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07 October 2005

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China: Procedures for obtaining a passport, including documents to be submitted, the issuing authority, processing times, and whether the applicant must apply in person (2003-2005)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

In anticipation of its 2002 entry into the World Trade Organization, in 2001 China introduced simplified procedures for citizens to obtain a passport for personal travel (BBC 22 Nov. 2001; *Beijing Review* 3 Jan. 2002; Canada 4 Jan. 2005; Xinhua 7 Mar. 2003). At that time, the Ministry of Public Security pledged that by 2005 citizens in all major towns and cities across the country would need to present only their identity card and household registration booklet (*hukou*) when applying for a passport (BBC 22 Nov. 2001; *Beijing Review* 3 Jan. 2002). A trial run of these new measures was held in Zhongshan in Guangdong Province beginning in April 2001, and the measures were later extended to other major cities in the province, including Shunde and Guangzhou (Xinhua 7 Mar. 2003). By August 2003, the new measures had been introduced in 25 cities but the Ministry of Public Security noted that the procedures would be introduced in another 100 cities in the next few months, encompassing one-third of the country's major cities, by the end of 2003 (CCTV 1 Sep. 2003; *People's Daily* 8 Aug. 2003; Xinhua 7 Aug. 2003). By the end of 2004, the measures were to have been introduced in 80 per cent of major urban areas (Xinhua 3 Jan. 2004). Prior to these new passport issuance measures, citizens were required to present approval for travel from their employers, along with other documents, including letters of invitation to travel abroad (BBC 22 Nov. 2001; *Beijing Review* 3 Jan. 2002), identification documents of relatives or friends in the place of destination, and proof of bank balance (*ibid.*).

Recently, *The Times* of London reported that new rules implemented by local Public Security Bureau (PSB) offices stipulate that all government and military employees must submit a letter of permission containing an official stamp from their work places, when applying for or renewing a passport (10 June 2005). According to *The Times*, public servants would also be required to hand their passports over to their employer after returning from travel abroad, and to apply for approval to obtain the passport again for future travel (10 June 2005). The new rules were reportedly introduced following the defection in May 2005 of a Chinese consulate official in Sydney, Australia (*The Times* 10 June 2005). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted within time constraints.

According to the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Control of the Exit and Entry of Citizens, citizens wishing to obtain a passport for personal travel must apply through their local public security office (PRC 22 Nov. 1985, Art. 12). The Research Directorate did not find any sources indicating that this law is no longer in force.

Citizens applying for a passport for personal travel are required to fill out a form available at the local public security office, and submit it along with their identity card and *hukou* (*Beijing Review* 3 Jan. 2002; *China Daily* 21 Aug. 2003). Applicants must also submit a photograph meeting passport specifications or have one taken at the time of application at the public security office (Canada 4 Oct. 2005). Beijing residents can download a passport application form from the Beijing Public Security Bureau Website (*ibid.*). In correspondence to the Research Directorate, an official in the Canadian Consulate General in Guangzhou

indicated that any Chinese citizen in possession of a valid identity card and having no criminal record may apply for a passport (4 Jan. 2005). The Beijing Public Security Bureau is reportedly building a database of names of people who will be excluded from the new passport issuance procedures for reasons of national security (*China Daily* 21 Aug. 2003).

An official at the Canadian embassy in Beijing explained in correspondence to the Research Directorate that applicants for passports are required to appear at the local public security office in person, and "no provision for mail-in applications nor for applications to be submitted by a representative or third party" exists (4 Oct. 2005). Passports may be picked up by the applicant or a delegate, who must present a letter of authorization signed by the applicant, along with the applicant's resident identity card and that of the delegate (Canada 4 Oct. 2005). According to *China Daily*, residents of Beijing can request that their passports be sent to them by courier (21 Aug. 2003).

With the introduction of the new issuance measures, passports are generally ready within 15 business days of the date of the application (*Beijing Review* 3 Jan. 2002; Xinhua 7 Mar. 2003). In Beijing, the processing time was reduced from twenty to ten working days in 2003, and then to five in 2004 (*China Daily* 8 June 2004). The Public Security Bureau in the nation's capital city also offers two- to three-day service for urgent passport applications (ibid.), though information on the criteria for such urgent applications could not be found among sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Officials in the Public Security Bureau (PSB) in the city of Yueyang, Hunan Province were under investigation in late 2004 for allegedly issuing passports to a human smuggling group (*Beijing News* 24 Dec. 2004). Police in Xiamen, Fujian Province and in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province reportedly uncovered more than a hundred passports issued by the Yueyang PSB in the possession of smuggling organizations (ibid.). The Ministry of Public Security is said to be considering pursuing the extradition of the section chief of the Yueyang PSB entry-exit control department, who purportedly fled the country after being questioned by the Party Committee of the Yueyang Police (ibid.). Further information on the investigation could not be found among sources consulted within time constraints.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral Sources: The Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Toronto and the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Ottawa were unable to provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in New York City; Embassy of the People's Republic of China, Washington, DC; *Time Asia*; United Kingdom Home Office, United States Department of State.

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