UGANDANS ARRESTED OVER FORGED US VISA DOCUMENTS

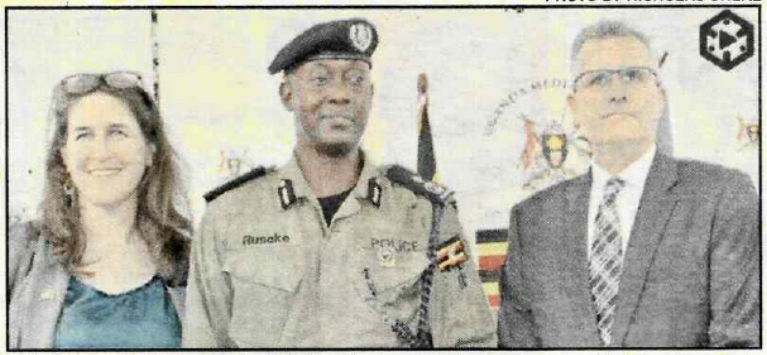
By Charles Etukuri

The United States Embassy in Uganda has revealed that 43 Ugandans have been arrested for attempting to use forged documents to obtain travel visas and were handed over to the Uganda Police Force for prosecution since July 2025.

Addressing journalists at the Uganda Media Centre in Kampala yesterday, the embassy's regional security officer, James Bloomer, decried the increasing number of visa applicants attempting to use fraudulent documents.

Bloomer was accompanied by the Police spokesperson, Kituuma Rusoke.

PHOTO BY NICHOLAS ONEAL



(L-R) Amy Petersen the US Embassy spokesperson with Rusoke and Bloomer during a press briefing at the media centre, yesterday
(Scan picture using the Vision Digital Experience to watch video)

VISA APPLICANTS CAUTIONED

"We encourage the people of Uganda who want to travel to the US to obtain a [illegible] through the proper channels. The US is open for business. We want to work with Ugandans, who want to travel for business or tourism, but they must understand the process and the regulations that must be followed," Bloomer said.

He cautioned against using middlemen or brokers, who claim they can influence the process.

Bloomer further cautioned applicants against submitting forged documents, saying doing so automatically disqualifies them from obtaining a visa.

"For example, if you present a fraudulent birth certificate, you will not get a visa. If you are applying to study at a university in the US and present forged academic documents, that will also prevent you from getting a visa," he said.

He added that embassy officials had also encountered applicants presenting counterfeit money.

"If we catch you with such items, you will not get a visa," Bloomer said.

He revealed that since July 2025, at least 43 individuals had attempted to use forged documentation in their applications. The 43 were stopped at the US Embassy and handed over to the Uganda Police Force for prosecution, he said.

OVERSTAY IN THE US

He also reminded successful applicants to respect the terms of their stay in the US. "When you arrive in the United States, immigration officials will inform you how long you are permitted to stay. Please do not overstay," Bloomer said.

Asked whether the US government was considering reducing visa fees or easing requirements that may be pushing some applicants to commit fraud, Bloomer said such policies are determined in Washington.

POLICE CONFIRMS ARRESTS

Rusoke confirmed that police had taken over the 43 cases and that the suspects had since been arraigned in court. He also warned the public to be wary of conmen who pose as officials to extort money from unsuspecting citizens. "To appear credible, these criminals use forged identification cards, fake introduction letters and unofficial phone numbers or social media accounts," Rusoke said.

He noted that in some cases fraudsters even use the names and photographs of genuine government officials to deceive victims before disappearing with their money or demanding additional payments.

Rusoke urged the public to treat any request for secret payments to secure visas, jobs, or government services as a clear sign of fraud.

VISA BOND PAYMENTS

The Regional Security Officer at the United States Embassy in Uganda, James Bloomer warned visa applicants against paying a visa bond before they are officially informed by the embassy.

"If you apply for a visa, the consular officer during the interview will tell you whether you are required to pay a visa bond and the amount involved. Do not pay any visa bond before the interview," Bloomer said. He cautioned that fraudsters often exploit desperate applicants by demanding money in advance.

The US Department of State last month published a list of 30 countries, including Uganda, whose citizens will be required to show proof of payment of the bonds before getting visas.

The bond, which is refunded after the person returns, varies from $5,000 (sh18m), $10,000 (sh36m), or up to $15,000 (sh56m).