Office of Communications
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Fact Sheet

June 21, 2007

NATURALIZATION THROUGH MILITARY SERVICE

Members and certain veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces are eligible to apply for United States citizenship under special provisions of the *Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)*. In addition, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has streamlined the application and naturalization process for military personnel serving on active-duty or recently discharged. Generally, qualifying service is in one of the following branches: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, certain reserve components of the National Guard and the Selected Reserve of the Ready Reserve.

Qualifications

A member of the U.S. Armed Forces must meet certain requirements and qualifications to become a citizen of the United States. This includes demonstrating:

- 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 residency and physical presence in the United States. These exceptions are listed in Sections 328 and 329 of the INA.

An individual 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 Wartime

All immigrants who have served honorably on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces or as a member of the Selected Ready Reserve on or after September 11, 2001 are eligible to file for immediate citizenship under the special wartime provisions in Section 329 of the INA. This section also covers veterans of designated past wars and conflicts.

Service in Peacetime

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

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

Posthumous Benefits

Section 329A of the INA provides for grants of posthumous citizenship to certain members of the U.S. Armed Forces. Other provisions of law extend benefits to surviving spouses, children, and parents.

- A member of the U.S. Armed Forces who served honorably during a designated period of hostilities and dies as a result of injury or disease incurred in, or aggravated by, that service (including death in combat) may receive posthumous citizenship.
- The service member's next of kin, the Secretary of Defense, or the Secretary's designee in USCIS must make this request for posthumous citizenship within two years of the service member's death.
- Under section 319(d) of the INA, a spouse, child, or parent of a U.S. citizen who dies while serving honorably in active-duty status in the U.S. Armed Forces, can file for naturalization if the family member meets naturalization requirements other than residency and physical presence.
- For other immigration purposes, a surviving spouse (unless he or she remarries), child, or parent of a member of the U.S. Armed Forces who served honorably on active duty and died as a result of combat, and was a citizen at the time of death (including a posthumous grant of citizenship) is considered an immediate relative for two years after the service members dies and may file a petition for classification as an immediate relative during such period. A surviving parent may file a petition even if the deceased service member had not reached age 21.

How to Apply

- All aspects of the naturalization process, including applications, interviews and ceremonies are available overseas to members of the U.S. Armed Forces.
- Members of the U.S. Armed Forces are not charged a fee to file for naturalization or to receive a certificate of citizenship.
- Every military installation has a designated point-of-contact to assist with filing the military naturalization application packet. Once complete, the package is sent to the USCIS Nebraska Service Center for expedited processing. That package will include:
    - Application for Naturalization (USCIS Form N-400)
    - Request for Certification of Military or Naval Service (USCIS Form N-426)
    - Biographic Information (USCIS Form G-325B)

Statistics

- USCIS has naturalized more than 32,500 members of the U.S. Armed Forces since the beginning of the War on Terror.
- In October 2004, USCIS hosted the first overseas military naturalization ceremony since the Korean War. During this time, USCIS has naturalized more than 4,100 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines during ceremonies in Afghanistan, Djibouti, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, South Korea, Spain, the United Kingdom and in the Pacific aboard the USS Kitty Hawk.
- USCIS has granted posthumous citizenship to 96 members of the U.S. Armed Forces stemming from the War on Terror.
- USCIS welcomes more than 700,000 citizens each year during naturalization ceremonies across the United States. That number includes nearly 8,000 members of the U. S. Armed Forces who naturalize both in the United States and abroad through an expedited process resulting from their military service.