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Press Release

FIRST U.S. MILITARY NATURALIZATIONS IN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Events In Germany, Afghanistan, and Iraq Culminate First Overseas Ceremonies

Washington, DC – Today, 28 active-duty service members took the Oath of Allegiance and became the newest U.S. citizens during a special overseas military naturalization ceremony on the Vogelweh Airbase in Kaiserslautern, Germany. The Vogelweh ceremony 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 was U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Director Eduardo Aguirre. Earlier in the week, Director Aguirre naturalized 17 service members on the Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan and 34 service members on Camp Victory South in Iraq.

“Today, we welcomed as new citizens men and women who had pledged to protect America’s freedom,” said Director 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.”

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 Director Eduardo Aguirre congratulates new citizens serving in the U.S. Army during the first overseas U.S. military citizenship ceremony in Afghanistan.