

Secretary Napolitano Leads Naturalization Ceremony for 31 Service Members at the Pentagon



Release Date: September 10, 2009

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
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Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano commemorated the milestone of more than 52,000 American military service members becoming U.S. citizens since Sept. 11, 2001, by joining Department of Defense Secretary Robert Gates and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Director Alejandro Mayorkas at a naturalization ceremony for 31 military men and women today at the Pentagon.

“Since 9/11, we have helped more than 52,000 courageous soldiers, airmen, marines and sailors gain the benefits and rewards of U.S. citizenship,” said Secretary Napolitano. “I am proud to swear in these brave men and women who have come from all over the world to serve our country and become its newest citizens.”

Those naturalized in today’s ceremony were born in Bangladesh, China, Ecuador, Ghana, Haiti, India, Iran, Jamaica, Liberia, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Philippines, Senegal, South Korea, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom and Vietnam.

Among the service members naturalized today were a wounded warrior and three soldiers recruited through the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI) pilot program—developed to help fill the nation’s critical readiness needs, such as healthcare professionals and those with foreign language and cultural skills.

In her remarks, Secretary Napolitano highlighted the strength of the partnership between DHS and the Department of Defense that resulted in more than 9,000 non-citizens in uniform becoming American citizens this fiscal year—more than any year since 1970.

Secretary Napolitano also emphasized her commitment to bringing immigration services to members of the military wherever they serve, and ensuring that members of the military have every possible opportunity for expedited citizenship.

Naturalization ceremonies for members of the armed forces have taken place across the United States and in Afghanistan, Djibouti, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Iceland, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Philippines, South Korea, Spain and the United Kingdom.

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This page was last reviewed/modified on September 10, 2009.