



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

News Release: USCIS Naturalizes First American Soldier in Haiti

Ceremony Held during Military Appreciation Month

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – Army Pfc. Guy A. Eugene became the first person to receive U.S. citizenship while serving in Haiti after reciting the *Oath of Allegiance* during a naturalization ceremony held today at the U.S. Embassy.

Presiding during the ceremony was U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Haiti Field Office Director Pius Bannis, who said, "It is a privilege and a distinct honor to be the first to welcome Pfc. Eugene as the newest citizen of the United States, and to have a role in helping him carry out his dream of becoming an American citizen."

Eugene said the ceremony is more of a formality because he already feels like an American. He explained saying, "Once I was allowed to wear the [U.S. Army] uniform, I felt part of the United States."

A native of Haiti, Eugene immigrated to the United States at age 36 after vandals burned down his business. He returned to his native country with the U.S. Army as part of *Operation Unified Response* following the Jan. 12, 2010 earthquake. Assigned to the Army's 529th Network Support Company at Fort Sill, Okla., Eugene said he plans on earning a college degree in accounting once he returns to the United States.

Since September 2001, more than 59,300 service men and women have become citizens during naturalization ceremonies in the United States and in 20 different countries overseas, which now includes Haiti. The *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004* allows for overseas naturalization ceremonies for members of the U.S. armed forces. Before Oct. 1, 2004, service men and women could only naturalize while physically within the United States.

Information about immigration services and benefits available to members of the military and their families is available online at: <http://www.uscis.gov/military>. Members of the U.S. armed forces and their families may also contact the USCIS military customer service toll-free telephone line, 1-877-CIS-4MIL (1-877-247-4645) or by sending an e-mail to militaryinfo.nsc@dhs.gov.

