

UGANDANS TO PAY BETWEEN \$5,000, \$10,000 AND \$15,000

By Charles Etukuri

Ugandans planning to travel to the US have been urged to stop falsifying visa documents and overstaying. The Government yesterday said the few people who had abused US visas spoilt for the majority of upright applicants. This forced the US government to add Uganda among the 30 countries where each individual will now be required to pay a bond varying from \$5,000 (about sh18m), \$10,000 (about sh36m), or up to \$15,000 (about sh56m).

On Tuesday, the US Department of State published a list of 30 countries whose citizens will be required to show proof of payment of the bonds before getting visas.

This effectively means that Ugandan citizens planning to travel to the US will now be required to pay a bond before they can obtain either short-term or long-term visas.

"The Department of State has identified nationals from these countries as needing visa bonds," the Department of State said. The affected countries include Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Botswana, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, and Cuba.

They also include: Djibouti, Dominica, Fiji, Gabon, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Mauritania, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Tajikistan.

Others include Tanzania, Togo, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The US also restricted the points of entry to the US to three from August 20, 2026.

"As a condition of the bond, all visa holders who have posted a visa bond must enter and exit the US through the designated ports of entry. Not doing this might lead to a denied entry or a departure that is not properly recorded: Boston Logan International Airport,

UGANDANS TO PAY UPTO SH56M BOND FOR US VISAS

John F. Kennedy International Airport, Washington Dulles International Airport," the Department of State said.

"Visa bond requirements are outlined in Immigration and National Act (INA) Section 221(g)(3) and the Temporary Final Rule (TFR) establishing the pilot programme. Visa overstay rates are based on the B1/B2 overstay rates per the Department of Homeland Security's entry/exit overstay report."

The Department of State said: "Any citizen or national travelling on a passport issued by one of these countries, who is found otherwise 'eligible for a B1/B2 visa, must post a bond for \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000."

The decision effectively means that Ugandans applying for B1/B2 visas (tourist visas) must now pay a commitment fee (commitment to non-violation of visa terms) of between \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000 upon the determination of a consular officer.

The payment is supposed to be made directly to the US government and not third parties and one is eligible for a refund upon departure, provided the departure occurs on or before the time allowed/indicated in the visa stamp and determination of non-violation of visa terms. The payment is in addition to the visa application fee of \$160 (about sh580,000).

GOVERNMENT SPEAKS OUT

The new visa security requirement takes effect on January 26, 2026.



Foreign affairs ministry PS Bagiire



Great Lakes Safaris CEO Wekesa

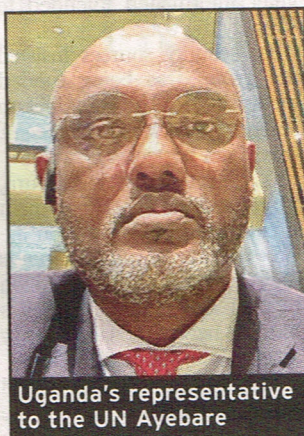


The move comes in the wake of a crackdown by US President Donald Trump and his secretary of Homeland Security, Kristi Noem.

Reacting to the decision by the US government, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vincent Bagiire Waiswa, said: "Ugandans need to appreciate that their actions of overstaying tourist/business visas and falsifying visa documents attract sanctions. We have many Ugandans staying in the US whose visas expired."

Bagiire, however, said the bond was not a ban and they were engaging the US government over the matter.

Adonia Ayebare, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations, also clarified on his social media handle, saying: "Uganda is not on the visa ban, our senior officials engaged the US



Uganda's representative to the UN Ayebare

side to make sure we are not among 40 or more countries that are on travel restrictions. On the separate issue of the bond is due to overstays by mostly holders of tourist visa categories. This does apply to students. Unfortunately, a few of the people who abuse US visas spoil it for the majority of upright applicants."

Efforts to get an official comment from the US Embassy in Kampala proved futile, but sources at the embassy confirmed that the F1 visa, which mainly caters for students, was not affected.

"F1/M1 (student), H-1B (speciality worker), L-1 (intra-company transfer) and J-1 (exchange visitor) have not been affected," the source said.

Asked how the amount will be determined, the source at the embassy noted that this would be at the discretion of the consular officer.

However, Amos Wekesa,

BOND COMPLIANCE

The US noted that the applicants will receive a direct link to pay through *Pay.gov*. "They must not use any third-party website for posting the bond. The US government is not responsible for any money paid outside of its systems. A bond does not guarantee visa issuance. If someone pays fees without a consular officer's direction, the fees will not be returned," the Department of State warned.

The Department of State warned that the bond will be cancelled and the money returned automatically if the Department of Homeland Security records the visa holder's departure from the US on or before the date to which they are authorised to stay, or the visa holder does not travel to the US before the expiration of the visa, or the visa holder applies for and is denied admission at the US port of entry.

The statement said the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will refer cases to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) when a visa holder is suspected of breaking the terms of their visa.

This review will determine whether a violation occurred. Such cases include situations where a visa holder leaves the US after their permitted stay has expired, remains in the country beyond the authorised period, or applies to change their immigration status, including seeking asylum.

the founder and managing director of Great Lakes Safaris Limited, a tour company, said the restrictions had impacted

Ugandan businesses.

"It is becoming impossible for the Ugandan business community to do international business. Recently, 90% of Ugandan tour operators were denied visas to world travel market. Government officials can freely travel around the world and we know they aren't looking for business opportunities, which is necessary."

In Kenya, the business community not only travel with their leaders while looking for opportunities, but they also make sure they can go anywhere and search for business. A country can't grow if its business community can't go looking for opportunities," Wekesa stated.

Isa Kato, the vice-president at the Ugandan Tourism Association, said: "The proposed US visa bond introduces a cost barrier that restricts Ugandan tourism businesses from accessing key trade markets, attending expos and securing partnerships; directly affecting our ability to attract visitors and investment. In other words, high visa bonds restrict market access and undermine tourism promotion."

TRUMP'S STAND

The move comes in the wake of a crackdown by US President Donald Trump and his secretary of Homeland Security, Kristi Noem, targeting illegal immigrants.

In December last year, the DHS announced "historic progress" in securing the homeland, highlighting a year of record-breaking achievement of more than 2.5 million illegal aliens leaving the US.

"Since January 20, 2025, DHS enforcement operations have resulted in more than 605,000 deportations. DHS has prioritised removing the worst of the worst criminal illegal aliens as part of the Trump Administration's efforts to return law and order to the US."

"Additionally, thanks to the comprehensive efforts of DHS law enforcement, 1.9 million illegal aliens have voluntarily self-deported since January 2025," a statement on their website said, urging all illegal aliens to use the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) home app to get a free flight home for Christmas and \$1,000 (sh3.6m).

The US Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin said: "Illegal aliens are hearing our message to leave now. They know if they do not, we will find them, we will arrest them, and they will never return."



UGANDA INVESTMENT AUTHORITY

RECALL OF ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE POSITION OF PROJECT MANAGER, KIBP INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

This is to inform all concerned that the advertisement for the position of Project Manager under the KIBP Infrastructure Development Project, published on 22nd December 2025, is hereby recalled/withdrawn with immediate effect. Any inconvenience caused is regretted.

MANAGEMENT