Bring Them Home: The Case for MAVNI

By Jonathan T. Helton

***Resolved:* *The United States federal government should substantially reduce its restrictions on legal immigration to the United States.***

Summary: Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) was a program designed to incentivize foreigners with useful military skills – translation or medical knowledge – to join the U.S. military. In exchange, after honorable service, they would receive citizenship. Recent events have indefinitely suspended MAVNI. People who were in the system when it was canceled are facing deportation. This plan restores MAVNI. Immigrants are well educated, motivated and highly qualified recruits who fill key spots and solve manpower shortages in the military. Without them our national security is at risk. And the motive for blocking them is simply racism.

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Dying for one’s country is a great honor and sacrifice. But voluntarily fighting and dying for a country that is not yours is unimaginable for most. However, some brave men and women have joined the U.S. military as non-citizens. Sadly, current policies are blocking their track to joining the country they sacrificed to serve. Please join us as we affirm: The United States federal government should substantially reduce its restrictions on legal immigration to the United States.

OBSERVATION 1. INHERENCY

FACT 1. MAVNI

MAVNI allows immigrants to join the military and then receive US citizenship

Tara Copp 2017 (Pentagon Bureau Chief for Military Times) 24 December 2017 “New in 2018: For foreign recruits, the new year brings few answers” <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-army/2017/12/24/new-in-2018-for-foreign-recruits-the-new-year-brings-few-answers/>

The Military Accessions Vital to National Interest, or MAVNI, program allowed foreign-born recruits with vital skill sets, such as translators, to become naturalized U.S. citizens after joining the military.

FACT 2. Canceled

MAVNI is closed

Patrick Long 2019. (retired Air Force First Sergeant with 22 years of active duty service) “U.S. Military MAVNI Program- The program to allow noncitizens to enlist has been discontinued” last updated 6 Jan 2019 https://www.thebalancecareers.com/military-accessions-mavni-program-3354096

In 2016, after implementing more stringent background check requirements, the Obama administration [froze the program](https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2018/07/06/heres-the-bottom-line-on-the-future-of-mavni-many-foreign-born-recruits-may-soon-be-out/), leaving several thousand recruits without any way to advance. The terms of the MAVNI program required participants to begin boot camp within three years of their enlistment. Most of the last batch of MAVNI recruits timed out of the service while awaiting the background check process to be completed. In 2018 under the Trump administration, the Army [began discharging](https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2018/07/05/us-army-quietly-discharging-immigrant-recruits/) soldiers who had enlisted under the MAVNI program. Most were reportedly not given notice of why they were being discharged, but their citizenship status was jeopardized as a result. Many of them had served honorably in Afghanistan, Iraq and other locations around the world. As of January 2019, the program remains closed and there do not appear to be any plans for its revival.

FACT 3. Blocks legal immigration

Cancellation of MAVNI blocks legal immigration

Heather Timmons 2018. (journalist) “How Trump built an invisible wall around America” 2 Sept 2018 https://qz.com/1325325/trumps-immigration-policies-created-a-virtual-wall/

**MAVNI:** The[Military Accessions Vital to National Interest](https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2017/06/28/1000-foreign-born-military-recruits-facing-deportation-under-proposed-pentagon-plan) program gives foreign students and other visitors with language and other skills the US needs a pathway to citizenship by joining the military. The program was suspended in October of 2016 [pending an overhaul](https://mavnicenter.com/topic/83/is-mavni-program-currently-suspended-or-shutdown/3) of the application screening process, and has yet to be reinstated. Some 1,000 foreign recruits [may be deported](https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2017/06/28/1000-foreign-born-military-recruits-facing-deportation-under-proposed-pentagon-plan/) under a Trump-era Pentagon proposal, another 4,100 citizens naturalized during the program will have their citizenship reexamined, the Military Times says.

OBSERVATION 2. We offer the following PLAN implemented by Congress and the President

1. Reinstate MAVNI to previous levels when it was fully active before 2016

2. Plan takes effect the day after an Affirmative ballot.

3. All Affirmative speeches may clarify.

OBSERVATION 3. JUSTIFICATIONS.

JUSTIFICATION 1. Racism

Reason for canceling MAVNI was stereotyping all foreign-born as security risks

Margaret Stock 2017 (quoted by NPR's Melissa Block. Stock is a retired U.S. Army officer involved in creating MAVNI.) 22 October 2017 “Army Tightens Rules For Immigrants Joining As A Path To Citizenship” <https://www.npr.org/2017/10/22/559336282/army-tightens-rules-for-immigrants-joining-as-a-path-to-citizenship>

STOCK: Well, that's the ostensible excuse for doing it. And nobody's against background checks. Everybody thinks background checks are great. But when you do the type of background checks that they're doing, you end up with nobody in the military (laughter), essentially. When customs and border patrol did similar background checks, they flunked two-thirds of their applicants. The proper way to handle espionage threats is to investigate them, prosecute people. But what you don't do is label an entire group of people as security threats just because they were born in a foreign country.

