




# DoD Announces Policies Affecting Foreign Nationals Entering Military

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News

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WASHINGTON -- The Defense Department is releasing two policies that will affect foreign nationals entering the military or who are already in the military, Stephanie Miller, DoD's director of accessions, said today.

The changes will affect personnel accessed under the MAVNI Pilot Program -- the acronym stands for Military Accessions Vital to National Interest -- and Lawful Permanent Residents (also known as green card holders). A green card is a permanent residency document for the United States.

The changes recognize that "while the department recognizes the value of expedited U.S. citizenship achieved through military service, it is in the national interest to ensure all current and prospective service members complete security and suitability screening prior to naturalization," Miller said.

One policy change is to the initial security and suitability screening for green card holders. "Effective immediately, all green card holders must complete a background investigation and receive a favorable military security suitability determination prior to entering any component of the armed forces," Miller said in an interview.

Previously, green card holders could ship to basic military training as long as background investigations were initiated. Green card holders go through the same check as American citizens.

The change will mean that green card holders entering the military may be in the delayed entry or training program longer than in the past, due to a backlog for security clearances at the Office of Personnel Management.

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The clearance procedure could take up to a year.

## **Qualifying Service Standard, Aligning Requirement for Citizens, Noncitizens**

The second change affects those in the MAVNI program and green card holders. "The department is establishing a qualifying service standard for the purposes of rendering honorable service determination for foreign nationals who pursue expedited U.S. citizenship on the basis of their military service," Miller said.

Service members receive a characterization of service after serving 180 days. "In order for foreign nationals to achieve expedited citizenship on the basis of their military service, they must receive an honorable service recommendation," Miller said. Previously, the practice of the department had been to grant that determination after "as little a few days in boot camp," she added. The new policy aligns the requirement of honorable service with that for U.S. citizens.

Under the new policy, foreign nationals must complete security screening, basic military training and serve to 180 days for a characterization of service determination.









Those in the reserve components must complete security screening, basic military training and have one satisfactory federal year of service. "For example, the individual drilled successfully, he achieved all of his points, he did his two weeks of annual training and as a result, achieved one good federal year," Miller explained. "At that time, the department would render that person's service as honorable, and then the department would sign the form that he would include in the naturalization packet for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services."

The department is changing these policies because some individuals received citizenship before background investigations were completed, Miller said. "It is in the national interest to complete the security investigation before we grant someone honorable service, particularly in the case where that characterization is considered in an application for citizenship" she added.

This affects some personnel in the service now who received certification before their security screenings were completed. The department is recalling those certifications, and will recertify once the investigations are successfully completed, Miller said.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This story was updated Oct. 17, 2017)

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