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News Release

USCIS COMPLETES LATEST MILITARY NATURALIZATION EFFORT

123 Service Members Naturalized at Camp Anaconda; 83 Naturalized at Camp Victory

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalized more than 200 soldiers, sailors and Marines during two naturalization ceremonies in Iraq earlier this month. This is the fourth trip that USCIS personnel have made to the region to naturalize members of the U.S. military serving in harm's way.

During a May 12th ceremony held at Camp Anaconda in Balad, Iraq, 123 soldiers took the Oath of Allegiance and became American citizens. Three days later, 73 soldiers, one sailor and nine Marines became U.S. citizens at Camp Victory in Baghdad. The service members naturalized came from 70 different countries.

Among the new citizens was Private First Class (PFC) Gilbert Njuguna of Garland, Texas. A native of Kenya, PFC Njuguna came to the United States from Nairobi when he was 15 years old. Originally from Kenya's Masi Tribe, he is the first among his generation of the tribe to become a U.S. citizen. "I don't have words to describe how I feel," Njuguna said shortly after his ceremony. "I can't believe that this is actually happening to me. I feel proud to have obtained my U.S. citizenship on my own." A combat medic in Iraq, Njuguna plans to become a doctor.

Because of recent changes to the law governing U.S. citizenship, USCIS is able to conduct naturalization interviews and ceremonies overseas exclusively for U.S. military service members. Last year, USCIS employees interviewed and naturalized 1,006 soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines in Afghanistan, Germany, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, Spain, the United Kingdom and in the Pacific aboard the USS Kitty Hawk. USCIS employees volunteer for military naturalization assignments.

Walter Haith, a USCIS Adjudications Officer in Frankfurt, Germany, was part of the three-person team that deployed to Iraq for this latest naturalization effort. He was joined in Iraq by fellow team members Anne Corsano, the USCIS Deputy Director of Rome District Office and Darryl Perez, a USCIS Immigration Specialist also from the Rome District Office.

A U.S. Army retiree, Haith views this as a unique opportunity to give back. "These soldiers have willingly put themselves in harm's way to defend our country," says Haith. "For me, the chance to travel to Iraq and help naturalize these soldiers is an immense honor." This was Haith's second voluntary trip to Iraq to conduct military naturalizations.

Last year, USCIS naturalized more than 7,000 members of the Armed Forces at ceremonies in the U.S. and overseas.

For more information regarding immigration services or the military naturalization program, visit the USCIS website at 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.