Excluding immigrants from the military is motivated by racism

Prof. Simeon Man 2018 (assistant professor at University of California, San Diego) WASHINGTON POST 25 July 2018 https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2018/07/25/discharging-immigrant-soldiers-is-the-american-way-thats-the-problem/?noredirect=on&utm\_term=.62410d4e724d

Last month, reports emerged that the U.S. military had [begun discharging](https://www.npr.org/2018/07/09/626773440/u-s-army-is-discharging-immigrant-recruits-who-were-promised-citizenship) immigrant Army reservists and recruits who did not pass their security screening and were deemed “unsuitable.” For many, it closed off their pathway to obtaining U.S. citizenship through the military. This action reflects the latest in the Trump administration’s [organized assault](https://www.aclu.org/blog/immigrants-rights/trump-administrations-multi-pronged-assault-immigrants-rights) on immigrants, but it’s also part of a far longer story. Over the past 70 years of unending U.S. wars, the military has repeatedly welcomed immigrants and those deemed “foreign” for their skills and symbolic value, and then subsequently discharged them on the grounds that they posed a threat to the nation. Doing so reflects an America caught between military necessity and suspicion of others, driven by racism, that has made appeals for immigrant inclusion and support for U.S. overseas militarism increasingly difficult to separate.

JUSTIFICATION 2. Recruiting Shortfalls

A. Canceling MAVNI reduces immigrant enlistments

Richard Smith 2017 (Richard Allen Smith is a writer, former Army sergeant and Afghanistan war veteran.) 23 October 2017 “The Trump Defense Department’s green card policy is an insult to immigrants who serve” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2017/10/23/the-trump-defense-departments-new-policy-is-an-insult-to-immigrants-who-serve/?utm_term=.abd2b460b4d5>

The net effect is that immigrants will wind up being discouraged or potentially, in some cases, prevented from serving in our armed forces, to the detriment of our military.

B. Immigrants are necessary to meet recruiting goals

Prof. Amy Lutz 2017 (Associate Professor of Sociology in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University) 27 October 2017 “Immigrants Have Always Belonged In The U.S. Military” <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/immigrants-have-always-belonged-in-the-us-military_us_59f339bae4b05f0ade1b5686>

[According to Margaret Stock](https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/essential-fight-immigrants-military-eight-years-after-911), a retired Army officer and immigration lawyer, “Without the contributions of immigrants, the military could not meet its recruiting goals and could not fill its need for foreign-language translators, interpreters, and cultural experts.” She finds that by 2009 about 8% of the active-duty military forces [were foreign born](https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/essential-fight-immigrants-military-eight-years-after-911), most of them naturalized citizens. She also notes that even undocumented immigrants are required to register with the Selective Service when they turn 18. Research by the Center for Naval Analysis has also found that noncitizens have longer military careers than citizens perhaps because the military offers fairer treatment than other parts of American society, [encouraging immigrants to pursue advancement within the military](https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/D0011092.A2.pdf). The researchers suggest that immigrants are “one overlooked source of military manpower.” Immigrants help the military fill key positions requiring specialized language skills, but also medical skills.

C. National security at risk from military manpower shortage

Gen. Thomas Spoehr and Bridget Handy 2018 (Spoehr – Retired Lt. General, US Army. Handy - Assistant Director of the Student Division at The Federalist Society ) 13 Feb 2018 The Looming National Security Crisis: Young Americans Unable to Serve in the Military” https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/the-looming-national-security-crisis-young-americans-unable-serve-the-military

A manpower shortage in the United States military directly compromises national security. America needs a strong military to defend its national interests, and that military depends on qualified volunteers. As the most recent U.S. National Security Strategy makes clear, the “United States faces an extraordinarily dangerous world, filled with a wide range of threats that have intensified in recent years.”

D. Impact: Existential threat.

Gen. Thomas Spoehr and Bridget Handy 2018 (Spoehr – Retired Lt. General, US Army. Handy - Assistant Director of the Student Division at The Federalist Society ) 13 Feb 2018 The Looming National Security Crisis: Young Americans Unable to Serve in the Military” https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/the-looming-national-security-crisis-young-americans-unable-serve-the-military

Empowering parents to access learning options that work for their children early on increases graduation rates, decreases crime, and encourages healthy lifestyles, and should be a priority for lawmakers, educators, parents, and all citizens. All these effects will increase the number of young American adults who can join the Armed Forces—an absolute necessity in preparing the next generation of America’s defenders. For the United States and all Americans, the threat of an ever-dwindling military is nothing less than existential.

JUSTIFICATION 3. Translators

A. Canceling MAVNI means we lose critical language skills in the military

John Kirby 2017 (CNN national security analyst John Kirby is a retired rear admiral in the US Navy who was a spokesman for both the State and Defense departments in the Obama administration) 14 July 2017 “Pentagon, don't cancel citizenship program for immigrants with special skills” <https://www.cnn.com/2017/07/14/opinions/pentagon-dont-cancel-mavni-opinion-kirby/index.html>

Some are medical specialists: thoracic surgeons, prosthodontists, orthopedic surgeons, and entomologists, to name a few. Some speak critical languages, such as Mandarin Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Somali and Pashto, which remain vital to our ability to operate effectively around the world. Should the military cancel MAVNI, it would deprive itself of this talent.

