



## **FACT SHEET: Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI)**

### **What is MAVNI?**

- The Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI) program was authorized by the secretary of defense in November 2008. Its purpose is to address critical shortages of medical and strategic language personnel in the U.S. armed services by allowing certain qualified noncitizens to enlist in the U.S. military under [Section 504\(b\)\(2\) of title 10, United States Code](#).
- MAVNI recruits noncitizens in the U.S. whose enlistment is vital to the national interest.
- Since 2009, more than 10,400 individuals have enlisted or served in the U.S. military through MAVNI. Approximately 10,000 of those enlistees are still in the service or waiting to serve. On Sept. 30, 2016, the Defense Department authorized the annual recruitment of up to 1,400 enlistees through MAVNI. However, the program is [temporarily suspended](#) as the Defense Department is [currently not accepting](#) MAVNI applications for fiscal year (FY) 2017.

### **MAVNI Eligibility Requirements**

Applicants for MAVNI must meet all standard requirements to enlist in a branch of the U.S. armed services, as well as the following:

- Must be an asylee, refugee, recipient of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), or hold certain [nonimmigrant visas](#), such as the F visa for foreign students in the U.S.;
- Must have been in a “valid status” in those categories for two years preceding the enlistment date and have no single absence from the U.S. of 90 days or more during that period;
- Must have no pending application for lawful permanent residence; and
- If a health care professional, must be recruited specifically to fill [specific medical specialties](#) where the military has a critical shortage, meet all qualification criteria for their medical specialty and enlist for at least three years of active duty or six years of Selected Reserve (SELRES) service, among other requirements; or
- If an enlisted individual with special language and culture background, must possess capability in at least one of [46 specific critical languages](#) and the associated cultural background, demonstrate language proficiency in a test and oral interview, and enlist for at least three years of active duty or six years of SELRES service.

## **MAVNI Security Requirements**

On Sept. 30, 2016, the Department of Defense introduced [new security requirements](#) for MAVNI. Applicants must undergo an extensive security and suitability screening process including an initial screening, continuous monitoring and annual background checks.

Initial Screening: Prior to entering basic training or serving for any period of time, MAVNI applicants must:

- Complete a Tier 3 or Tier 5 background investigation;
- Pass a National Agency Check, which runs the applicant's name through seven different government and security databases (including the CIA External Name Trace System and the FBI's Foreign Terrorist Tracking Task Force);
- Undergo a counterintelligence interview; and
- Receive a national security determination by the Department of Defense and earn a favorable military suitability determination by the U.S. military.

If negative information is found in the background investigation, which may include having a foreign relative or a family member who worked for a foreign government, the military has the option to administer a polygraph examination or separate itself from the applicant.

## **Naturalization and MAVNI**

- Upon completing the enlistment process, MAVNI enlistees may apply for U.S. citizenship through an expedited naturalization process that does not require the individual to be a permanent resident (green-card holder).
- The new security requirements for MAVNI have created a backlog of applicants waiting to start their military service, which impedes their ability to naturalize. The Department of Defense is [reportedly](#) considering canceling enlistment contracts for all 1,800 MAVNI enlistees awaiting orders for basic training and halting the program altogether. About 1,000 of those recruits have had their visas expire while awaiting travel orders, which puts them at risk of deportation if their contracts are canceled.

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