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Prepared Remarks

Military Naturalization Ceremony
Camp Pendleton, California
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OOH-RAAH... Marines and Sailors!

This is my first visit to Camp Pendleton, and all I can say is, wow. What a base, what leadership... what a corps.

There is no more fitting place for this ceremony.

A ceremony we understand to potentially be the largest, for military naturalizations, in California history, with 207 service men and women from 43 countries.

I am privileged to celebrate this very personal and patriotic moment with you and your fellow Devil Dogs... first to fight, right of the line!

I appreciate the presence of so many family and friends of our Americans-to-be. I commend your support of their choice to fully join the American family. And, I am grateful for your sacrifices in support of their service to our Nation.

We owe you a big round of applause. OOH-RAAH!

Military or civilian, America asks much of its citizens. President Theodore Roosevelt noted, "The first requisite of a good citizen in this republic of ours is that he shall be able and willing to pull his weight."

He may as well have been referring to any one of the 207 compelling stories before us this day.

There is, Sergeant Delwin Ellington, a 23-year-old immigrant from Jamaica, who arrived in this country at the age of 10 and makes his home away from Camp Pendleton in Tampa, Florida.

Sergeant Ellington recently returned from Operation Iraqi Freedom where he served in the 1st Marines Division, Amphibious Assault Battalion... and, he will soon re-deploy to Iraq.

He says, "There are so many things I want to do for this country... and being a citizen will help me excel." I say, Sergeant Ellington, you already have.

Then there is the story of Lance Corporal Armando Reyna, a 20-year-old technician from Mexico with the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

Lance Corporal Reyna says there are many reasons why he wants to become a U.S. citizen.

Most of all, because he would be "proud to be an American." Well, Lance Corporal Reyna... we are equally as proud of you.

And, our Commander-in-Chief is especially proud of you... all of you.

I administer the Oath of Allegiance to many servicemen and women, including two who took the oath in their hospital beds, as the President stood at my side.

When one of those soldiers was asked if he had family present, he said that he did not have family at all.

The President and First Lady immediately responded, "We'll be your family, then."

I tell you, we laughed and we cried. We prayed, and then we cried some more. It was a day I will never forget. But, that is the type of Commander-in-Chief we have in this great country.

I understand many of you are soon to re-deploy. I want you and all your fellow Marines and Sailors to know that you are in our thoughts and prayers.

Words simply cannot capture our country's gratitude for your service. Know that we are behind you, and that we support you- completely. You are carrying out a just and noble mission.

I do not have to remind you that Devil Dogs do not know anything other than how to succeed. When circumstances are at their worst, you are at your best... just like the Battle of Bellowoods during the First World War.

Pinned down, and nearly out of ammunition... the Marines charged with bravery and bayonets... and they were victorious, saving Paris from opposition hands. The Germans referred to those brave Marines as Devil Dogs, but the world knows them as heroes.

The same holds true today. You are each our heroes in the war against terror.

And, each and every one of us here is honored to share this moment with you and welcome you to the American family.

The Great Seal of the United States features an eagle holding a ribbon in its beak imprinted with the words *E Pluribus Unum*—one out of many.

These are not hollow words. They are words that we, as a nation, live and grow by.

Semper Fi... Go Navy... God Bless America!