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G CIV Trip to Cuba Canceled Due to Government Action

The **Georgia Council on International Visitors'** trip to **Cuba** in June has been canceled following the **U.S.** government's decision to revoke travel privileges for people-to-people educational exchanges.

The **U.S. Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control** announced March 24 in the **Federal Register** that educational exchanges unrelated to academic coursework will no longer be approved.

"We are trying to find a way to do a future trip by applying under a different visa category, but we are still looking into this," G CIV's executive director, **George Brown**, told **GlobalFax**.

"My guess is that the visas were canceled because some [educational exchange] licenses were being used for tourist trips, but we're disappointed that the government is abolishing them rather than enforcing the terms," Dr. Brown said.

He said he was somewhat perplexed about the trip's cancellation because most of the new Federal Register policies actually aim to expand President **Bush's** "Initiative for a New Cuba" that encourages democratic reform, he added.

Dr. Brown added that it is not surprising U.S. policy toward Cuba is tightening, however, given Cuban authorities' recent detention of some 80 Cuban pro-democracy dissidents.

March 24 Federal Register updates supporting Mr. Bush's initiative include increasing the number of visas issued for humanitarian projects designed to promote democracy in Cuba, including training Cubans in civic education, political advocacy, etc.

Other changes include expanding the definition of "close relatives" of Cuban nationals so U.S. family members can visit Cuba, increasing the amount of money those family members can legally spend while there and increasing the number of remittances they are allowed to carry with them to Cuba.

Montana Sen. **Max Baucus** addressed this and other U.S. Cuba policies during a speech at the **Carter Center** last week. See the next **GlobalFax** issue for a full report.

Contact Dr. Brown at **(404) 832-5560 ext. 12** for more information.



Dr. Brown

Atlanta business travelers to **Hong Kong** are encouraged to visit a government Web site, <http://www.info.gov.hk/dh/ap.htm>, which provides advice about how to avoid contracting severe acute respiratory syndrome, also known as atypical pneumonia.

The virus, which made its first appearance on the world stage in February, has forced the hospitalization of more than 600 people in Hong Kong, according to **Sarah Wu**, director of the **Hong Kong Economic & Trade Office** in **New York**.



Ms. Wu

The Web site, set up by the Hong Kong government, provides up-to-date information about the outbreak and offers advice on how to prevent the virus' spread, said Ms. Wu.

She added that the Hong Kong government is working with Atlanta-based **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** to contain and treat the outbreak.

The **U.S. Department of State** issued a public announcement last week, counseling travelers planning nonessential trips to **China**, **Hong Kong**, **Singapore** and **Hanoi, Vietnam**, to consider postponing their visits.

Contact the State Department at **(888) 407-4747** or the **Hong Kong Information & Cultural Association** in Atlanta at hkica@mindspring.com

The **Asian-American Chamber of Commerce of Georgia Inc.**'s new officers for 2003-04 are:

John Lu, president of **Lucky Corp.** and the **Chinese Restaurant Association**, who replaces **Soon Hee Paik**, president of **ES Consultants Inc.**, as president; **K.J. Tan**, president of **K.J. Tan and Associates**, first vice president; **Rengen Li**, supplier diversity manager at **Coca-Cola Co.**, second vice president;

Chris Tsai, executive director for pricing and planning in **BellSouth Corp.**'s supply chain services department, secretary; **Lani Wong**, chair of the **National Association of Chinese Americans**, treasurer and **Wayne Lazarus**, attorney with **Stocks, Lazarus & Carmichael LLP**, legal counsel.

The chamber plans to hold a gala event on Thursday, May 22, at the **Georgia World Congress Center**, to celebrate **Asian Heritage Month**.

Some dozen community organizations are to participate, and tickets for their members will be \$35, guests \$50. Contact the chamber at **(770) 414-0140**.



Norcross Office Ships Leftover U.S. Fabric to Mexico Apparel Makers

Victor Rivera, CEO and president of a **Mexican** fabric trader's **Norcross**-based subsidiary, has adapted to the southward movement of **Southeast U.S.** textile and apparel manufacturers by buying their leftover materials.

Mr. Rivera's company, **CIRSA USA LLC**, is the U.S. office of a **Mexico City**-based second-hand fabric trading company that opened here in 2000 to be closer to fabric brokers that supply large manufacturers of underwear and athletic wear, like **Hanes**, **Fruit of the Loom** and **Russell Corp.** products.

CIRSA buys leftover or damaged material from suppliers in **Alabama**, **Georgia**, **North and South Carolina** and **Virginia** and then sends it to Mexico for distribution to clothing companies. Last year, CIRSA sold 18 million pounds of fabric in Mexico.

"We are always looking for new fabric brokers, but they are disappearing," Mr. Rivera told **GlobalFax**, linking the brokers' disappearance to a slow economy and U.S. textile an apparel companies' perceived flight to **Central America** and Mexico in search of cheaper labor.

"We'll eventually open a warehouse here [in Georgia] and then consider making finished garments in Mexico to resell to the United States and other countries," Mr. Rivera said.

Visit www.cirsa.d2gwebsite.com or contact Mr. Rivera at **(770) 242-7470** for more information. Visit www.globalatlanta.com for full text.



CNN Names 10 Top Hotels Worldwide

CNN Partner Hotels presented 10 hotels worldwide with an outstanding service award during the Sixth International Hotel & Investment Conference, held last month in **Berlin**.

An affiliate of **Atlanta's Cable News Network LP**, CNN Partner Hotels is a marketing program that licenses the CNN International television signal and use of the "CNN Partner" brand to participating hotels around the world.