B. Impact: Prevent the next 9/11. MAVNI translation skills are key to preventing 9/11 events

Margaret Stock 2017 (quoted by NPR's Melissa Block. Stock is a retired U.S. Army officer involved in creating MAVNI.) 22 October 2017 “Army Tightens Rules For Immigrants Joining As A Path To Citizenship” <https://www.npr.org/2017/10/22/559336282/army-tightens-rules-for-immigrants-joining-as-a-path-to-citizenship>

One of the reasons why the United States was unable to prevent the 9/11 terrorist attacks was that we didn't have enough people working within the government who spoke foreign languages. So they had intercepts from the hijackers, they found out later, that hadn't been translated. There weren't enough native-born Americans with the requisite language skills to do this kind of work. So post-9/11, the Bush administration authorized Military Accessions Vital to the National Interests, also known as the MAVNI program. That's the acronym. And the idea was to bring in highly vetted legal immigrants if they had language capabilities - native language capabilities - or specialized medical skills. We had a great success - great successes with this program.

JUSTIFICATION 4. Evil Injustice.

Immigrant soldiers put their lives on the line for our country… and we deport them

Mark Footerman 2018 (Mark Footerman is an Army veteran and HillVets Congressional Fellow in the office of Rep. Vicente Gonzalez. He works on veterans, defense, health care and immigration issues) 5 March 2018 “Commentary: Deportation threat disrespects the service of noncitizen warriors” <https://www.militarytimes.com/opinion/commentary/2018/03/05/commentary-deportation-threat-disrespects-the-service-of-noncitizen-warriors/>

In the post-9/11 era, more than 109,000 immigrants [have been naturalized through service](https://www.uscis.gov/news/fact-sheets/naturalization-through-military-service-fact-sheet). Foreign-born soldiers have deployed to every American conflict, risking their lives for the U.S before being eligible to drive or vote. And while these immigrants, including Leon, continue to contribute in every occupation among our ranks, thousands have been deported and even more risk deportation as the current administration rolls back naturalization programs.

2A Evidence: MAVNI

DEFINITIONS & BACKGROUND

MAVNI requirements

Congressional Research Service 2018 (William A. Kandel, Analyst in Immigration Policy, and Lawrence Kapp, Specialist in Military Manpower Policy) 11 May 2018 “Expedited Citizenship through Military Service” <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/homesec/IF10884.pdf>

While federal law restricts enlistment in the U.S. Armed Forces based on citizenship and residency, as specified above, it allows individuals who do not meet those requirements to enlist if the Service Secretary "determines that such enlistment is vital to the national interest" (10 U.S.C. 504(b)(2)). This is the statutory basis for the MAVNI program authorized by DOD in 2008. As implemented by DOD, the MAVNI program allowed the military services to recruit certain legally present aliens whose skills were deemed vital to the national interest. Those skills included medical specialties and expertise in certain languages. Applicants at the time of enlistment had to be either asylees, refugees, holders of Temporary Protected Status (TPS), beneficiaries of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, or in any one of a range of nonimmigrant categories. (As implemented, the MAVNI program did not admit unauthorized aliens who were not lawfully present in the United States.) Applicants must have been in a valid status as described above for at least two years immediately prior to enlistment. Approved MAVNI applicants who then met the conditions for expedited naturalization through military service, as described above, could immediately apply for U.S. citizenship. Following concerns about security protocols for screening MAVNI applicants, DOD halted the program as of September 30, 2016. It is not known if or when DOD will reactivate the program.

Eight-year service

Note to reader: This was written before the program was changed in October 2017, thus the “has”

Tom Bowman 2017 (Tom Bowman is a NPR National Desk reporter covering the Pentagon. In his current role, Bowman has traveled to Iraq and Afghanistan often for month-long visits and embedded with U.S. Marines and soldiers) 11 July 2017 “Citizenship For Military Service Program Under Fire” <https://www.npr.org/2017/07/11/536630223/citizenship-for-military-service-program-under-fire>

By some metrics, the program — which grants citizenship in exchange for eight years of honorable military service — has been successful.

TOPICALITY

Canceling MAVNI blocks legal immigration: Immigrants who were in MAVNI are fleeing or under threat of deportation

Luís Lozada 2018 (Luís L. Lozada is a J.D. candidate at Cornell Law School where he is a Cornell International Law Journal Associate. He holds a Bachelor’s Degrees from UCLA. Written in the Cornell International Law Journal Online, the preeminent source for scholarship on foreign and international law) 29 January 2018 “The Exclusion of Immigrants in the Military and How it Hurts the United States” <http://cornellilj.org/the-exclusion-of-immigrants-in-the-military-and-how-it-hurts-the-united-states/>

As a result of changing immigration law and policy surrounding the military, recruits under DACA, and the MAVNI program have sought preemptive refugee or asylum due to the threat of deportation. Some recruits have fled or have considered fleeing to Canada, Germany, Australia and other countries, where they might be welcomed. With the closure of the program and ability to deport foreign recruits, the Department of Defense undermined not only the program, but also immigrant recruits, who are unlikely to trust the military in the near future.

