

Naturalization through Military Service

Special provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) authorize U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to expedite the application and naturalization process for current members of the U.S. armed forces and recently discharged servicemembers. Generally, qualifying military service includes service with one of the following: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and National Guard. In addition, spouses of members of the U.S. armed forces who are or will be deployed may be eligible for expedited naturalization. Other provisions of the law also allow certain spouses to complete the naturalization process abroad.

Qualifications

A member of the U.S. armed forces must meet the requirements and qualifications to become a citizen of the United States. He or she must demonstrate:

- Good moral character,
- Knowledge of the English language,
- Knowledge of U.S. government and history (civics), and
- Attachment to the United States by taking an Oath of Allegiance to the U.S. Constitution.

Qualified members of the U.S. armed forces are exempt from other naturalization requirements, including residence and physical presence in the United States. These exceptions are listed in Sections 328 and 329 of the INA.

All aspects of the naturalization process, including applications, interviews and ceremonies are available overseas to members of the U.S. armed forces and certain “command-sponsored” spouses.

A person who obtains U.S. citizenship through his or her military service and separates from the military under “other than honorable conditions” before completing five years of honorable service may have his or her citizenship revoked.

Service in Peacetime

Section 328 of the INA applies to all members of the U.S. armed forces and those already discharged from service. An individual may qualify for naturalization if he or she has:

- Served honorably in the U.S. armed forces for at least one year,
- Obtained lawful permanent resident status, and
- Filed an application while still in the service or within six months of separation.

Service during Periods of Hostilities

Under special provisions in Section 329 of the INA, the President signed an executive order on July 3, 2002, authorizing all noncitizens who have served honorably in the U.S. armed forces on or after Sept. 11, 2001, to immediately file for citizenship. This order also covers veterans of certain designated past wars and conflicts. The authorization will remain in effect until a date designated by a future presidential executive order.

Naturalization at Basic Training

USCIS established the Naturalization at Basic Training Initiative in August 2009 with the Army to give noncitizen enlistees the opportunity to naturalize when they graduate from basic training. Under this initiative, USCIS conducts all naturalization processing including the capture of biometrics, the naturalization interview and administration of the *Oath of Allegiance* on the military installation. Since 2009 USCIS has expanded the initiative to the Navy, Air Force, and finally to the Marine Corps in 2013, giving enlistees of these branches equal opportunity to (in most cases) leave basic training as U.S. citizens.

How to Apply

Every military installation has a designated point-of-contact, generally in the personnel division or the Judge Advocate General's Office, to assist members of the military prepare and file their naturalization application packet. That packet includes:

- Application for Naturalization, USCIS Form N-400 (Members of the military are not charged a fee to file the Form N-400.)
- Request for Certification of Military or Naval Service, USCIS Form N-426 (The military must certify this form before sending it to USCIS. Individuals separated from the military may submit an uncertified Form N-426 with their DD Form 214.)

Once the packet is complete, send it to the specialized military naturalization unit at the USCIS Nebraska Service Center for expedited processing.

Customer Service to Assist the Military

USCIS customer service specialists are available to respond to inquiries from military members and their families Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., Central Time, except federal holidays. Military families may contact USCIS by:

- Calling the military toll-free telephone help line -- 1-877-CIS-4MIL (1-877-247-4645), or
- Sending an e-mail to the military customer service specialists at: militaryinfo.nsc@dhs.gov.

Posthumous Benefits

Section 329A of the INA provides for grants of posthumous citizenship to certain members of the U.S. armed forces. A member of the U.S. armed forces who served honorably during a designated period of hostility and died as a result of injury or disease incurred in or aggravated by that service (including death in combat) may be eligible to receive posthumous citizenship, as long as the next-of-kin applies for posthumous citizenship within two years of the service member's death. Other provisions of the law extend immigration benefits to the service member's surviving spouse, children and parents.

Statistics (through Fiscal Year 2014)

- Since Oct. 1, 2002, USCIS has naturalized 102,266 members of the military, with 11,548 of those service members becoming citizens during USCIS naturalization ceremonies in 34 foreign countries: Afghanistan, Albania, Australia, Bahrain, China (Hong Kong), Cuba (Guantanamo), Djibouti, El Salvador, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, Iraq, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Korea, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Mexico, the Philippines, Qatar, South Korea, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom.
- Since the beginning of fiscal year 2008, USCIS has naturalized 2,318 military spouses during ceremonies in the following 30 countries: Afghanistan, Australia, Bahrain, Bulgaria, Chile, Cuba, China (Hong Kong), El Salvador, Georgia, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kuwait, Mexico, Norway, Oman, Panama, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates.
- Since the beginning of fiscal year 2009, USCIS has presented 90 children of members of the military with citizenship certificates during ceremonies in Italy, Germany, Japan, South Korea and the United Kingdom.

MILITARY STATISTICS BY YEAR AND LOCATION (through Fiscal Year 2014)

Naturalized Service Members			
YEAR	TOTAL	USA	ABROAD
FY-02	2,434	2,434	0
FY-03	4,659	4,659	0
FY-04	6,327	6,327	0
FY-05	7,136	6,106	1,030
FY-06	8,538	6,643	1,895
FY-07	5,895	4,541	1,354
FY-08	7,865	6,356	1,509

FY-09	10,505	8,850	1,655
FY-10	11,230	9,819	1,411
FY-11	10,333	9,415	918
FY-12	8,693	8,184	509
FY-13	9,125	8,414	711
FY-14	9,526	8,970	556
TOTAL	102,266	90,718	11,548

Military Children Naturalized Abroad							
Location of Ceremony	TOTAL	FY-09	FY-10	FY-11	FY-12	FY-13	FY-14
Italy	3	0	0	0	1	0	2
Germany	20	4	7	3	4	0	2
Japan	25	5	6	7	0	4	3
South Korea	24	3	4	7	4	5	1
United Kingdom	18	0	1	17	0	0	0
TOTAL	90	12	18	34	9	9	8

Military Naturalized Abroad								
Location of Ceremony	TOTAL	FY-08	FY-09	FY-10	FY-11	FY-12	FY-13	FY-14
Afghanistan	31	0	0	0	0	0	1	30
Australia	10	0	0	0	0	0	2	8
Bahrain	6	0	0	0	1	1	4	0
Bulgaria	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Chile	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
China (Hong Kong)	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Cuba	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Djibouti	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
El Salvador	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

Germany	814	10	173	154	155	146	135	41
Georgia	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	0
Greece	12	0	0	0	11	0	0	1
Italy	198	4	51	45	35	21	28	14
India	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Jamaica	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Japan	554	5	73	144	61	133	83	55
Jordan	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Kosovo	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Kuwait	8	0	0	2	0	0	0	6
Mexico	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Norway	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Oman	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Panama	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Philippines	4	0	0	3	0	1	0	0
Poland	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Portugal	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
South Korea	446	11	58	63	62	87	61	104
Spain	58	0	3	23	8	14	8	2
Romania	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tanzania	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Thailand	4	0	0	2	1	1	0	0
Turkey	12	0	0	3	2	3	3	1
United Kingdom	124	0	21	28	25	20	28	2
United Arab Emirates	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	2,308	30	380	473	368	430	358	269

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