Status Inquiries to Directorate of Executive Travel (DET)

usarmy.pentagon.hqda.mbx.lsw-ppv-customer-service@mail.mil

SIA - Application Suspense Inquiries

CA-PPT-SIA-PASSPORTS@state.gov

CPC - Application Suspense Inquiries

CA-PPT-CPC-MIL-CS@state.gov

DoD Acceptance Agent Passport Program Inquiries

CA-PPT-SIA-CS@state.gov

Travel.State.Gov/SIA

Visit us online for more information about forms, notices, and resources.

Nine Simple Tips

1. Include rank or grade of applicant on Form DD 1056, Box 7. Civilian or DOD are not acceptable in this field.
2. Transmittals must be included in all envelopes with applications, and the tracking number must be recorded.
3. CONUS Agents, including those in Guam and Puerto Rico, should send three additional photocopies of Form DD 1056 along with the original.
4. Photos must be secured to the application with four staples and staples must not interfere with the image.
5. Always record the applicant's ID when executing Form DS-11 and provide a photocopy of the ID. Submission of the photocopy does not take the place of recording the ID on Form DS-11.
6. A U.S. Birth Certificate is not acceptable as primary identification. It is evidence of U.S. citizenship.
7. Do not send double-sided photocopies. Only single sided copies are acceptable.
8. On Form DD 1056, box 17, state specific country of travel. If unsure, provide projected destination.
9. Secure assembled applications with jumbo paperclips (no staples).

SIA Story Time

A time sensitive comeback was dropped off to SIA without a copy of the suspense notice. Without the suspense notice, there was no indication that an application was already on file at SIA. The comeback was processed as a new application and the existing application on file remained in suspense. SIA personnel searched frantically for the comeback to resolve the original application, which was needed for urgent travel. Finally, hours later, the two applications were married up. Needless to say, despite great efforts, the confusion prevented the customer from receiving the passport the same day.

PASSPORT MATTERS REALLY DOES MATTER

For the latest information regarding the DoD Passport Program, important notices, and training dates, visit DoD's Passport Matters website. The homepage contains everything from changes in policy to deadlines and instructions. Under the Resources tab, find helpful FAQs and required Passport Program forms such as the Agent Update form and a fillable DS-7691 transmittal form.



DoD Passport Agents
Passport Matters

Understanding the SIA Lingo

Navigate the application process effectively by understanding the terms below:

Suspense: Applications placed on hold pending submission of additional documents or information such as new passport photos, travel orders, missing or corrected DD Form 1056, corrected applications, and more. Documents must be received within 90 days to prevent the application from being "not issued."

**Pro Tip: Take action on suspense emails as quickly as possible to eliminate the need to upgrade an application to expedite in the future.*

Comebacks: (Also known as "Applicant Response") Documents submitted in response to a suspense email that will be matched to the original application at the passport agency.

**Pro Tip: Always include a copy of the suspense notice with documents submitted to the passport agency in response. Missing this step can cause your documents to be misdirected and delay the application.*

Not Issued: Applications that are denied due to insufficient evidence or entitlement issues, and have exceeded the 90-day suspense time. A request to withdrawal an application will result in that application being "Not Issued." Applications that are "Not Issued" are not returned, only original documents are sent back to the passport agent.

Special thanks to Communications Associate, Sabreen El-Shrafi, for this article

Please reference the [Foreign Clearance Guide \(FCG\)](#) and [F.M. Passport Agent's Reference Guide \(PARG\)](#) for detailed guidance about when and how to execute Form DS-11, plus information about other passport program requirements and responsibilities mentioned on this page.

Elimination of Visa Page Inserts

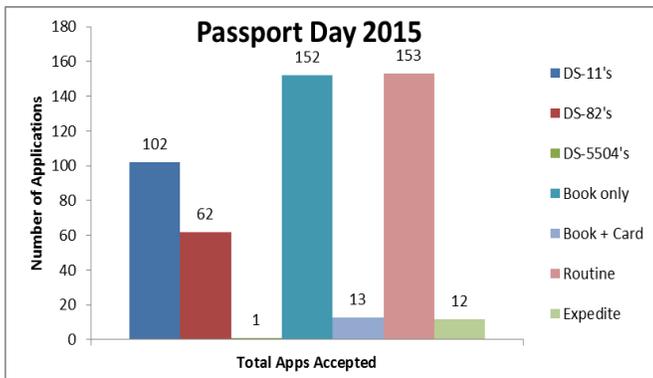
Effective January 1, 2016, the U.S. Department of State no longer adds visa pages into U.S. passports. [The Final Rule to this effect was published in the Federal Register on November 20, 2015.](#) This was published after a 60 day comment period. Previously, U.S. passport holders had the option to pay for the insertion of additional 24-page visa inserts when valid passports lacked adequate space for entry or exit visa stamps. The decision to discontinue this service was made to enhance passport security and is consistent with international passport standards. Applicants in need of additional pages in their valid passports must instead obtain a new passport.