MAVNI cancellation leads to deportations

Alex Horton 2017 (Alex Horton is a general assignment reporter for The Washington Post. He previously covered the military and national security for Stars and Stripes, and served in Iraq as an Army infantryman.) 15 September 2017 “U.S. Army kills contracts for hundreds of immigrant recruits. Some face deportation.” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/09/15/army-kills-contracts-for-hundreds-of-immigrant-recruits-sources-say-some-face-deportation/?utm_term=.6f62c1d92933>

U.S. Army recruiters have abruptly canceled enlistment contracts for hundreds of foreign-born military recruits since last week, upending their lives and potentially exposing many to deportation, according to several affected recruits and former military officials familiar with their situation.

MAVNI suspension left recruits in limbo, legal immigration status lapsed while waiting

Miriam Jordan 2017 (national immigration correspondent.) NEW YORK TIMES 15 September 2017 “Fast Track to Citizenship Is Cut Off for Some Military Recruits” <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/15/us/fast-track-to-citizenship-is-cut-off-for-some-military-recruits.html>

More than 4,000 Mavni recruits have been in limbo since late last year, when the Department of Defense began introducing additional vetting. The protracted process has indefinitely delayed basic training for many enlistees, making it more difficult for recruiters to meet their targets. Recruiting stations are flooded with calls from many concerned that their lawful presence in the country could lapse while they await clearance.

MAVNI deportations beginning

Dianna Cahn 2018 (She writes for Stars and Stripes. Stars and Stripes provides independent news and information to the U.S. military community, including active-duty servicemembers, DoD civilians, veterans, contractors, and their families. Unique among Department of Defense authorized news outlets, Stars and Stripes is governed by the principles of the First Amendment.) 4 June 2018 “Foreign-born recruit faces deportation despite assurances by Mattis” <https://www.stripes.com/foreign-born-recruit-faces-deportation-despite-assurances-by-mattis-1.531062>

Luo Shu, a Chinese citizen who graduated with a degree in data analytics from George Washington University, was recruited into the Army’s delayed entry program two years ago for his language and professional skills. He was arrested at the Department of Homeland Security Investigations office in Newark, N.J., on Monday after an Army administrative error allowed his service contract to expire before he could pass the Defense Department background checks and ship off to basic training, his lawyer said.

INHERENCY

MAVNI was halted in late 2016

Dianna Cahn 2018 (journalist for Stars and Stripes. Stars and Stripes provides independent news and information to the U.S. military community) 9 April 2018 “Foreign-born recruits, promised fast track to citizenship, stuck in ‘mindless bureaucracy’” <https://www.stripes.com/foreign-born-recruits-promised-fast-track-to-citizenship-stuck-in-mindless-bureaucracy-1.521183>

In any case, the MAVNI program had already been halted. The Defense Department stopped recruiting under MAVNI in late 2016 and let authorization for the program expire in September 2017. The Pentagon cited the logjam in security clearances; it’s unclear whether the program will be reinstated.

Without MAVNI, much slower process for immigrants to get citizenship through military service

Tara Copp 2018 (Pentagon Bureau Chief for Military Times and author of the award-winning military nonfiction "The Warbird: Three Heroes. Two Wars. One Story.") 3 May 2018 “Naturalizations drop 65 percent for service members seeking citizenship after Mattis memo” <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2018/05/03/naturalizations-drop-65-percent-for-service-members-seeking-citizenship-after-mattis-memo/>

Based on a review of [data of personnel who have applied and were approved for citizenship since 2014](https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-studies/immigration-forms-data/data-set-form-n-400-application-naturalization), the USCIS approval rate for service members has remained relatively steady.  
[END QUOTE. She goes on later in the article to say QUOTE:]  
In a briefing with reporters Thursday, Pentagon spokesperson Dana White said the military still values non-citizen soldiers’ contributions, and that the delays and bureaucratic issues encountered as the DoD revises military naturalization may be a part of adjusting to the new, stricter process.

A/T “Lawsuits” – Limited in scope

Dianna Cahn 2018 (She writes for Stars and Stripes. Stars and Stripes provides independent news and information to the U.S. military community, including active-duty servicemembers, DoD civilians, veterans, contractors, and their families. Unique among Department of Defense authorized news outlets, Stars and Stripes is governed by the principles of the First Amendment.) 9 April 2018 “Foreign-born recruits, promised fast track to citizenship, stuck in ‘mindless bureaucracy’” <https://www.stripes.com/foreign-born-recruits-promised-fast-track-to-citizenship-stuck-in-mindless-bureaucracy-1.521183>

The Department of Defense declined to answer questions or release details about MAVNI recruits stuck in these restrictive conditions, citing ongoing litigation and “out of respect to the legal process.” There are at least two class-action lawsuits filed by MAVNI Army reservists seeking resolution on related issues, but those lawsuits do not include all MAVNIs, including those on active duty. And the lawsuits are limited in scope.

