



Office of Communications

**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

News Release

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USCIS NATURALIZES FIRST MILITARY SPOUSE OVERSEAS

Frankfurt Ceremony Marks Military Spouse Appreciation Month

WASHINGTON – Zita Chouchan, the spouse of a member of the U.S. military recited the Oath of Allegiance and became the newest citizen of the United States yesterday at the U.S. Consulate in Frankfurt, Germany. This was the first overseas naturalization ceremony for a military spouse.

Jonathan Scharfen, Acting Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) presided over the ceremony, which also included 20 soldiers stationed throughout Germany and Kosovo.

"This week, as we observe Memorial Day, we take time to reflect upon the sacrifices our military and their families make to defend the freedoms America offers," said Scharfen. "Words cannot express our profound appreciation for the honorable service you provide. You make us proud to be Americans."

May is Military Spouse Appreciation Month, and in her letter to USCIS seeking the opportunity to conduct her naturalization process and ceremony overseas, Mrs. Chouchan said, "I'm very proud ... not everyone has earned the right to be called a military spouse."

In January, President Bush signed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 into law. This new law amended portions of the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow certain spouses of members of the military to naturalize overseas where they are stationed. Before January 2008, these spouses could only naturalize while physically within the United States.

The 21 new citizens were born in American Samoa, China, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Great Britain, Grenada, Haiti, Hungary, Israel, Jamaica, Liberia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, the Philippines, Russia, and Togo.

Photos from the ceremony are available on the USCIS web site at: www.uscis.gov.

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