Diplomatic passports are available only in 52-page books and official passports are available only in 28-page books. Production of a 52-page official passport is not cost effective and, therefore, does not exist because the majority of U.S. Government travelers do not utilize the existing 28-pages provided. Agencies with high volume travelers that regularly and repeatedly utilize all available visa pages should follow existing guidance to request second passports. For more information about requests for second passports, please visit [Eligibility to Apply for a 2nd Special Issuance Passport.](#)

Passport Day at the Special Issuance Agency

On October 24, 2015, SIA held its Annual Passport Day in support of the National Passport Awareness Campaign. The Special Issuance Agency accepted passport applications and assisted approximately 285 attendees, including Department of State personnel, federal agency employees, military members, and their immediate family members.



Did you know?

Passport Day is an event during which federal employees and their immediate family members can submit special issuance passport applications directly to SIA. This event was created to support our federal colleagues with convenient Saturday hours and encourage applicants to apply early during, historically, low volume seasons.



You have **Questions** and we have **Answers!** Here are some questions asked by passport agents, like you, at the March 2016 DoD Acceptance Agent Training Class.

Q₁: Why does the Charleston Passport Center not accept certain items that SIA will? Sometimes I receive a suspense letter for something even though another application went up the same way, with no issues.

A₁: *The Charleston Passport Center follows the same standard operating procedure for adjudicating military passport applications as SIA. If you notice a trend of inconsistencies between applications processed by SIA and CPC, please notify the SIA Customer Service Office.*

Q₂: Military members don't always receive orders for a deployment until it's almost time to depart. What do we do?

A₂: *If you are requested to accept passport applications for a group of members tasked for a deployment, please contact the DoD Executive Agent, Directorate of Executive Travel (DET) for guidance on what to submit with the applications prior to accepting them. Often times, the requirements for these groups have been pre-vetted by DET and SIA.*

Q₃: Why is it so hard to get a passport/visa status check? It'd be nice if we could check statuses ourselves.

A₃: *SIA is pursuing online status check capabilities, but there is no timeline for implementation. DET is the first point of contact for DoD passport and visa status checks. SIA and CPC provide status of suspended passport applications only.*

Q₄: Is there a standard procedure or policy in place to ensure that aircrew and quick reaction aircraft maintenance personnel can get passports prior to having trips scheduled? Given the nature of Air Mobility Command, international trips could occur with little to no notice, hence the need to ensure that every active aircrew member has a valid passport.

A₄: *DET must be contacted with justification for a waiver in circumstances where, due to instances of "mission readiness," the destination or travel date cannot be provided in DD Form 1056 or to request dual passports. However, the final decision is made by SIA of whether a passport will be issued to the individual.*

Q₅: Is there a standard procedure or policy for obtaining

second passports (basically having a 5-year and 4-year passport at the same time)? The reason for this question is because the aircrew wants to ensure that they can get a visa while still having the ability to travel internationally while waiting for the passport to come back.

A₅: *Please refer to the guidance in A₄. NOTE: Beginning in 2015, second passports have been issued with an expiration date that is one year less than the primary passport. If the primary passport has less than 1 year of validity left on it, the second passport will be issued with validity for 1 year.*

Q₆: Indonesia (Exercise Garuda Shield) - We have troops participating in OPERATION PACIFIC PATHWAYS which arrive on military commercial charter. Their stay is more than 30 days thus requiring a visa. How can you get a visa for a stay longer than 30 days if you do not have a passport to put the visa in, secondly Indonesia charges for the visa on arrival (VOR) and visas for longer than 30 days stay?

A₆: *Per the DoD Foreign Clearance Guide, passport requirement for DoD personnel arriving via military vessel or aircraft, participating in port calls and/or military exercises have been waived in the past. However, this requires extensive coordination with Indonesian authorities, and waiver requests must be submitted at least 30 days in advance of the port call/exercise. Such requests should be coordinated between exercise planners, Embassy personnel, and the host country prior to the exercise.*

Q₇: Thailand (Exercise Cobra Gold) - Like Indonesia, Thailand exercises may be part of Operation PACIFIC PATHWAYS.

