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More Russians Play U.S. Green Card Lottery, Despite Propaganda

By Daria Litvinova

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A total of 265,086 people took part in the U.S. State Department's 2015 green card lottery compared to 167,600 in 2012.

The number of Russians entering a competition to win the right to permanently reside in the U.S. has grown by 58 percent — nearly 100,000 people — since 2012, the Znak.com news website reported Monday, citing U.S. Embassy spokesman Will Stevens.

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The number of Russians keen to win a U.S. green card, as the permanent residency permit is known, has increased despite intense anti-American propaganda in major media outlets, including federal TV channels, Znak.com said.

More than 4,000 Russians won green cards in the 2015 lottery, though not all of the winners

go on to take up the residency permit, the embassy spokesman was cited as saying.

The embassy also expects growth this year in the number of issued immigration visas — the type of visa given to Russians who are planning to move to the U.S. but who have not been lucky enough to win a green card, Stevens added. Since 2011, the number of immigration visas issued had been decreasing, probably as a result of a 2012 law banning the adoption of Russian orphans by U.S. nationals, Stevens said.

The number of tourist visas issued has dropped, probably because of the weak ruble and economic decline, the report said. The fact that tourist visas are issued to Russians for three years has also contributed to the decrease, he said: People don't apply for new visas as often as before.

The Russian government has repeatedly voiced concerns about Russians becoming U.S. nationals. Last year Russia canceled the popular Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program that had seen more than 8,000 Russian high school students study in the United States. Government officials claimed, among other things, that its purpose was to attract bright students to the U.S. and make them stay there.

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