



Largest Foreign-Born Groups in the Armed Forces are also Largest in U.S.

By Elizabeth Grieco

Many of the largest immigrant groups in the United States also comprise some of the largest foreign-born groups in the U.S. military, as examined in the July issue of the Migration Information Source. The foreign born from countries such as the Philippines, Mexico, Viet Nam, Korea, El Salvador, and Germany are among the ten largest immigrant groups in the United States as well as in the armed forces.

The foreign born from the Philippines are the largest of all immigrant groups and account for over one-fourth of all foreign born on active duty, followed by those from Mexico (10 percent), Jamaica (6 percent), Korea (3 percent), and the Dominican Republic (3 percent), according to Department of Defense data for April 2003.

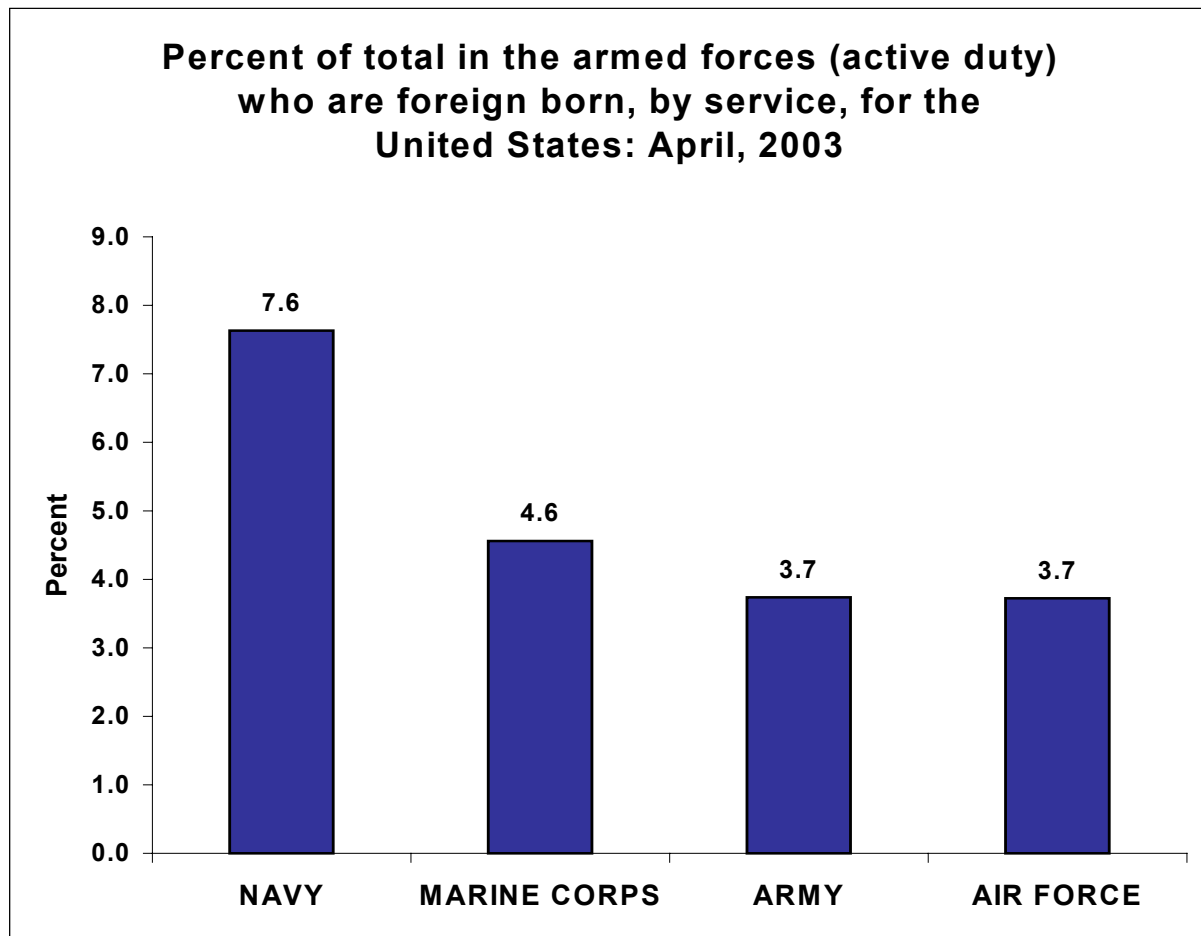
The data indicate that more than 68,000 immigrants now serve in the U.S. armed forces, which is just fewer than 5 percent of the 1.4 million men and women on active duty. More than half are naturalized citizens, meaning though they were born outside of the United States, they are now U.S. citizens.

Fifteen countries with largest number of immigrants on active duty in the U.S. armed forces: April 2003

Immigrant group	Total		Naturalized citizen		Non-citizen	
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of group	Number	Percent of group
TOTAL	68,826	100.0	35,211	51.2	33,615	48.8
Philippines	17,373	25.2	10,548	60.7	6,825	39.3
Mexico	6,994	10.2	2,618	37.4	4,376	62.6
Jamaica	4,091	5.9	1,818	44.4	2,273	55.6
Republic of Korea	2,227	3.2	1,560	70.0	667	30.0
Dominican Republic	2,031	3.0	833	41.0	1,198	59.0
Colombia	1,613	2.3	749	46.4	864	53.6
Trinidad and Tobago	1,488	2.2	672	45.2	816	54.8
El Salvador	1,473	2.1	519	35.2	954	64.8
Vietnam	1,446	2.1	986	68.2	460	31.8
Haiti	1,410	2.0	434	30.8	976	69.2
Germany	1,188	1.7	924	77.8	264	22.2
United Kingdom	1,089	1.6	758	69.6	331	30.4
Guyana	1,088	1.6	552	50.7	536	49.3
Peru	1,021	1.5	386	37.8	635	62.2
Panama	1,017	1.5	714	70.2	303	29.8

Military service provides one avenue toward citizenship and is an important integrating force for some immigrants to this country. One benefit of service is that foreign-born members of the U.S. military can apply for U.S. citizenship without the mandatory five-year waiting period. Other motives for service include job training and educational opportunities, as well as a desire to serve their adopted country. Approximately 8 percent of the men and women serving in the Navy are foreign born, followed by the Marine Corps (5 percent) and Army and Air Force (4 percent each).

The foreign born in the United States play an important role in many areas critical to the United States, including defense. Immigrants and the foreign-born in the U.S. have been under intense scrutiny since September 11. But, as demonstrated by Lance Corporal José Gutierrez, a U.S. soldier born in Guatemala – and a non-citizen – who died in the conflict in Iraq, many foreign-born serve and die for the United States.



More information can be found at www.migrationinformation.org.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Elizabeth Grieco is the data manager for MPI's Migration Information Source. The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) is an independent, non-partisan, and non-profit think tank dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. The institute (www.migrationpolicy.org) provides analysis, development, and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national, and international levels. It aims to meet the rising demand for pragmatic responses to the challenges and opportunities that migration presents in an ever more integrated world. The Source, MPI's online publication, provides current and accurate data and analysis of immigration and refugee issues.