



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Naturalization Through Military Service: Fact Sheet

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 members. Generally, qualifying military service includes service with one of the following branches: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, certain components of the National Guard and the Selected Reserve of the Ready Reserve. 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 and the Army established the Naturalization at Basic Training Initiative in August 2009 to give noncitizen enlistees the opportunity to naturalize when they graduate from basic training. (The Navy joined the initiative in 2010.) 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 base so (in most cases) the recruit is able to graduate from basic training as a U.S. citizen.

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 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 members of the military and their families Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., Central Time, except federal holidays. They 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 specialist 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 spouses, children and parents.

Statistics (through Fiscal Year 2011)

- Since September 2001, USCIS has naturalized 74,977 members of the military, with 9,773 of those service members becoming citizens during USCIS naturalization ceremonies in the following 27 countries: Afghanistan, Bahrain, China (Hong Kong), Cuba (Guantanamo), Djibouti, El Salvador, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Philippines, Qatar, South Korea, Spain, Thailand and the United Kingdom.
- Since 2008, USCIS has naturalized 1,236 military spouses during ceremonies in the following 23 countries: Bahrain , Bulgaria , China (Hong Kong), El Salvador , Germany , Greece , Italy , Jamaica , Japan , Kuwait , Mexico , Norway , Oman , Panama , Philippines , Poland , Portugal , South Korea , Spain , Tanzania , Thailand , Turkey , and the United Kingdom.
- Since 2009, USCIS has presented 64 children of members of the military with citizenship certificates during ceremonies in Germany, Japan, South Korea and the United Kingdom.

| Naturalized Service Members | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| YEAR | TOTAL | USA | ABROAD |
| Sept. 2011 | 138 | 138 | 0 |
| 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 | 11,146 | 9,735 | 1,411 |
| FY-11 | 10,334 | 9,415 | 918 |
| TOTAL | 74,977 | 62,204 | 9,773 |

| Service Members Naturalized Abroad | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Location of Ceremony | TOTAL | FY-05 | FY-06 | FY-07 | FY-08 | FY-09 | FY-10 | FY-11 |
| Afghanistan | 991 | 40 | 87 | 80 | 105 | 183 | 208 | 288 |
| Bahrain | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| China (Hong Kong) | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Cuba (Guantanamo) | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Djibouti | 27 | 0 | 19 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| El Salvador | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Germany | 1,334 | 311 | 320 | 148 | 135 | 137 | 152 | 131 |
| Greece | 13 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| Haiti | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Honduras | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Iceland | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Iraq | 3,410 | 184 | 705 | 684 | 644 | 678 | 427 | 88 |
| Italy | 290 | 75 | 57 | 56 | 13 | 26 | 26 | 37 |
| Japan | 1,919 | 174 | 419 | 183 | 349 | 282 | 288 | 224 |
| Kenya | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kosovo | 37 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 29 | 1 |
| Kuwait | 551 | 42 | 110 | 60 | 110 | 167 | 58 | 4 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Mexico | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Philippines | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 3 |
| Qatar | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| South Korea | 1,070 | 164 | 160 | 121 | 149 | 171 | 198 | 107 |
| Spain | 72 | 39 | 7 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 10 |
| Thailand | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| United Kingdom | 16 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| TOTAL | 9,773 | 1,030 | 1,895 | 1,354 | 1,509 | 1,655 | 1,411 | 919 |

| Military Spouses Naturalized Abroad | | | | | |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Location of Ceremony | TOTAL | FY-08 | FY-09 | FY-10 | FY-11 |
| Bahrain | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Bulgaria | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| China (Hong Kong) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| El Salvador | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Germany | 492 | 10 | 173 | 154 | 155 |
| Greece | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| Italy | 135 | 4 | 51 | 45 | 35 |
| Jamaica | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Japan | 283 | 5 | 73 | 144 | 61 |
| Kuwait | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Mexico | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Norway | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Oman | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| Panama | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Philippines | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Poland | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Portugal | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| South Korea | 171 | 11 | 58 | 63 | 39 |
| Spain | 33 | 0 | 3 | 23 | 7 |
| Tanzania | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Thailand | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Turkey | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 |
| United Kingdom | 68 | 0 | 21 | 28 | 19 |
| TOTAL | 1,251 | 30 | 380 | 473 | 368 |

| Military Children Naturalized Abroad | | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Location of Ceremony | TOTAL | FY-09 | FY-10 | FY-11 |
| Germany | 12 | 4 | 7 | 1 |
| Japan | 18 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| South Korea | 13 | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| United Kingdom | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 44 | 12 | 18 | 14 |

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[Plug-ins](#)