A₇: *By Thai law, a non-immigrant visa is required for no-fee passport holders (diplomatic and official). Visa is obtained from a Thai embassy or consulate before traveling to Thailand. The visa requirement for stays of less than 30 days is not enforced by Thai immigration. Airlines will board passengers if the no-fee passport does not contain a valid visa, and Thai immigration provides an entry stamp upon arrival. This procedure is only valid for stays of less than 30 days. Stays of more than 30 days require a visa prior to arrival.*



*Kerstin Roper,
SIA Assistant Director*

In June 2015, I started as the Assistant Director at SIA. I first came to SIA in 2010 as a Passport Specialist after transferring from the Washington Passport Agency. Prior to becoming one of SIA's Assistant Directors, I was a Program Analyst at Passport Headquarters in both the Office of Program Management and Operational Support (PMO) and the Office of Management Analysis and Coordination (MAC). I've also worked in two other bureaus supporting the Secretary's Global Partnership Initiative and the Near Eastern Affairs Middle East Partnership Initiative. As a participant in the Passport TDY Program, I provided visa adjudication support to embassies and consulates in Chennai, Dubai, New Delhi, and Toronto. In 2008, I was a Political Action Committee manager for a trade association's government relations team. My primary focus was trade advocacy on Capitol Hill, grassroots lobbying at the state level, and campaign finance. Before that, I taught Advanced Placement English Literature in Fairfax County Public Schools. I co-authored an oral history volume with Voices of America in 2005. In 2003, I published two Congressional Research Service reports on military spending and same sex marriage.

In my current role, I'd like to use my knowledge of program management to assess how our agency does business and ensure that we go from better to best with everything we do. I come to work each day excited to collaborate with former colleagues and new professionals. Now that I am done with my graduate studies at Johns Hopkins and Virginia Tech, I have a lot of free time! In my spare time, I am president of my local alumnae association; chair of the annual planning and execution of both a Girls Day Conference and a local 5k run/2k walk; and binge watch HGTV. Overall, I seek opportunities to grow at every turn and SIA is the best place to do just that!

I started my two year SIA tour back in August 2015 and joined the Department of State as a Foreign Service Officer in September 2000. Immediately prior to joining SIA, I worked for two years in the Office of Consular Systems and Technology as the Special Assistant to the Director. I have also served at a number of overseas posts as a Consular Officer, and I did one Public Diplomacy tour at a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Iraq. Prior to joining the Department of State, I was a university professor.

My primary goal as Assistant Director is to make sure our SIA team members have all of the tools, training, and resources that they need to create the dynamic team atmosphere that will get us through the passport surge we anticipate in the coming years.

Outside of work, I have a great deal of interest in the Medieval era and the history of that time. I belong to a number of social groups that study, recreate, and reenact the Middle Ages, with a particular interest and focus on sword (and other weapon) combat.



*Eugene Arnold,
SIA Assistant Director*

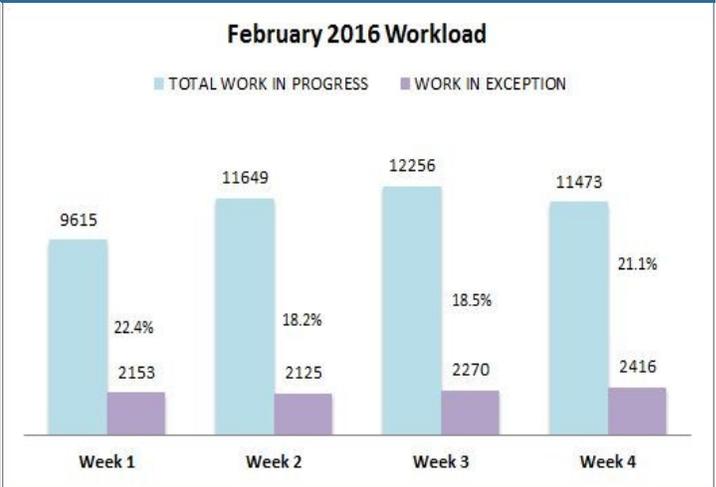
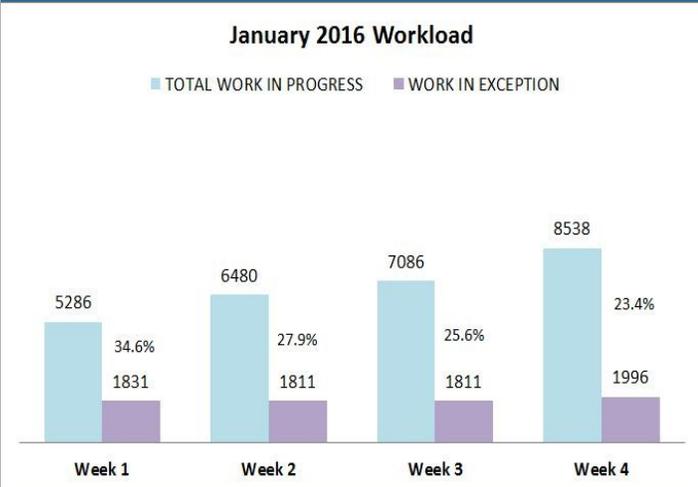
A Note of Thanks!

