



VETERANS OF SPECIAL GUERRILLA UNITS AND IRREGULAR FORCES IN LAOS

Advisory Task Force

Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act Verification Process Summary

Reference Model for SGU Task Force Review

Verification Element	Description	Supporting Legal or Policy Citations
Legislative Background	Public Law 106-207 (May 26, 2000) authorized certain Hmong and Lao veterans who served in U.S.-supported Special Guerrilla Units in Laos between February 28, 1961, and May 7, 1975, to apply for naturalization with an exemption from the English-language requirement and special consideration of the civics requirement. The recognition and naturalization review standards were implemented by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and reflected in 8 C.F.R. §§ 312.1(b) and 312.2(b), which provide certain exemptions from the English and civics testing for eligible classes	• Public Law 106-207 (Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 2000), 114 Stat. 316 (May 26, 2000). • 8 C.F.R. §§ 312.1(b) and 312.2(b) – English and civics testing exemptions. • USCIS Policy Manual, Vol. 12 (Pt. E – English and Civics Testing Requirements).
Affidavit Evidence	Applicants submitted Form N-426H (Certificate of Honorable Service), a special-use INS form created for Hmong and Lao SGU veterans, supported by two or more sworn affidavits from credible SGU officers or senior enlisted members attesting to qualifying service.	• USCIS Policy Memos Archive (2000) – Implementation of Hmong Veterans Act. • INS/USCIS FAQ: Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act (Aug. 21, 2000).

		• Form N-426H (Certificate of Honorable Service) — retired form used 2000–2004. • Public Law 106-207, § 4 – Proof of service by affidavit or equivalent documentation.
Command Certification	Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), (later USCIS) relied on verified rosters of recognized SGU unit commanders and officers that were cross-checked through Department of Defense advisory input and credible veterans' organizations. These lists were used to confirm the authenticity of affidavits and ensure that only credible officers could certify service.	• Public Law 106-207, § 5 – DoD advisory opinions and use of organizational records. • National Archives and Records Administration (RG 472) – U.S. Forces in Southeast Asia, 1961–1975.
Service Parameters	Qualifying service required honorable participation in military operations in Laos between February 28, 1961, and May 7, 1975, conducted in support of United States military objectives.	• Public Law 106-207, § 2(a) – Defines qualifying service period and conditions of service. • USCIS Policy Manual, Vol. 12 Pt. D – General Naturalization Requirements (context for adjudication).
Supporting Documentation	Applicants could submit training photos, certificates, pay stubs, mission identification cards, or other contemporaneous materials to substantiate their service. A lack of official U.S. records did not preclude eligibility if credible testimonial or community-verified evidence was available.	• USCIS Policy Memos Archive (2000) – Alternative evidence guidance. • INS/USCIS FAQ: Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act (Aug. 21, 2000). • Public Law 106-207 § 4 – Acceptable forms of proof and affidavits. • USCIS Policy Manual Vol. 12 Pt. B Ch. 3 – Evidentiary standards during naturalization interview.
Community Verification	Recognized veteran associations, including the Lao Veterans of America and affiliated SGU community organizations, assisted INS in verifying the authenticity of affidavits and confirming	• INS Implementation Guidance (2000) – Community-based verification and outreach.

	community standing for applicants. These partnerships provided crucial context for applicants whose records were incomplete or unavailable.	• Senate Report 106-563 – Legislative intent emphasizing community-level corroboration.
USCIS Review	INS (now USCIS) officers received specialized training on SGU command structure and service history to evaluate affidavit credibility, cross-check names and service dates, and apply flexible evidentiary standards consistent with congressional intent. These trainings emphasized cultural awareness, recognition of non-traditional documentation, and equitable evaluation of testimonial evidence.	• USCIS Policy Manual, Vol. 1 Pt. E – AFM retirement and successor adjudication guidance. • USCIS Policy Manual, Vol. 12 Pt. B Ch. 3 – Naturalization interview and evidentiary assessment standards. • Adjudicator’s Field Manual (archived PDFs – Ch. 10 & 21). • Public Law 106-207, § 3 – Congressional findings supporting equitable review.
Documentation Standards	Two independent affidavits were required, executed under penalty of perjury, and accompanied by photo identification whenever possible. Each affidavit identified the veteran’s unit designation, commanding officer, and approximate service dates, with a sworn acknowledgment of personal knowledge of that service. These requirements ensured consistent, credible verification of qualifying SGU service.	• INS/USCIS FAQ: Hmong Veterans’ Naturalization Act (Aug. 21, 2000). • USCIS Policy Manual, Vol. 12 Pt. D – General naturalization documentation and testimony standards. • USCIS Policy Manual, Vol. 1, Pt. E (Adjudications Standards) • 8 U.S.C. § 1445 – Naturalization application documentation requirements. • Public Law 106-207, § 4 – Acceptable forms of documentation and affidavit verification.
Evidentiary Weight & Decision Standards	Consistency among affidavits carried substantial weight in determining eligibility. When discrepancies arose, officers resolved them through follow-up interviews, supplemental affidavits,	• USCIS Policy Manual, Vol. 12 Pt. B Ch. 3 – Naturalization interview and evidentiary assessment standards.

	or corroboration from recognized community or unit sources. Credibility determinations relied on verified command hierarchies, unit associations, and geographic patterns of service, in keeping with the Act's intent to balance flexibility with evidentiary reliability.	• Public Law 106-207, § 2(c) – Evidentiary sufficiency and acceptance of testimonial proof.
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Sources

Federal Statutes and Regulations:

- [Public Law 106-207 \(Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 2000\)](#) – Sections 2–5 define service period, acceptable proof standards, evidentiary sufficiency, and DoD advisory authority.
- [8 C.F.R. Part 312 – English & Civics Requirements](#)
- [8 U.S.C. § 1445 – Naturalization Application Documentation \(Cornell LII mirror\)](#)

Alternate official source (PDF): [GovInfo link](#)

<https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2023-03052>

USCIS Policy & Guidance

- [USCIS Policy Manual – Volume 12 \(Citizenship & Naturalization\)](#)
- [Volume 12 Part B Chapter 3 – Naturalization Interview & Evidentiary Standards](#)
- [Volume 12 Part D – General Naturalization Requirements](#)
- [Volume 12 Part E – English & Civics Testing and Exceptions](#)
- [Volume 1 Part E – AFM Retirement and Successor Guidance](#)
- [USCIS Policy Memos Archive \(2000 Implementation\)](#)
- [INS/USCIS FAQ: Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act \(Aug. 21 2000\)](#)

Historical and Legislative Records

- National Archives — Record Group 472: Records of the U.S. Forces in Southeast Asia (1950–1975)
<https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/472.html>
- [Minnesota Statutes § 197.448 – SGU Recognition](#)
- <https://www.congress.gov/committee-report/106th-congress/house-report/563/1>
<https://www.aila.org/ins-faq-on-naturalization-process-for-hmong>
<https://www.aila.org/dhs-hmong-veterans-naturalization-act-2000>

Archived Adjudicator's Field Manual

- [AFM Chapter 10 – Overview \(PDF\)](#)
- [AFM Chapter 21 – Evidence \(PDF\)](#)

Note: USCIS officially retired the Adjudicator's Field Manual (AFM) in 2020. The archived chapters remain available for historical reference, but the USCIS Policy Manual is now the primary source for current adjudication and evidence guidance.