

BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER

ON

NOTIFYING TRAINEES OF THE “NATURALIZATION AT BMT” INITIATIVE

BLUF: BMT partners with Recruiting Service for messaging about naturalization prior to departure for BMT. Arrival procedures include announcements and visual aids in the initial processing area. If Trainees bring all required personal documents and do not require extensive follow-on interviews about their background, sufficient time exists in BMT for Trainees to complete the naturalization process prior to graduation. Air Force BMT has naturalized 426 graduates with the Naturalization at BMT Initiative since resuming in April 2023.

PURPOSE: Describe the USCIS naturalization process conducted at Air Force BMT.

DISCUSSION

- Previous naturalization procedures at BMT included an on-site USCIS representative to facilitate applications and conduct naturalization oaths at the Coin/Retreat Ceremony
 - USCIS on-site presence was eliminated in 2020 during COVID and a revised virtual process was created between USCIS and DOD; the revised process began at BMT in April 2023
- BMT provides pre-arrival messaging with Recruiting Service to prepare their shippers
 - Information includes the USCIS website so recruits can begin their on-line process before departing for BMT, including uploading of documents
- Arrival processes include announcements, literature, and visual aids with QR Codes in the arrival facility for Trainees to immediately access USCIS information during initial processing
 - Arrival procedures allow BMT staff to validate Trainee interest in naturalization so they can be scheduled for USCIS processing/appointments during BMT
- Dedicated resources are available to facilitate naturalization applications
 - Computers, printers, scanners, and private interview rooms as well as a dedicated staff member to schedule appointments, answer questions, and coordinate with USCIS personnel
- Typical naturalization processing includes 4 appointments and 8-hrs out of training over the 7.5 Weeks of Training (WOTs) of BMT
 - **0 WOT:** Collect names of interested Trainees and validate creation of USCIS account
 - **1 WOT:** 2 appointments w/Scheduling office:
 - 1st appointment (Monday) – Initial application for Naturalization and complete *Certification of Military Service* for BMT/CC signature

- 2nd appointment (Wednesday) – Upload *Certification of Military Service* to complete application for USCIS processing
- **2 WOT:** 3rd Appointment (Wednesday) – USCIS collects biometrics on site for Trainees that need photos and/or fingerprints
- **5-7 WOT:** 4th Appointment (Tuesday) – USCIS conducts virtual interview; if Trainee interview is successful, the naturalization test is administered; if test is successful, Trainee is immediately sworn as a citizen in the same virtual appointment
- **7 WOT:** Airmen recognized at Coin/Retreat Ceremony and certificates are given to them prior to graduation parade
- Two most common reasons why naturalization is not completed before graduation are:
 - 1) Trainee does not have access to required source documents; 2) USCIS has concerns with a Trainee's personal history that require additional background checks
- BMT has a handoff procedure to ensure technical training locations are informed of BMT graduates that are continuing the naturalization process
- Spreadsheet loaded to a Microsoft Teams site every Monday following graduation; allows gaining technical training staff to assist with any continuing application issues

CONCLUSION: Recruiting Service begins awareness prior to shipping. Messaging continues immediately upon BMT arrival. Dedicated resources are available for naturalization to be completed prior to graduation and shipping to technical training. Handoff procedures ensure any unfinished cases are tracked as needed.