

Want Iraq Post? Firm Specializes in Tough Visas

By **CHRIS CZIBORR**

Usually its foreign workers who want to come to the U.S., but Newport Beach firm Global Visa Solutions LLC works to get visas for American workers going abroad, even to Iraq.



“We’re positioning ourselves to assist companies such as Halliburton in Iraq as soon as the diplomatic circles have established a civil government there,” said Andrea Elliott (photo), a senior foreign attorney at Global Visa.

The firm has worked to get visas and passports for U.S. workers headed to Afghanistan after the war there ended, Elliott said.

“We’ve handled visas for workers in places like Libya in the past,” she said.

The firm now has 12 people and plans to add another nine in the next year, according to Elliott.

Clients include Aliso Viejo engineer and builder Fluor Corp. and San Francisco rival Bechtel Group Inc., as well as Bank of America Corp., Northrop Grumman Corp. and law firm Latham & Watkins.

Global Visa has its own small technology staff and has its own software to help clients process visas.

Visa processing times vary from country to country, Elliott said.

“In Singapore you can e-file and things could take as little as three days,” she said. “But in Spain you need at least six months lead time—that country has a very high illegal immigration rate. They are very cautious and regional

in their approach.”

The firm typically charges clients \$950 to \$2,200 per worker depending on the country and the type of visa.

Elliott said she tries to urge clients to plan ahead for these things since visa approval can be a slow, mind-numbing process.

“They need to plan ahead instead of just giving someone a tourist visa and making that person work overseas illegally,” she said.

Visa Irregularities

Companies wanting to send workers overseas also may hit irregularities in how governments issue visas.

“In China, filing fees vary depending on what day of the week it is,” Elliott said. “I have to phone my Shanghai office representative all the time because the fees change each day. And in China, filing fees vary depending on what kind of office a U.S. company has there. Filing fees for a representative office are double what they would be if you had a foreign wholly owned subsidiary in China.”

Setting up a representative office in China is relatively quick and easy, compared to setting up a wholly owned subsidiary.

“But China nails them on the back end with higher filing fees,” Elliott said. “It’s difficult to get a U.S. executive to understand there are certain things overseas you just can’t do or get done quickly.”

The firm projected \$10 million in revenue this year, which would be up from last year, according to Elliott.

Firm officials wouldn’t disclose last year’s figure.

Global Visa’s competitors include global law firms such as Chicago-based Baker & McKenzie.