The "Ultimate Service Award," now in its second year, is the only global



citation to honor hotel line staff for superior service.

Travelers from 157 countries voted for their preferred hotel through the www.cntraveler.com/awards Web site or via www.tnsfres.com, homepage of **Taylor Nelson Sophres**.

For a list of winners, visit www.cntraveler.com

Ex-Mirant Official Sees Difficulties in Power Globalization

The **U.S.** energy crisis has delayed privatization of the **Chinese** and **Korean** power industries and is likely to lead to power shortages in **Indonesia** and the **Philippines** in three or four years, according to former chief financial officer of **Mirant Corp.**, **Raymond Hill**.

Dr. Hill, who left Mirant in December and took a position as professor at **Emory University's Goizueta Business School**, is collaborating with professor **L.G. Thomas** on a book that attempts to answer the academic question, "What happened to the globalization of the power business over the last 10 years?"



Dr. Hill

Dr. Hill headed up Mirant's **Asian** business in **Hong Kong** for 18 months, from June 1997 to December 1998 and saw the devastating effects of the Asian financial crisis on the power industry.

"The 'Asian flu' in the late 1990s has affected various Asian countries in varying degrees over an extended time, especially **Indonesia**, **Pakistan** and **Thailand**," he told **GlobalFax**. "Now, difficult times for U.S. and European energy companies in the region are making additional investment there very unattractive," he said.

Indonesia and the Philippines have relied on foreign private capital to develop their power industries, but that capital is no longer being channeled into their energy sectors, Dr. Hill added.

The "lights won't go out" in China and Korea, but without foreign investment, both countries will fail to achieve their goals of fully privatizing their power industries, he said. Contact Dr. Hill at **(404) 727-8579** or ray_hill@bus.emory.edu. Visit www.globalatlanta.com for full text.

Participants in the program, an initiative of the **EU Center of the University System of Georgia**, included undergraduates from the **Georgia Institute of Technology**, **Georgia State University**, **North Georgia College and State University** and **South Georgia College**.

Atlanta-based Latinvest LLC investment group has acquired a **Florida** electronic funds transfer company to expand its services for **U.S. Hispanics** sending remittances to family members in **Latin America**.



Latinvest, which acquires money transfer and financial services companies, announced March 31 that it teamed with **Great Hill Partners LLC** of **Boston** to acquire **Sunrise**, Fla.-based **Vigo Remittance Corp.**

Vigo provides funds transfer services in 33 countries, handling some \$2.5 billion in consumer money transfers in 2002.

"The Latin American and Caribbean funds transfer markets have been growing rapidly, and we are excited about our plans to further grow the business in these market corridors," said **Roger Timm**, executive vice president of the investment group and Vigo.

Remittances, or funds sent from immigrants to their countries of origin, in the Latin America-Caribbean region are expected to exceed \$42 billion by 2005, Mr. Timm said. This region receives the largest amount of worldwide remittances, which were more than \$140 billion last year, he added.

Visit www.usatransfers.com or contact Mr. Timm at **(770) 281-8900**. Visit www.globalatlanta.com for full text.

Belgian Ambassador Sees No U.S.-Europe Trade Rift in Short-term

Belgian Ambassador to the **United States Frans van Daele** discussed the future of **European Union-U.S.** relations via video-conference last week with students from colleges and universities in **Georgia**.



Participants in the program, an initiative of the **EU Center of the University System of Georgia**, included undergraduates from the **Georgia Institute of Technology**, **Georgia State University**, **North Georgia College and State University** and **South Georgia College**.

Topics included the future of Europe's common defense policy, the role of the **North Atlantic Treaty**

Organization in combating global terrorism and the battle between EU sovereign member states and a more centralized EU government.

Mr. van Daele also commented to **GlobalFax** following the discussion that he did not believe the current political rift between the U.S. and Europe would affect international trade in the short-term.

"The EU-U.S. trade relationship is mutually advantageous, and I think that is recognized on both sides," he said.

Call the EU Center at **(404) 385-0600**. Visit www.globlatlanta.com for full text.

New Atlanta Firm Finds Low-Cost Back Office Outsourcing

Narsi Narasimhan, founder of the **Indian Professionals Network** in **Atlanta**, has co-founded a company to connect **U.S.** clients with information technology call centers and software developers in India and other offshore locations.

The new company, **Paalam Inc.**, which means "bridge" in the Indian languages of **Malayalam** and **Tamil**, aims to match U.S. firms' IT and back-office outsourcing needs with low-cost partners in India and possibly **Jamaica**, **Malaysia** and other countries, Dr. Narasimhan told **GlobalFax**.



He said he started the company last month, along with colleagues **Krishna Kushwaha** and **Manoj Mehta**, in response to the U.S. IT slowdown.

Contact Mr. Mehta, Paalam's vice president of business development, at **(404) 274-2894** or see www.paalam.com. Visit www.globalatlanta.com for full text.

Former **U.S.** Ambassador to **Canada Gordon Giffin** will speak about U.S. foreign policy at the Monday, April 7, luncheon of the **Rotary Club of Atlanta** in the **Loudermilk Conference Center downtown**.

Mr. Giffin currently is the co-chair of the public policy and regulatory affairs practice of Atlanta law firm **McKenna Long & Aldridge**.

The luncheon, which is to begin at 12:15 p.m., is open to the public with a charge of \$15 per person. For more information, call **(404) 522-2767**. Visit www.globalatlanta.com for full text.

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