

RELEASE IN
FULL

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Sunday, July 31, 2011 8:09 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw: AP: Uganda probes age of youth team denied US visa

From: Smith, Dana S
Sent: Sunday, July 31, 2011 07:42 AM
To: Mills, Cheryl D; Kennedy, Patrick F
Subject: Fw: AP: Uganda probes age of youth team denied US visa

From: Tran, Michael J [mailto:TranMJ2@state.gov]
Sent: Sunday, July 31, 2011 07:27 AM
To: PA PRS_Issues; Nuland, Victoria J; Toner, Mark C; Hammer, Michael A; Smith, Dana S; Chang, Benjamin
Subject: AP: Uganda probes age of youth team denied US visa

Update with posted Taken Question language highlighted...

Associated Press

Uganda probes age of youth team denied US visa

By GODFREY OLUKYA , 07.30.11, 08:43 PM EDT

KAMPALA, Uganda -- The Ugandan government will punish those responsible and apologize to the United States if it finds players on a youth baseball team were denied American visas for lying about their ages, a sports official said Saturday.

The Rev. John Foundation team from Kampala was trying to become the first team from Africa to play in the Little League World Series. U.S. consular services in Uganda denied visas because of discrepancies with ages and birth dates.

"What happened shames our country and we should not encourage it," said Godfrey Mbirizi, the vice chairman of Uganda's National Council of Sports. "We are going to investigate and punish those involved. Unless USA has other reasons for denying the players visas, but if it is because of lying age or disorganized documents then it is unfortunate."

The team from Kampala won the Middle East and Africa Region tournament to advance to the Little League World Series. The 65-year-old tournament begins Aug. 18 in South Williamsport, Pa., and ends Aug. 28.

Mbirizi said that in future the council will verify players' ages and documents before they leave.

"Some of the applications included birth records which several parents admitted had been altered to make some players appear younger than they actually are," the U.S. State Department said in a statement released Saturday.

"The Department consulted closely with the Little League Association in the United States, who advised that there were specific age limitations to play in the Little League World Series. Thus, those applicants who were over age did not qualify to play and consequently did not qualify for a visa for that purpose."

The Ugandan team's success had been considered a triumph for Little League and baseball's international growth. Little League officials plan to meet in the next few days to determine how to proceed with the series, with a preference to maintain a 16-team field.

According to Little League, the last time a team that qualified could not make the trip was 1959. A squad from then-West Germany, made up of dependents of U.S. Army personnel, was unable to make the trip because the manager and coaches had military obligations. Eight teams qualified then, and the tournament was played with seven squads.