Immigrant recruits declining since cancellation of MAVNI and tighter background checks

Tara Copp 2018 (Tara Copp is the Pentagon Bureau Chief for Military Times and author of the award-winning military nonfiction "The Warbird: Three Heroes. Two Wars. One Story.") 3 May 2018 “Naturalizations drop 65 percent for service members seeking citizenship after Mattis memo” <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2018/05/03/naturalizations-drop-65-percent-for-service-members-seeking-citizenship-after-mattis-memo/>

The number of service members applying for and earning U.S. citizenship through military service has dropped 65 percent since Defense Secretary Jim Mattis directed additional background checks for non-citizen troops, Military Times has found. In October 2017, Mattis directed policy changes, linked below, that added additional reviews of non-citizen service members and[extended time in service before they could receive necessary paperwork](https://partner-mco-archive.s3.amazonaws.com/client_files/1525359954.pdf) to pursue naturalization. In the first set of data available since the new policy, the number of applicants dropped from 3,132 in the last quarter of fiscal year 2017 to 1,069 in the first quarter of fiscal year 2018, the most recent data available.

JUSTIFICATION 1 – RACISM

Military service overcomes racism. That’s why Trump cancelled MAVNI

**[Referring in context to MAVNI as “such a program”…]**

Prof. Nicole Hemmer 2018 (assistant professor at the University of Virginia) 9 July 2018 “It’s always been hard to say no to citizenship requests from soldiers. Trump’s doing it.” https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2018/7/9/17549402/citizenship-military-mavni-immigration-service-naturalization-discharge-history-mavni

Historically, for immigrants excluded from the full rights of citizenship because of their race, the military has been the most powerful proving ground for their citizenship claims. From Asian Americans who won citizenship after serving in Europe in World War I to African Americans who won support for civil rights after returning from World War II, military service created an almost irrefutable case for citizenship. American racists sometimes still fought those claims, but they led to real advances — which is exactly why the Trump administration would aim to end such a program.

JUSTIFICATION 2 – MANPOWER

Suspension of MAVNI directly causes recruiting shortfalls

Alex Horton 2017 (Alex Horton is a general assignment reporter for The Washington Post. He previously covered the military and national security for Stars and Stripes, and served in Iraq as an Army infantryman.) 18 October 2017 “‘It looks like we’re afraid of foreigners’: Army turns away some green-card holders” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/10/18/it-looks-like-were-afraid-of-foreigners-army-turns-away-some-green-card-holders/?utm_term=.78648fcfef12>

The MAVNI program’s suspension was a factor in the Army’s failure to meet its goal of bringing in 14,400 reservists this year, Stock said. There was a shortfall of more than 1,000 recruits, Army officials said. The Pentagon estimated 2,400 had passed previous security check benchmarks and were waiting to train when officials recommended canceling the bulk of those contracts.

Army using less qualified (“Category IV”) recruits to fill slots

Gen. Dennis Laich 2018 (retired from the U.S. Army as a major general in 2006. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army War College and Harvard’s National and International Security Program ) 27 July 2018 “Commentary: Recruiting’s slippery slope” ARMY TIMES https://www.armytimes.com/opinion/commentary/2018/07/28/recruitings-slippery-slope/

If recruiting goals remain at approximately 80,000 per year for the next three years and the Army exercises the 4 percent Category IV “standard,” in three years (a normal initial enlistment period) we might anticipate an Army with 10,000 Category IV soldiers — a more expensive, less effective Army. Category IV soldiers present several problems. They are less likely to complete their initial training or their initial term of enlistment. They are harder to train due to lower cognitive skills and literacy. They are less effective.

Failing recruiting goals creates a manpower crisis, and puts national security at risk

Gen. Dennis Laich 2018 (retired from the U.S. Army as a major general in 2006. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army War College and Harvard’s National and International Security Program ) 27 July 2018 “Commentary: Recruiting’s slippery slope” ARMY TIMES https://www.armytimes.com/opinion/commentary/2018/07/28/recruitings-slippery-slope/

The U.S. military is beginning to experience a manpower crisis and a steady erosion of its ability to secure the nation. The Army is [struggling to meet its recruiting goals](https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2018/05/08/with-retention-up-and-recruiting-down-heres-how-the-army-plans-to-add-7500-more-soldiers-to-the-ranks/) as it [seeks to expand](https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2017/10/08/personnel-chief-the-army-is-preparing-to-grow-the-force-by-17000-soldiers-in-2018/) in a difficult recruiting environment with 3.9 percent civilian unemployment and a [declining propensity](https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2017/10/12/top-recruiter-just-136000-out-of-33-million-young-americans-would-join-the-army/) among America’s youth to serve in the armed forces.

13.5% of the military is immigrants – blocking immigrants reduces recruiting quality and quantity

Melissa Block, quoting Margaret Stock 2017 (NPR's Melissa Block talks with Margaret Stock, a retired U.S. Army officer, who created a program to recruit skilled immigrants. She says the new rules will bring down enlistment.) 22 October 2017 “Army Tightens Rules For Immigrants Joining As A Path To Citizenship” <https://www.npr.org/2017/10/22/559336282/army-tightens-rules-for-immigrants-joining-as-a-path-to-citizenship>

STOCK: I was appalled by this because it's obvious the military is going to lose a valuable source of recruits. The foreign-born right now are 13.5 percent of the population. And the percentage of the population that's foreign-born is growing. So if you're going to say that the military can't recruit 13.5 percent of the population, you're restricting military recruiting only to citizens. You're going to end up with much less quality in terms of language - foreign language skills, cultural skills.

