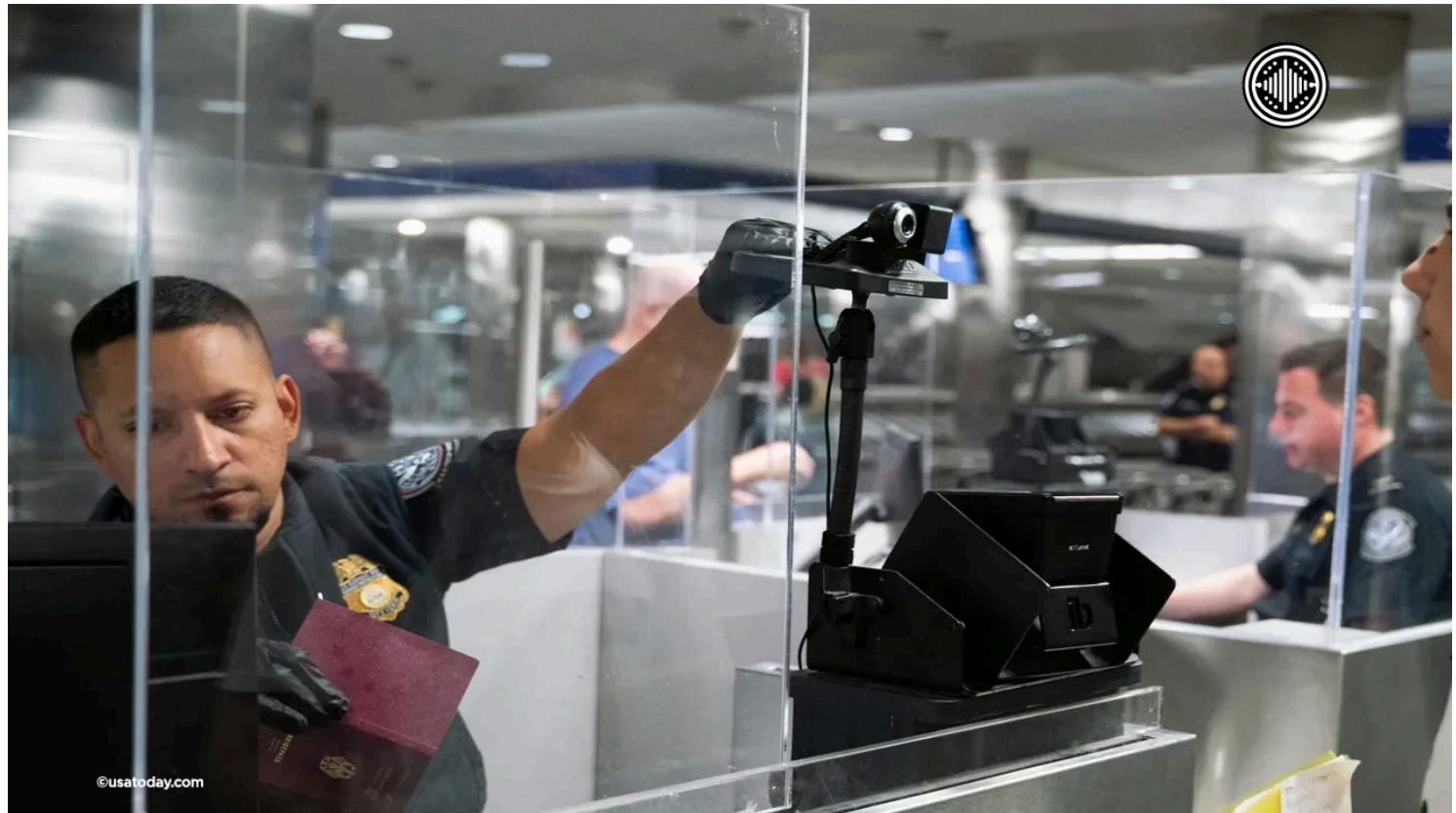# OpenVoiceNews U.S.

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U.S. to Implement Up to $15,000 Visa Bonds for Select Tourist and Business Travelers

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Starting August 20, 2025, the U.S. State Department will launch a 12-month pilot program requiring visa applicants from Malawi and Zambia to post bonds of up to $15,000 for B-1 (business) or B-2 (tourist) visas, aiming to curb visa overstays, according to a Federal Register notice published on August 5, 2025. The initiative, part of President Donald Trump's January 2025 executive order "Protecting the American People Against Invasion," targets countries with high overstay rates, with bonds refundable upon compliance with visa terms. The program reflects the administration's focus on enforcing immigration laws and enhancing national security.

The pilot program, set to run until August 5, 2026, applies to B-1 and B-2 visa applicants from countries identified by the State Department for high visa overstay rates, based on Department of Homeland Security (DHS) data. Consular officers will set bond amounts at $5,000, $10,000, or $15,000, depending on applicants' circumstances, such as employment, income, and travel purpose, as outlined in the Federal Register. "This targeted common-sense measure reinforces the administration's commitment to U.S. immigration law while deterring visa overstays," State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce told reporters on August 5, 2025. Visa holders must enter and exit through designated airports— Boston Logan International Airport, John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York, or Washington Dulles International Airport—or risk denial of entry or forfeiture of the bond, per Reuters.

Malawi and Zambia, with overstay rates of 14.3% and 11.1% respectively in fiscal year 2023, were selected as initial participants, though the State Department may expand the list, according to The Washington Post. DHS reported that 237 of 1,655 Malawian and 388 of 3,493 Zambian visitors overstayed their visas that year, though countries like Chad, Laos, and Haiti had higher rates. The State Department estimates the program will affect approximately 2,000 applicants, with a total bond cost of $20 million if the average bond is $10,000, refundable if visa terms are met. A similar 2020 pilot under Trump's first term was not implemented due to pandemic-related travel restrictions, per The New York Times.

The program is described as a diplomatic tool to encourage foreign governments to improve vetting and reduce overstays. "The Pilot Program is designed to serve as a diplomatic tool to encourage foreign governments to take all appropriate actions to ensure robust screening and vetting for all citizens," the Federal Register notice stated. Critics, including the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), argue it targets poorer nations unfairly. "This move reinforces our concern that the program is not about national security, but about targeting poorer, majority-Black nations with a discriminatory wealth test," CAIR's Robert S. McCaw told Bloomberg Law. The U.S. Travel Association noted the program's limited scope, affecting low-travel-volume countries, per CNBC.

The bond requirement adds to existing measures, including a $250 "visa integrity fee" from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, also refundable upon compliance, per Reuters. The initiative follows a broader decline in U.S. tourism, with a 20% drop in travel from Canada and Mexico and an 11% decrease in Las Vegas visitors in June 2025, according to the U.S. Travel Association. As the Trump administration tightens immigration policies, the pilot program

aims to balance security with enforcement, though its impact on travel and diplomacy remains under scrutiny.