

GUIDELINES FOR READING A MACHINE-READABLE VISA (MRV)

A. Description of MRV Counterfoil

The MRV counterfoil has a number of security features, the most important being:

- (1) Steel engraving: the intaglio engraved portion of the visa has a distinct feel and is hard to counterfeit.
- (2) Latent image: the foil's upper right corner bears a latent image revealed only at the correct angle of view which is very difficult to read.
- (3) Microline: the microline of text requires a magnifying glass to read. When photocopied, the letters merge into a solid line.
- (4) Repeat background, duplex undertint and fugitive

and ultraviolet inks: these make extremely difficult any alterations of the data fields or replication by photocopiers.

(5) Secure adhesive: the adhesive that bonds the foil to the passport page is of high quality, making the visa difficult (though not impossible) to remove intact.

(6) Laminate over the picture: after the visa is printed, a self-sticking secure laminate is put over the photo area and part of the character zone. The laminate cannot be removed without destroying itself and the photo and damaging part of the data field.

B. Description of Machine-Readable Zone

"The machine-readable zone" consists of the two bottom lines on the visa, conforming to format criteria established by ICAO (The International Aviation Organization). The following numbered paragraphs describe the data fields which appear in the machine-readable zone.

TOP LINE

1. First two characters: the type of document being issued, in this case a nonimmigrant visa (VN).
2. Next three characters: country of issuance (e.g., USA in this example issued by the Department). (Visas currently being issued at our posts abroad indicate the country in which issued (e.g., MEX for Mexico or DOM for Dominican Republic, etc.) but ICAO has requested that the country symbol be that of the government - not the location - of issuance, so future visas may all show USA, regardless of the location of the post of issuance.)
3. Remaining spaces (up to 39): surname and given name of bearer, separated by diacritical marks.

LOWER LINE

4. First digits (up to nine): passport number.
5. Next digit: a computer-generated verification number.
6. Next three digits: nationality of the bearer.

7. Next six digits: date of birth (year, month, date).

8. Another computer-generated verification digit.

9. Sex (F or M)

11. Another verification digit.

The uniform ICAO format stops at this point, leaving 16 spaces for the issuing agency to incorporate other types of data in any format desired by that nation. The Department is currently using the following but changes may be made later.

12. Next two characters: visa classification code.

13. Issuing office identifier number (single digit). (This is meaningful only for so long as the country of location of issuance (e.g., MEX) is used, but will lose its significance if we go to "USA" in all cases. See item 2 above.)

14. Single digit waiver code.

15. Next three digits: HEX-Validity period. (A "hex-decimal" represents 16, rather than 10, permitting larger numbers to be represented in a smaller space.)

16. Next (penultimate) eight characters: encryption by the computer.

17. Final digit: another verification or "check" digit.