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China

Response to Information Request Number:	CHN03004.ZHN
Date:	April 03, 2003
Subject:	China: Information on Non-Immigrant Visa Interviews
From:	BCIS Resource Information Center
Keywords:	China / Travel documents

Query:

Would an individual who traveled to the US for the first time on a non-immigrant visa in 1998 have been required to appear for an interview before obtaining that visa?

Response:

The following information was provided by the U.S. Department of State (3 Apr 2003):

"A Chinese citizen traveling to the U.S. on a nonimmigrant visa in 1998 would not necessarily have been required to appear in person for a visa interview.

In 1998, the five visa issuing posts in China [Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang] employed several Personal Appearance Waived (PAW) programs to process visas for Chinese travelers. These PAW programs included:

- The 'Waiban' program, whereby 'official' Chinese travelers have their passports and visa applications submitted on their behalf by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or Provincial and Municipal Foreign Affairs Offices (FAO's);

- The Drop Box program for Chinese, whereby travelers who have visited the U.S. within the previous five years and did not overstay their visas, and who still have the original visa and passport to present as evidence of their previous travel may drop off their passport

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and application;

- American Chamber of Commerce Business Visa Program, whereby certain employees and customers of U.S. companies who participate in the program are allowed to drop off their passports and applications without personally appearing for a visa interview;

- Mission Visa Referral Program, whereby U.S. Embassy and Consulate American staff can refer contacts whose travel to the U.S. [is] in the U.S. government's interest;

- Travel Agency Referral Programs, whereby travel agents could submit visa applications for applicants' traveling on group tours.

It is important to note that the Embassy and Consulates always reserve the right to call in any visa applicant for a personal interview.

NOTE: U.S. visa issuing posts in China have discontinued all Travel Agency Referral Programs. Not all U.S. visa issuing posts in China participate in the American Chamber of Commerce Business Visa Program."

The information contained in this response does not account for passports, visas, and any other documents obtained through bribery, personal connections, or other irregular means.

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

References:

U.S. Department of State. E-mail to the Bureau of Citizenship & Immigration Services, Resource Information Center (Washington, DC: 3 Apr 2003).

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