



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

August 4, 2004

FACES OF AMERICA: Citizen Soldier
Staff Sergeant Hilbert Caesar
United States Army

"I've always felt like an American... it's just official now."

Staff Sergeant Hilbert Caesar of the 4th Battalion 27th Field Artillery is one of America's brave soldiers...an American hero serving proudly in the United States Army.

"I just love what I do... I'm a soldier fighting for the United States," said Sergeant Caesar.

Not comfortable with the label "hero," he has always considered himself an American. Yet it was only recently during an August 2, 2004 ceremony in Virginia that the native of Guyana raised his right hand and took the Oath of Allegiance which made him a naturalized citizen.

"I left Guyana when I was 11 years old. My family wanted me to have better opportunities in the U.S.," said Caesar.

Now at the age of 26, Sergeant Caesar recalls when he first joined the U.S. Army more than six years ago. "I don't know how to put it into words... this is what I was meant to do," said Caesar.

He was one of the first soldiers called to serve in Operation "Enduring Freedom" – a duty he proudly considers a privilege.

"I knew with such great honor as serving this country, came great risks... I've accepted that... I would do this all over if asked," said Caesar.

Sergeant Caesar was admitted to Walter Reed Hospital in Washington D.C. last April after suffering serious wounds in Iraq.

"There were four bombs buried on the side of road," Caesar recalls. "I was traveling in a convoy when anti-coalition forces detonated the bombs."



Staff Sergeant Hilbert Caesar and Dominican Republic native Army Spc. Johanna Abreu, recite the pledge of allegiance during a citizenship ceremony at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Office in Arlington, Va. on August 3. Photo courtesy: U.S. Army Public Affairs.

In that explosion, Sergeant Caesar lost his right leg. Rather than focusing on his own injury, however, he strives to motivate and inspire other members of his unit who have also suffered serious injuries. He encourages them to find a reason to move on and live their lives.

Despite his pain and the extreme nature of his injury, Caesar refused to use a wheelchair during his stay at Walter Reed. His incredible progress amazed the hospital staff. He learned to walk quicker than the majority of amputees at Walter Reed. His spirit alone continues to inspire his fellow soldiers.

One case in particular involved another soldier who lost a leg in an explosion. This particular soldier reportedly couldn't find the will to walk or even try to

until he saw Staff Sergeant Caesar walking proudly in front of him. Now the two are recovering together, standing tall and walking side by side.

Many would turn away from serving their newly adopted country in the face of such suffering. Sergeant Caesar's attitude is quite the opposite.

"I want to stay in the Army. I knew going into a war that there were risks...but I won't turn my back on my fellow soldiers...I love them... I need to stand by them in any way I can," said Caesar.

His injury will not, however, keep Sergeant Caesar from continuing to be a proud member of the United States Armed Forces as he is exploring options in other fields.

"I may try to enter into the technician medical field with the Army...I can't lead the soldiers, but perhaps I can help save them," said Caesar.

As Sergeant Caesar looks down the road, he continues to think of ways to protect the country that he loves. He knows for certain that he will continue his study of criminal justice and he'll continue working to protect his fellow Americans and his fellow soldiers from harm.

Sergeant Caesar is awaiting an upcoming ceremony where he will receive the Purple Heart for his heroism, sacrifice, and devotion to country.



Sergeant Hilbert Caesar is congratulated by USCIS Director Eduardo Aguirre, and Arlington District Director Phyllis Howard at the conclusion of his citizenship ceremony. Photo courtesy: U.S. Army Public Affairs

– USCIS –

On March 1, 2003, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services became one of three legacy INS 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 the integrity of our nation's security.