

Friday, June 27, 2025

We want to clarify the difference between a visa denial and a “refusal” during administrative processing.

When a visa is denied:

- Consular officers are instructed to first conduct standard intake and interviews to determine whether the FMJ applicant "is otherwise eligible for the requested nonimmigrant status." The visa will be refused under 214(b) or 214(a) without further vetting if the consular officer determines the applicant is ineligible under regular standards.
- When a visa is denied under 214(a) or 214(b), the applicant is notified of the denial reason by the consular officer and provided with a document explaining the reason for denial.

When an application is under enhanced vetting:

- Consular officers are instructed to refuse the visa under INA 221(g) and place the application under "administrative processing" in order to conduct the new enhanced vetting.
- "Administrative processing" is the behind-the-scenes processing that the U.S. Department of State (DOS) conducts to request and obtain clearances. See the DOS [Visa Denials](#) and the DOS [Administrative Processing Information](#) pages for background information on the general process following any INA 221(g) visa refusal. At this point, the consular officer must:
 - "Inform the applicant that his case is refused and requires additional administrative processing to establish his eligibility for the visa."
 - "Request that the applicant set all of his social media accounts to 'public' and"
 - "[R]emind the applicant that limited access to, or visibility of, online presence could be construed as an effort to evade or hide certain activity."
- The interviewing consular officer will then conduct the enhanced vetting required by the DOS cable.
- The application will likely appear as "Refused" in the applicant's CEAC (Consular Electronic Application Center) record. Once vetting is completed, if no "potentially derogatory information" is found, or is resolved, the consular officer can reactivate the case and approve the visa, in which case the CEAC record should reflect "Issued."
- This part of the process can take some time.

This information means that if your visa is under additional review rather than denied, your account may update when social media screening is complete. If you see “refused” as your status in your CEAC record, continue to check your account for changes, unless you were given a visa denial under 214(a) or 214(b).