



NEWS RELEASE

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Colombia's Citizens Now Ineligible for U.S. Visa Transit Privilege

Effective April 2, 2001, citizens and nationals of Colombia will be ineligible for the Transit Without Visa program. Information on the change was published in the *Federal Register* today.

The interim rule is entitled, "Adding Colombia to the List of Countries Whose Citizens or Nationals are Ineligible for Transit Without Visa (TWOV) Privileges to the United States Under the TWOV Program." It revokes the privilege for Colombian citizens and nationals because of a steadily increasing number of abuses in which individuals refuse to leave the United States within the time limits established. The Department of State has also issued parallel regulations.

Between October 1, 2000, and March 22, 2001, approximately 1,100 Colombian citizens who boarded flights as "TWOV" passengers, supposedly in transit through Miami International Airport to a third country, refused to depart the United States within the time limits established. The number of Colombian citizens who used the privilege to come to the United States and refused to depart on time increased from 22 in October 2000, to 56 in November, 110 in December, 161 in January 2001, and 248 in February 2001. From March 1 to March 22, 506 Colombian citizens or nationals refused to depart the United States in a timely manner. This represents a substantial increase over the 29 such incidents that occurred in Fiscal Year 2000.

The escalating trend shows a clear abuse of this special program and has caused Colombia to be added to the list of countries whose citizens and nationals are ineligible for the program.