



November 17, 2006 (revised)

News Release

DHS/DOD Commemorates Veterans' Day by Welcoming America's Newest Citizens: Overseas Ceremonies Held in Afghanistan, Germany and Iraq

WASHINGTON — More than 200 active-duty service members became America's newest U.S. Citizens during weekend military naturalization ceremonies held in Afghanistan and Iraq. The ceremonies took place on Veterans' Day, Saturday, November 11, 2006 at Camp Victory in Baghdad (75 service members naturalized) and at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan (61 service members naturalized), and on Sunday, November 12, 2006 at Camp Anaconda in Balad, Iraq (44 service members naturalized), and on Tuesday, November 14, 2006 at the U. S. Consulate, Frankfurt, Germany (29 service members naturalized). Joining the new citizens to celebrate their accomplishment during the Iraq ceremonies was U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Director Emilio Gonzalez. U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and General George Casey, Commander of Multinational Force – Iraq, joined Director Gonzalez during the Baghdad ceremony.

“Thousands of immigrant troops are making extraordinary sacrifices for America,” said Gonzalez. “These men and women have pledged to defend with their lives – liberties they have yet to secure for themselves. There is no more fitting way for a grateful Nation to show its appreciation than through granting qualified military service members U.S. citizenship as quickly as possible.”

During the Frankfurt naturalization ceremony, Director Gonzalez presented a posthumous U.S. citizenship certificate to Salina Jimenez for her late husband Sergeant David Jimenez-Almazan. Sergeant Jimenez-Almazan, a 27-year-old Army combat medic, died on August 27 in a roadside blast in Iraq's Anbar province. He was the 84th recipient of posthumous U.S. citizenship stemming from the War on Terrorism.

Because of recent changes to the law governing U.S. citizenship, USCIS can hold naturalization interviews and ceremonies overseas for U.S. military service members. Since the inception of the program in 2004, USCIS personnel have naturalized more than 2,500 Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Marines during ceremonies in Afghanistan, Djibouti, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, South Korea, Spain, the United Kingdom and in the Pacific aboard the USS Kitty Hawk.

Each year, USCIS welcomes more than 500,000 citizens during naturalization ceremonies across the United States. That number includes nearly 7,000 members of the armed forces who naturalize both in the U.S. and abroad through an expedited process stemming from their military service. For more information regarding immigration services, please call 1-800-375-5283 or visit www.uscis.gov.

– USCIS –

In March 1, 2003, USCIS became one of three legacy Immigration and Naturalization Service components to join the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. USCIS is charged with fundamentally transforming and improving the delivery of immigration and citizenship services, while enhancing our nation's security.