Military lowering standards, accepting less-skilled soldiers

Eric Fanning 2018 (Eric Fanning was the 22nd secretary of the Army serving during the Obama administration.) 1 January 2018 “Immigration reform: An Army recruitment opportunity” <http://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/367839-immigration-reform-an-army-recruitment-opportunity>

As a result, USAREC has been forced to lower its recruiting standards in hopes of reaching its goal of 80,000 new soldiers. In fiscal 2016, 1.6 percent of Army recruits were Category Four candidates, who scored in the bottom third of standard military exams. The following fiscal year, the Army increased the acceptance rate to 1.9 percent. While these percentages remain below the 4 percent cap, they are moving in the wrong direction.

Loss of recruits raises personnel costs and diverts money from maintenance

Luís Lozada 2018 (Luís L. Lozada is a J.D. candidate at Cornell Law School where he is a Cornell International Law Journal Associate. He holds a Bachelor’s Degrees from UCLA. Written in the Cornell International Law Journal Online, the preeminent source for scholarship on foreign and international law) 29 January 2018 “The Exclusion of Immigrants in the Military and How it Hurts the United States” <http://cornellilj.org/the-exclusion-of-immigrants-in-the-military-and-how-it-hurts-the-united-states/>

Relatedly, increasing personnel costs have led the Department of Defense to shift funds from military operations and supplies to personnel. It is true that program recruits are a fraction of active troops, but the potential loss and access of highly sought-after skills could lead to security consequences. It is more difficult and expensive to recruit American citizenship with highly sought-after skills than to retain those already in military service because of competition from the private sector. This problem of covering personnel costs is so severe that the Department of Defense would often pull money out of operations and maintenance, such as replenishing munitions and repairing vehicles damaged in combat.

MAVNI recruits had lower attrition rates

Luís Lozada 2018 (J.D. candidate at Cornell Law School where he is a Cornell International Law Journal Associate) 29 January 2018 “The Exclusion of Immigrants in the Military and How it Hurts the United States” <http://cornellilj.org/the-exclusion-of-immigrants-in-the-military-and-how-it-hurts-the-united-states/>

Additionally, the Pentagon’s own review of the program found that MAVNI recruits had a lower attrition rate, meaning that they were more likely to remain in the military than American-born service members, which would save the military additional expenses in the near future.

Canceling MAVNI undermines U.S. security and exposes recruits to deportation and retaliation overseas

Luís Lozada 2018 (Luís L. Lozada is a J.D. candidate at Cornell Law School where he is a Cornell International Law Journal Associate. He holds a Bachelor’s Degrees from UCLA. Written in the Cornell International Law Journal Online, the preeminent source for scholarship on foreign and international law) 29 January 2018 “The Exclusion of Immigrants in the Military and How it Hurts the United States” <http://cornellilj.org/the-exclusion-of-immigrants-in-the-military-and-how-it-hurts-the-united-states/>

The MAVNI program strengthened the military capacity of the United States. Compared to other branches of the armed forces, the Army is considered weaker due to decline in military resources, inadequate equipment, and fewer troops for deployment. A Heritage Foundation report stated that the main threats to the United States stem from Russia, China, Afghanistan and Pakistan, with the largest threat being North Korea. Foreign recruits that speak these languages provided a great benefit to the military, but without the MAVNI program many could face deportation unless immigration law is changed, or a new program emerges that allows foreign recruits to remain in the United States. Many recruits, who have sworn allegiance to the United States, could face harsh interrogations if they were deported to countries such as China or Russia. There is also the possibility that public announcements and photos of formally enlisted American personnel would be posted on social media that could be exploited by adverse intelligence agencies as propaganda, in effect, attacking the United States.[[](http://cornellilj.org/the-exclusion-of-immigrants-in-the-military-and-how-it-hurts-the-united-states/" \l "_edn57)

MAVNI soldiers had better than average educational quality and higher re-enlistment rates

Tom Bowman 2017 (Tom Bowman is a NPR National Desk reporter covering the Pentagon. In his current role, Bowman has traveled to Iraq and Afghanistan often for month-long visits and embedded with U.S. Marines and soldiers) 11 July 2017 “Citizenship For Military Service Program Under Fire” <https://www.npr.org/2017/07/11/536630223/citizenship-for-military-service-program-under-fire>

According to a Pentagon breakdown, soldiers recruited through the program have educational levels that exceed the Army average, and their re-enlistment rates are higher than soldiers who are already citizens.

JUSTIFICATION 3 – CRUCIAL SKILLS

10,000+ recruits

Alex Horton 2017 (Alex Horton is a general assignment reporter for The Washington Post. He previously covered the military and national security for Stars and Stripes, and served in Iraq as an Army infantryman.) 15 September 2017 “U.S. Army kills contracts for hundreds of immigrant recruits. Some face deportation.” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/09/15/army-kills-contracts-for-hundreds-of-immigrant-recruits-sources-say-some-face-deportation/?utm_term=.6f62c1d92933>

Experts say the relatively small number of recruits in the MAVNI program possess skills with outsize value, [such as foreign languages highly sought](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/07/18/how-the-pentagons-plan-end-its-deal-with-immigrant-recruits-could-hurt-the-military/?utm_term=.b62b9f4935eb) by Special Operations Command. The program has rotated 10,400 troops into the military, mostly the Army, since its inception in 2009.

