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A and G Visas

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Special visas are issued to foreign government officials and their employees, and to aliens representing international organizations and their attendants. Government officials and their employees are issued A visas, while representatives to international organizations and their attendants are issued G visas.

The A nonimmigrant category is divided into three parts. A-1 visas are issued to officers of diplomatic missions or consular posts. Ambassadors, consular officers and diplomats, as well as visiting heads of state, top legislative and judicial officers would fall under the A-1 subcategory. The A-2 subcategory includes consular employees below the rank of vice-consul as well as embassy security guards. Personal employees of aliens in the A-1 and A-2 categories are issued A-3 visas. Any family members of aliens in any of the A subcategories are included with the principal alien.

A visas are obtained upon written request of the foreign government's foreign office. The State Department determines whether the alien is qualified for an A visa. Consular officers are required to show that A-3 aliens are paid sufficient wages, in assurance that they would not become public charges.

A-1 and A-2 aliens are admitted into the U.S. for indefinite periods, while A-3 aliens are allowed three years. A-3 visa holders may file for two-year extensions by submitting INS Form I-539 along with a written statement from the employer describing the current and intended employment.

The G category is divided into five subcategories. G-1 visas are issued to the principal resident representatives of a foreign government legally recognized by the U.S. and their staff members. G-2 visas are issued to other representatives of a foreign government legally recognized by the U.S. who are on temporary assignment. The G-3 is accorded representatives of foreign governments not legally recognized by the U.S. The G-4 subcategory covers other officers and employees of recognized international organizations, and the G-5, personal employees of aliens in one of the other subcategories. As with the A visa, family members of G visa holders are included with the principal.

G-1, G-2, G-3 and G-4 aliens are allowed to stay in the U.S. indefinitely. G-5 aliens, as with A-3 aliens, are also allowed three year stays, with two-year extensions.

Family members of A-1, G-1, G-3 and G-4 aliens may obtain employment authorization, with few restrictions. Family members of G-5 and A-5 aliens, on the other hand, are not allowed to accept employment in the U. S.

Aliens who qualify for another immigrant category aside from the A category are normally issued A visas, and immunity is accorded those on a diplomatic mission. Permanent residents who, through employment are qualified for A or G visas may file to have their status adjusted from permanent resident to nonimmigrant. Likewise, A or G visa holders may have their nonimmigrant status adjusted from nonimmigrant to permanent resident if they have fallen out of status and can prove that the adjustment would be in the national interest. The number of these types of adjustments is limited to fifty a year.