Our Customer Service Department would like to give a note of gratitude to all agents who register for training in a prompt, timely manner. SIA requires many resources to offer trainings that are convenient and educational. We thank you for assisting us by signing up early!

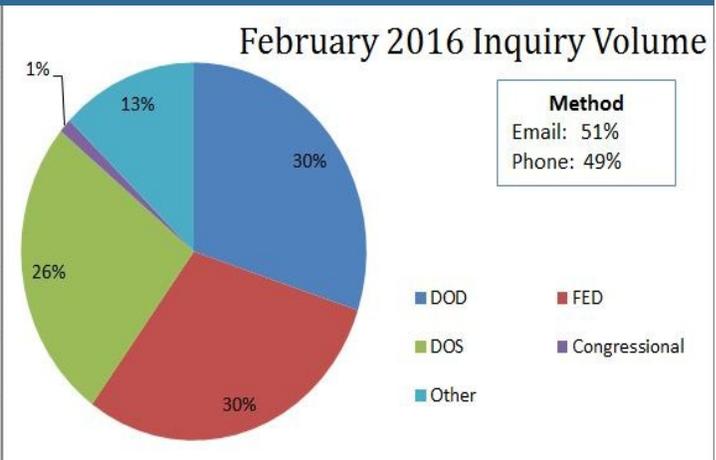
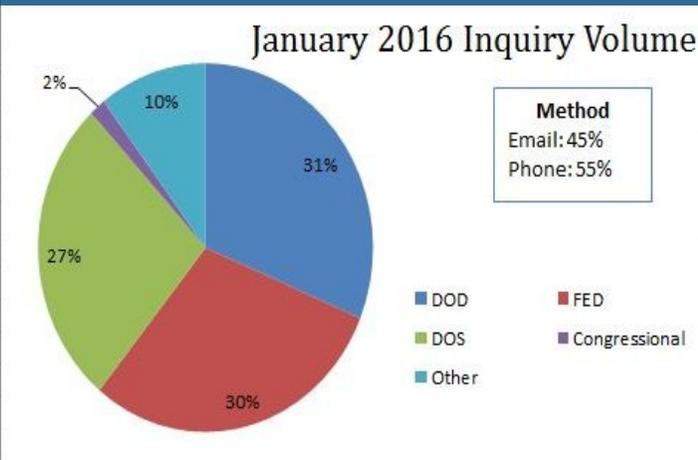
*Thank
you*

STATISTICS AND REPORTS

Workload Reports: SIA has been busy this season processing applications. Here is what the beginning of the year workload looked like for us. SIA's workload is steadily increasing. Due to this effect, it is pivotal applications submitted are accurately completed to ensure efficient production of your passports.



The Communications Team has been working vigorously to answer all your passport questions! Please continue to direct any passport application suspense inquiries to: CA-PPT-SIA-PASSPORTS@STATE.GOV



Know the Passport Processing Stages

1. Mail Open
 2. Image Capture
 3. Image Review
 4. Date Entry
 5. Name Check
 6. Adjudication
 7. Book Print
 8. Quality Control
- Referred to as the "Early Stages of Processing" (Stages 1-4)
- Often will be told "two more steps remaining" at this stage. (Stage 5)
- Often will be told "one step remaining" at this stage. (Stage 7)
- Final step before passport is completed. (Stage 8)

Advise your applicants to download the Smart Traveler (STEP) App!

The free "Smart Traveler" app allows easy access to information on the State Department's travel website, travel.state.gov, including:

- *Travel Alerts and Warnings
- *Updated Maps
- *Embassy locations and directions
- *Information on entry/exit requirements
- *Option to sign-up for the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

