



July 1, 2006

News Release

DHS/DOD WELCOME AMERICA'S NEWEST CITIZENS; OVERSEAS

Ceremony Held In Balad, Iraq

WASHINGTON, DC — Sixty-nine (69) active-duty service members took the Oath of Allegiance and became America's newest citizens during a special overseas military naturalization ceremony today at the Logistic Support Area Anaconda, Balad, Iraq. Joining the new citizens to celebrate their accomplishment were U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Rome District Director Jack Bulger and Colonel Mark W. Hampton, 35th Area Support Group Commander. Today's ceremony is part of the larger USCIS commemoration of the United States' 230th birthday. In all, USCIS is hosting more than 150 special July 4th ceremonies for 18,000 men, women and children in the United States and members of the military serving in overseas locations.

"Thousands of immigrant troops are making extraordinary sacrifices for America," said Bulger. "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."

Because of recent changes to the law governing U.S. citizenship, USCIS can now conduct naturalization interviews and hold naturalizations ceremonies overseas for U.S. military service members. Last year, USCIS personnel naturalized 1,006 Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Marines during ceremonies in Afghanistan, Germany, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, Spain, the United Kingdom and in the Pacific aboard the USS Kitty Hawk.

Each year, USCIS welcomes nearly 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.

This is the fifth trip USCIS personnel have made to Iraq to naturalize military service members serving in theater.

For more information regarding immigration services, please call 1-800-375-5283 or visit www.uscis.gov.

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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.