

National Foundation for American Policy

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New Research on Immigrant Military Contributions and Sacrifices Finds 80,000 Immigrants Serving in U.S. Armed Forces

22% of Medal Honor Recipients Have Been Immigrants

Arlington, Va. – “Today, approximately 80,000 immigrants serve in the U.S. Armed Forces, representing 6% of service members on active duty,” according to a National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP) [study](#). “During service in America’s wars and conflicts, 22% of the recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor have been immigrants. Recent immigrant Medal of Honor recipients include Florent Groberg (born in France), Alfred Rascon (born in Mexico), Tibor Rubin (born in Hungary) and Leslie Sabo Jr. (born in Austria).”

The research comes at a time when the Trump administration has adopted many policies designed to restrict nearly all types of immigration to the United States. “By providing opportunity, America has given much to immigrants and throughout America’s history immigrants have given much in return, including by serving in the U.S. military,” said NFAP Executive Director Stuart Anderson, who was executive associate commissioner for policy and planning and counselor to the Commissioner of the INS in the George W. Bush administration, and is the author of the NFAP report. “Many immigrants have sacrificed their lives while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces and we should appreciate and remember those sacrifices.”

The study, “Military Contributions and Sacrifices of Immigrants,” can be found at <https://nfap.com/>.

The report, released shortly before Memorial Day, features many stories and profiles of courage and sacrifice by immigrants in combat.

Among the findings in the study:

- Currently, more than 1.5 million veterans of U.S. military service are immigrants or the children of immigrants. Approximately 539,000 immigrants are veterans.
- Immigrants, including Baron Friedrich von Steuben, credited with transforming the Continental Army under General George Washington, helped secure America’s independence. During World War I, 18% of the soldiers serving in the U.S. Army were foreign-born. More than 300,000 immigrants were enlisted or inducted into the U.S. Army during World War II.
- Refugee scientists, many of the world’s most brilliant scientists and mathematicians, played crucial roles in successfully developing the atomic bomb during the Manhattan Project.
- Immigrants in the U.S. military are experiencing much greater obstacles when attempting to become U.S. citizens. The denial rate for military naturalizations increased from 7% in FY 2016 to 17% in FY 2019, a 143% increase in the denial rate, according to a National Foundation for American Policy analysis. Moreover, as a result of several policies, between

FY 2016 and FY 2019 the number of immigrants in the military who naturalized dropped by 54%, from 8,606 in FY 2016 to 3,987 in FY 2019.

Given the aging of the U.S. population, immigrants will be an important source of future recruits to the U.S. Armed Forces. The Trump administration should consider reforming policies that have made it more difficult for foreign-born individuals to join the military and for immigrants in the military to become U.S. citizens. That can be done by restoring the MANVI program that allowed many foreign nationals to offer their special skills to the U.S. Armed Forces and reinstituting the Basic Training Naturalization program.

What motivates immigrants to join the U.S. military? “I can’t speak for every immigrant, but for me it was to earn the right to call myself an American,” said Medal of Honor recipient Florent Groberg in an interview. “This country gave me the opportunity to come here and call myself an American. At the time, we were at war and I wanted to give back, to earn that I am a citizen. When my country is fighting an enemy, as a citizen it’s my duty to go out there and fight for this country. We’re as patriotic as anybody else.”

About the National Foundation for American Policy

Established in 2003, the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-partisan public policy research organization based in Arlington, Virginia focusing on trade, immigration and related issues. The Advisory Board members include Columbia University economist Jagdish Bhagwati, Ohio University economist Richard Vedder, Cornell Law School professor Stephen W. Yale-Loehr and former INS Commissioner James W. Ziglar. Over the past 24 months, NFAP’s research has been written about in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and other major media outlets. The organization’s reports can be found at www.nfap.com. Twitter: [@NFAPResearch](https://twitter.com/NFAPResearch)

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