

Thousands face US travel misery after visa glitch

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A team of about 100 computer experts is working to resolve a hardware failure which emerged at a State Department facility in the US on June

9, but State Department officials have acknowledged that full service will not be resumed this week.

About 50,000 applications for a US visa are received daily by American embassies and consulates around the world.

And while the summer vacation time is busy, the system cranks up into overload towards August when tens of thousands of students begin to flood to US shores.

"We don't expect that the system will be online before next week. I can't give you any more specific detail with respect to timing on that," State Department spokesman John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"This is a global issue and we're working around the clock to fix it."

The hardware failure is preventing the "processing and transmitting the mandatory security-related biometric data checks," Kirby added.

While the US regretted the inconvenience "this is very much a security issue and that's why we're taking it so seriously."

Some solutions are being worked on and on Wednesday about 250 Mexican workers "urgently needed to help with the harvests" and who had already been given visas in the past were issued with the right permits to enter the country, a senior State Department official told AFP.

"We anticipate that several hundred more will receive visas this week," he added.

Last summer a different technical glitch related to a software patch also hit the US visa processing system.

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