



# RHUMB LINES

*Straight Lines to Navigate By*



November 7, 2008

## Immigration Assistance

*"This is truly a special day for our country and our joint military team to accept these young men and women as citizens of this great country. You truly represent the strength of this nation--immigrants; people who believe in a nation and defend it even before they can call themselves citizens."*

**– Rear Adm. Len Hering, Commander, Navy Region Southwest**

Veteran's Day naturalization ceremonies honor the sacrifices of all veterans, past and present, and the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines serving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. These ceremonies recognize the honor of U.S. citizenship and the contributions of naturalized citizens in our Navy. There are currently 43,529 non-U.S. citizens in the all branches of the United States military, active and reserve, with 14,449 serving in the Navy. This year, special naturalization ceremonies are planned in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as on board the USS Midway Museum and Assault Craft Unit 5.

### Streamlining the Naturalization Process

- The naturalization process has been significantly streamlined for service members. Currently, non-U.S. citizens honorably serving in the United States Armed Forces on or after September 11, 2001 are eligible for expedited citizenship. Filing fees and waiting periods are currently waived, and interviews and oaths can occur overseas, further expediting the process. Only 1,433 eligible Service members filed in 2007 using the expedited filing procedures.
- United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Field Offices were directed to make and maintain contacts with designated military officials to bring immigration services to service members and their families at military installations.
- USCIS Field Offices are directed to naturalize qualified service members domestically, as soon after enlistment as possible and before deployment overseas.

### Immigration Assistance is Essential to Sailor Legal Readiness

- Proactive encouragement from Commanding Officers supports non-U.S. citizen Sailors achieving their overall legal readiness. Encouragement is important to those Sailors who are entitled to expedited naturalization to take advantage of the process.
- Immigration advice and services are provided by paralegals and attorneys at local [Legal Assistance Offices](#). Additionally, USCIS has established a dedicated, toll-free help line, 1-877-247-4645, and a web page, <http://www.uscis.gov/military> to assist service members and their families with immigration services and benefits.

### Key Messages

- Veteran's Day naturalization ceremonies honor the sacrifices of all veterans, past and present, and service members supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.
- A streamlined process for naturalization is available to active duty military members.
- Encouragement and support by local commands, legal offices and USCIS ensures naturalization benefits are available to our Sailors who are not U.S. citizens.

### Facts & Figures

- On Nov. 10 2006, more than 200 active-duty service members became U.S. citizens during naturalization ceremonies held at Camp Victory in Baghdad, Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, Camp Anaconda in Balad, Iraq, and at the U.S. consulate, Frankfurt, Germany.
- In 2007, 253 new U.S. citizens were welcomed in three special Veteran's Day naturalization ceremonies in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan.