



U.S. MILITARY AND DIPLOMAT BLANKET EXCEPTION FAQs

What is "Blanket Exception"?

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has granted a blanket exception to the Department of State to accept and adjudicate immigrant visa petitions for immediate relatives filed by qualified U.S. citizen active duty U.S. service members permanently assigned to U.S. military bases and U.S. diplomats outside of the United States.

What does this mean?

Filing the petition directly with U.S. Embassy Tokyo or U.S. Consulate General Naha simplifies the process and dramatically shortens the time it takes to obtain an immigrant visa, which is the first step towards a "green card." Instead of filing the petition with USCIS stateside, you file directly with the Immigrant Visa Unit in Tokyo or Naha (depending on where your family member would like to have his or her visa interview).

Who is qualified for the new "Blanket Exception"?

Active duty service members or diplomats who are U.S. citizens and have permanent change of station (PCS) orders assigning them permanently to Japan may file an I-130 petition in person at U.S. Embassy Tokyo or U.S. Consulate General Naha. At this time, the blanket exception does not apply to Department of Defense civilians and contractors, dependents of active duty military service members, or service members temporarily stationed or deployed in Japan.

Who qualifies as an "Immediate Relative"?

Active duty U.S. service members or diplomats may file I-130 petitions in Tokyo or Naha on behalf of their spouse, parent, or unmarried child under the age of 21. Petitions for all other relatives (i.e., unmarried child over the age of 21, married child, and sibling) must be filed with the USCIS Dallas Lockbox facility.

How to file a petition under the New Blanket Exception

Although qualified service members or diplomats in Japan may file their I-130 petition at either U.S. Embassy Tokyo or U.S. Consulate General Naha, we recommend filing the petition based on where your family member would like to be interviewed. U.S. Embassy Tokyo and U.S. Consulate General Naha are exploring options for a web-based Petition Filing appointment system. Please visit our [website here](#).



After we receive the appointment request, we will work with the petitioner to confirm eligibility, collect the necessary documents, and schedule a petition filing appointment. If we are able to approve the petition, we will then work with the petitioner and/or beneficiary to collect any required documents and schedule the immigrant visa interview. In the majority of cases, visas are approved and returned to the applicant within approximately one week of the interview.

What happens if a petition is not “clearly approvable”?

USCIS authorized the Department of State to adjudicate only I-130 petitions that are deemed “clearly approvable.” Petitions accepted in Tokyo or Naha that are not clearly approvable will be sent to the USCIS Office for adjudication. Petitions that are not “clearly approvable” would include cases in which the adjudicating Consular Officer is unable to verify the petitioner’s U.S. citizenship or the relationship between the petitioner and beneficiary.

Examples may include, but are not limited to, cases in which a petitioner or beneficiary claims no prior marriage on the petition form but the Consular Officer has reason to believe an unterminated marriage exists, or an adoption case in which the Consular Officer is unable to verify certain requirements related to inter-country adoptions.

Can I file an I-130 in Tokyo or Naha if I’ve already filed a petition directly with USCIS?

No. USCIS does not authorize the Embassy/Consulate to accept a local filing abroad if the petitioner has already filed a Form I-130 in the U.S. for the same beneficiary. We recommend that you contact the [USCIS Military Help Line](#) or [USCIS contact us](#) to request expedited processing and adjudication.

USCIS Lockbox remains available

Although active duty U.S. service members or diplomats may file a petition directly in Tokyo or Naha, the traditional method of filing an I-130 petition with the USCIS Dallas Lockbox facility remains available to all U.S. citizens petitioning for a family member. For active duty service members or diplomats with a year or more left on their assignment in Japan, this may be a more convenient option. Visit the USCIS website for Lockbox Filing tips.

“Exceptional Filing” for U.S. Citizen Petitioners who are not active duty military or diplomats

Under certain circumstances, and on a case-by-case basis, the USCIS Office may authorize the Department of State to accept and approve I-130 petitions for U.S. citizen petitioners who are not active duty military or diplomats. This would apply to any Department of Defense civilians and contractors, active duty dependents, service members temporarily stationed or deployed to Japan, and non-military petitioners.

Visit the [USCIS website](#) for more information about what circumstances may qualify for exceptional handling.