



October 18, 2004

Press Release

USCIS HOSTS MILITARY NATURALIZATION IN TOKYO *Event In Tokyo Culminates First Overseas Ceremonies*

Washington, DC – Approximately 20 active-duty service members took the Oath of Allegiance and became the newest U.S. citizens during a special overseas military naturalization ceremony on October 18, 2004 at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, Japan. The ceremony in Tokyo culminates the first overseas military naturalization ceremonies conducted by the United States Federal Government.

Joining the service members and their families to celebrate the swearing in were U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Deputy Director Michael Petrucelli and Consul General Edward McKeon. Earlier in the month, USCIS Director Eduardo Aguirre naturalized 34 service members in Iraq and 17 in Afghanistan.

“Today, we welcomed as new citizens men and women who had pledged to protect America’s freedom,” said Director of USCIS Eduardo Aguirre. “Thousands of immigrant troops are making extraordinary sacrifices for America. There is no more fitting way for a grateful nation to demonstrate its appreciation than through granting qualified service members the privilege of U.S. citizenship as quickly as possible, to carry out their dream of becoming Americans.”

“It is an honor and a privilege to bestow the ultimate honor, American citizenship, on these men and women who fight so bravely and tirelessly to defend the rights and freedoms of their adopted country,” said Deputy Director Petrucelli.

Last November, President Bush signed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004. The Act amended portions of the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow for overseas military naturalization ceremonies. Before October 1, 2004, military service members could only naturalize while physically within the United States.

– 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 our nation's security.