

Homeland Security Officials Brief Governor on Marianas Visa Waiver Program

Hong Kong added to visa waiver list, China waiver moving forward

January 13, 2009

A recent change to federal law has now created the Marianas Visa Waiver program (MVW), grouping visa waivers for both Guam and the CNMI. The new program will now allow tourists from Hong Kong to visit Guam and Marianas Islands for a period of 45 days as opposed to the 15 day period previously authorized by law.

Governor Felix P. Camacho received a briefing today by visiting Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials who also announced the formal acknowledgement of China and Russia as countries of significant economic benefit. This milestone represents the first of two steps needed to obtain a China visa waiver program.

"Attaining a visa waiver program for China and Russia requires that Guam and its federal partners meet a number of concrete goals. The first was to get these countries declared places of significant economic benefit—we have accomplished that goal," said Governor Camacho.

DHS's Immigration Policy Advisor Alexander Y. Hartman said the door is still open for adding other countries to the MVW program, such as China and Russia.

"These new regulations are the foundation for the MVW program," said Mr. Hartman. "We recognize the importance of these markets and we are willing to continue discussions on expanding areas."

"Now we must take the second necessary step which is to make our case to the Obama administration, meet DHS's security requirements and ask the new Homeland Security Director to add China to our existing list of visa waived countries," said Governor Camacho.

The Governor will also continue to pursue policy changes which will expedite visa processing times and give our tourism industry access to emerging Asian markets.

The delegation also included Attorney Advisor Amy Newman and San Francisco Field Operations Director Richard F. Vigna.

A public briefing for both the media as well as members of our community is scheduled for January 14th.