Without MAVNI we lose medical skills in the military

Luís Lozada 2018 (J.D. candidate at Cornell Law School where he is a Cornell International Law Journal Associate) Cornell International Law Journal Online 29 Jan 2018 “The Exclusion of Immigrants in the Military and How it Hurts the United States” <http://cornellilj.org/the-exclusion-of-immigrants-in-the-military-and-how-it-hurts-the-united-states/>

The second consequence is a shortage of physicians with the potential to affect the number of troops given combat deployment orders.[[41]](http://cornellilj.org/the-exclusion-of-immigrants-in-the-military-and-how-it-hurts-the-united-states/" \l "_edn41) For example, all recruits must obtain dental clearance as part of a health-related issues checklist before combat deployment. The MAVNI program fulfilled an immediate need by filling half of all vacancies in the Army Reserve Dental Corps in the first year from the program.[[42]](http://cornellilj.org/the-exclusion-of-immigrants-in-the-military-and-how-it-hurts-the-united-states/" \l "_edn42) To put that into perspective, currently two-thirds of all Army Reserve dentists are MAVNI program recruits.[[43]](http://cornellilj.org/the-exclusion-of-immigrants-in-the-military-and-how-it-hurts-the-united-states/" \l "_edn43) The MAVNI program created a pipeline of trained medical professionals incented to join the military for citizenship.[[44]](http://cornellilj.org/the-exclusion-of-immigrants-in-the-military-and-how-it-hurts-the-united-states/" \l "_edn44) Without available medical professionals, the military would have to find medical personnel elsewhere or provide larger, more costly incentives for native-born Americans to join the military.

Translators are vital to bridge the gap and build trust in dangerous areas

Luís Lozada 2018 (J.D. candidate at Cornell Law School where he is a Cornell International Law Journal Associate) Cornell International Law Journal Online 29 Jan 2018 “The Exclusion of Immigrants in the Military and How it Hurts the United States” <http://cornellilj.org/the-exclusion-of-immigrants-in-the-military-and-how-it-hurts-the-united-states/>

The first consequence is the loss of valuable skills MAVNI recruits brought to the military. The language abilities of MAVNI recruits provided a valuable resource within Special Operations Command. Special Operations Command, which specializes in missions to train and advise foreign militaries and militias, expressed vocal support for the program. Special Operations Command needs native speakers to bridge the gap between U.S. forces and local natives to build trust in dangerous and remote areas of the world.

JUSTIFICATION 4 – EVIL INJUSTICE

284 immigrant deaths while serving in US military

*Terry Babcock-Lumish and Kenji Price 2016 (Babcock-Lumish, president of Islay Consulting, served as an economist in the President's Council of Economic Advisers and taught economics at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Currently of counsel at Carlsmith Ball LLP, Price served as an officer in the Army's 75th Ranger Regiment and as an assistant U.S. attorney in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York. Babcock-Lumish and Price are based in Honolulu, Hawai'i.) 11 July 2016 “*When America denies citizenship to servicemembers” <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/defense/287184-when-america-denies-citizenship-to-servicemembers>

When the Department of Defense deems a young volunteer fit to serve the country in uniform, the ensuing contract is a serious one. According to the Partnership for a New American Economy, no fewer than 284 immigrants died advancing the nation's security interests since Sept. 11, 2001. Yet, to date, in a country that was borne out of blood shed on battlefields, many veterans anxiously await the U.S. government upholding its end of the bargain by granting the most fundamental status of democratic society: citizenship.

Honorable veterans face deportation

Mark Footerman 2018 (Mark Footerman is an Army veteran and HillVets Congressional Fellow in the office of Rep. Vicente Gonzalez. He works on veterans, defense, health care and immigration issues) 5 March 2018 “Commentary: Deportation threat disrespects the service of noncitizen warriors” <https://www.militarytimes.com/opinion/commentary/2018/03/05/commentary-deportation-threat-disrespects-the-service-of-noncitizen-warriors/>

The truth is unsettling. Immigrant veterans, despite honorably serving this nation, are facing the reality of our government deporting them — if it hasn’t already.

Immigrants “pay their dues” and want to serve

John Kirby 2017 (CNN national security analyst John Kirby is a retired rear admiral in the US Navy who was a spokesman for both the State and Defense departments in the Obama administration) 14 July 2017 “Pentagon, don't cancel citizenship program for immigrants with special skills” <https://www.cnn.com/2017/07/14/opinions/pentagon-dont-cancel-mavni-opinion-kirby/index.html>

We're not only a nation of immigrants. We're an Army, a Navy, an Air Force, a Marine Corps and a Coast Guard of immigrants. And we are better for it.  
[END QUOTE. He goes on later in the article to say QUOTE:]   
But it would be self-defeating to freeze out from the ranks individuals who, like Khan, can render unique service to our military and who desperately want to "pay their dues" to a nation they desperately want to call home.

