

GCDOCS- 39467239

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MEMORANDUM TO THE ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER**DECISION ENVELOPES STOLEN EN ROUTE TO THE VISA APPLICATION
CENTRE (VAC) IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL****FOR INFORMATION****SUMMARY**

- The purpose of this memorandum is to inform you of the theft of two courier packages, containing 50 decision envelopes (including client passports), en route to the Visa Application Centre (VAC) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- The VAC in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, operated by VFS Global, subcontracts DHL to provide courier services for application handling to and from the Visa Office in Sao Paulo, Brazil.
- On January 22, DHL picked up two packages from the Sao Paulo Visa Office containing a total of 50 decision envelopes (including clients' passports) to be delivered to the VAC in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. These decision envelopes included 43 visa approvals and 7 refusals.
- The next day, DHL informed the VAC in Rio de Janeiro that
was robbed en route at gunpoint on the afternoon
of January 22 by seven individuals with machine guns.
- As per the contract, VFS Global is held fully responsible and has informed the affected clients of the incident. They are liable for any loss or damage by DHL and will be reimbursing clients for the cost of lost passports and visas.
- A list of affected applicants has been shared with the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) to prevent the stolen passports being used to travel to or enter Canada.

BACKGROUND:

- The VAC in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, operated by VFS Global, subcontracts DHL to provide courier services for application handling to and from the visa office in Sao Paulo. As per the contract, VFS Global is fully responsible and liable for any damage caused by any of their subcontractors, including DHL.

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- On January 22, DHL picked up two packages from the Sao Paulo Visa Office containing a total of 50 decision envelopes (including clients' passports) to be delivered to the VAC in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- The decision envelopes contained passports and documents for 43 approvals and 7 refusals.
- On January 23, DHL informed the VAC in Rio de Janeiro that their unmarked delivery truck, protected by three armed guards, was robbed en route at gunpoint on the afternoon of January 22 by seven individuals armed with machine guns.
- The VAC informed the Visa Office in Rio de Janeiro immediately and the VAC team at NHQ was made aware late that day of the incident.
- According to DFATD's Travel Advisory, serious crime, which can involve significant violence, is high in most urban centres in Brazil. The use of firearms is common and victims have been seriously injured or killed when resisting perpetrators.
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- Given the high crime environment, the courier package from Sao Paulo containing client passports was not the target of the theft as the entire vehicle which contained other packages was stolen. We have been informed that a package from the [redacted] was also part of the shipment stolen that evening.
- Other Five Country Conference partners have been the victim of similar thefts in Brazil.

CURRENT STATUS:

- As per the contract, VFS Global is fully liable for the loss of goods under the care of their subcontractor, DHL. VFS has implemented the following measures:
 - Contacted each applicant to inform them of the incident.
 - Advised applicants that they will cover all expenses related to obtaining a new passport.
 - Advised applicants that they will reimburse the fees paid for the Canadian Visa (if they had been approved) and any other existing valid visa held in their passport.
 - Advised applicants to inform the Brazilian Federal Police (which is the passport issuing authority in Brazil) of the passport theft so they can cancel their stolen passports.

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- The visa office in Sao Paulo has taken actions to minimize the impact on affected applicants:
 - A list of affected applicants has been shared with CBSA

This action will mitigate against any risk to program integrity and possible fraud.

- For approved applications, a replacement visa will be issued immediately once a new passport is submitted.
- Public Works Government Services Canada (both Procurement and Industrial Security Division) has been informed of the incident.
- The Department has informed the Privacy Commissioner of this incident.

COMMUNICATIONS IMPLICATIONS:

- Given the recent media interest (article published on January 12 in the Toronto Star) of a similar theft of passports in Venezuela, this theft may generate further interest. In the event that there are media inquiries, existing MLQAs on the subject will be adapted.

NEXT STEPS:

- VFS Global will reimburse costs on behalf of clients (CAD for document replacement fee) to replace each stolen Canadian visa for a total of CAD As well, client costs for passport replacement will be covered.
- The mission in Sao Paulo will issue replacement visas as soon as feasible.
- The Department will continue to work with VFS Global to ensure compliance and complete a Privacy Breach Report as per Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) guidelines.

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