

National News

43 US visa applicants arrested

BY ANDREW BAGALA

KAMPALA. The United States Embassy has, since July last year, arrested 43 visa applicants suspected of presenting fake documents and handed them over to police for prosecution.

The Senior Regional Security Officer at the US Embassy, Mr James V. Bloomer, said the suspects tried to use the fake documents to obtain a visa to travel to the US.

"Since July of last year, we have had 43 people who have tried to use some sort of fake documents to obtain a visa to go to the United States. Those 43 people have been arrested. They have been stopped in the US Embassy, and they have been handed over to the Ugandan police forces for prosecution," Mr Bloomer said at the Uganda Media Centre yesterday.

The US has become stricter about the issuance of visas to anyone travelling to their country in an attempt to curb overstay cases and illegal immigration.

They also imposed a visa bond on travellers. Some travellers to the US pay between \$5,000 (Shs18.71m) and \$15,000 (Shs56.14m) as a visa bond. The money is only refunded if the traveller adheres to the rules of their stay.

"If you receive the visa, and you will be told after the interview whether or not you will receive it, the person doing the interview will tell you how much you have to pay for the visa bond. Please, don't pay for the visa bond before you receive the visa. There are people out there who are trying to separate you from your money. Therefore, don't let



Advice.

Please, do not stay longer. That is an agreement between you and the person who accepted the visa." - **James V. Bloomer, senior regional security officer at the US Embassy**

them," Mr Bloomer said.

He urged those who have been granted a visa to follow the instructions for the travel document.

"Please, do not stay longer. That is an agreement between you and the person who accepted the visa, and the US that you will follow the rules of that visa," he said.

Uganda Police Force Spokesman Kituuma Rusoke said several Ugandans are grappling with fraudsters, who impersonate as a go-between the embassies and visa applicants.

"Many Ugandans are grappling with conmen, who pretend to be go-betweens, but when actually they are impersonators. These criminals present themselves as officers from government agencies, ministries, non-governmental organisations, banks, telecoms and other government bodies. They target people who are green about processes, who are in a state of urgency, who want short-cuts, who are very trusting and some who are desperate for solutions," he said.