SOLVENCY/ADVOCACY

John Kirby

Adm. John Kirby 2017 (CNN national security analyst; retired rear admiral in the US Navy who was a spokesman for both the State and Defense departments in the Obama administration) 14 July 2017 “Pentagon, don't cancel citizenship program for immigrants with special skills” <https://www.cnn.com/2017/07/14/opinions/pentagon-dont-cancel-mavni-opinion-kirby/index.html>

But MAVNI has been a great success, and it should continue.

Sgt. Major John Troxell

Tara Copp 2017 (Pentagon Bureau Chief for Military Times) 24 December 2017 “New in 2018: For foreign recruits, the new year brings few answers” <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-army/2017/12/24/new-in-2018-for-foreign-recruits-the-new-year-brings-few-answers/>

“These programs are very important, especially as we’re looking at bringing in talent that can allow us to be more of an enabler or more of a facilitator to a force we are conducting security force assistance with,” said Command Sergeant Major John Troxell, the top enlisted adviser to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Joseph Dunford. Troxell said that it is essential for the military to have the ability to recruit for language skills and other expertise at a time when the force is expanding operations into more countries in the fight against violent extremist groups. “Programs like MAVNI just allow us to get after that even more,” he said.

It’s the right thing to do

Richard Smith 2017 (former Army sergeant and Afghanistan war veteran.) 23 October 2017 “The Trump Defense Department’s green card policy is an insult to immigrants who serve” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2017/10/23/the-trump-defense-departments-new-policy-is-an-insult-to-immigrants-who-serve/?utm_term=.abd2b460b4d5>

Think about it: Men and women who aren’t yet U.S. citizens volunteer to sacrifice on behalf of the vast majority of us who never put on the uniform. Recognizing these immigrants’ service by clearing the path toward citizenship is simply the right thing to do.

DISADVANTAGE RESPONSES

A/T “Infiltration” – Speculation

Alex Horton 2017 (journalist for The Washington Post; served in Iraq as an Army infantryman.) 15 September 2017 WASHINGTON POST “U.S. Army kills contracts for hundreds of immigrant recruits. Some face deportation.” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/09/15/army-kills-contracts-for-hundreds-of-immigrant-recruits-sources-say-some-face-deportation/?utm_term=.6f62c1d92933>

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Friday that he believes the MAVNI program [can be saved](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/10/13/the-pentagon-tried-to-kill-a-program-for-immigrants-mattis-thinks-it-can-be-saved/?utm_term=.54955b37af65), but he stressed the need to harden the military from “espionage potential” among immigrants. The Pentagon has not disclosed any examples of legitimate threats stemming from immigrant recruits.

A/T “Crime” – U.S. citizens commit more

Alex Nowrasteh 2017 (senior immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute’s Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity. His popular publications have appeared in the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, Washington Post.) 20 March 2017 “Immigration Myths - Crime and the Number of Illegal Immigrants” <https://www.cato.org/blog/immigration-myths-crime-number-illegal-immigrants>

Our headline finding is that both illegal immigrants and legal immigrants have incarceration rates far below those of native-born Americans—at 0.85 percent, 0.47 percent, and 1.53 percent, respectively. Excluding illegal immigrants who are incarcerated or in detention for immigration offenses lowers their incarceration rate to 0.5 percent of their population—within a smidge of legal immigrants. As a result, native-born Americans are overrepresented in the incarcerated population while illegal and legal immigrants are underrepresented, relative to their respective shares of the population.

A/T “Terrorism” – Minimal risk

[David Bier](https://www.cato.org/people/david-bier) 2018 (immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute’s Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity. He is an expert on visa reform, border security, and interior enforcement, and his work has been cited in the Washington Post, New York Times) 17 April 2018 “Extreme Vetting of Immigrants: Estimating Terrorism Vetting Failures” <https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/extreme-vetting-immigrants-estimating-terrorism-vetting-failures>

A terrorism vetting failure occurs when a foreigner is granted entry to the United States who had terrorist associations or sympathies and who later committed a terrorism offense including support for terrorist groups abroad. This analysis defines vetting failure broadly to include individuals who had privately held extremist views before entry. Moreover, unless evidence exists to the contrary, it assumes that anyone who entered the United States legally either as an adult or older teenager, and who was charged with a terrorism offense within a decade of entry, entered as a result of a vetting failure, even without any evidence that he or she was radicalized prior to entry. By this definition, only 13 people — 2 percent of the 531 individuals convicted of terrorism offenses or killed while committing an offense since 9/11 — entered due to a vetting failure in the post-9/11 security system. There were 52 vetting failures in the 15 years leading up to 9/11, four times as many as in the 15 years since the attacks. From 2002 to 2016, the vetting system failed and permitted the entry of 1 radicalized terrorist for every 29 million visa or status approvals. This rate was 84 percent lower than during the 15-year period leading up to the 9/11 attacks. Only 1 of the 13 post-9/11 vetting failures resulted in a deadly attack in the United States. Thus, the rate for deadly terrorists was 1 for every 379 million visa or status approvals from 2002 through 2016.

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