



# USCIS MONTHLY

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## August 2008

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## A Message from USCIS Acting Director Scharfen



I recently enjoyed the privilege to travel abroad and visit with USCIS Refugee Corps officers in Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, and Jordan.

In Tanzania, Refugee Corps officers interview Burundians who fled their homes in 1972.

In Thailand, I visited a camp where some Burmese refugees have lived for over a decade. In both Turkey and Jordan, I witnessed interviews of especially vulnerable Iraqi refugees.

While recently visiting Jordan, I met the dedicated USCIS Refugee Processing team in Amman. The team's leader, Mr. Michael Burt, informed me of the day-to-day operations involved in efficiently admitting Iraqi refugees to the U.S while simultaneously maintaining our commitment to national security. Additionally, Mr. Burt explained how these Iraqi refugees were victimized for sectarian and religious reasons as well as for any association with the United States. These are just some of the many issues that USCIS officers must consider before formulating a decision that could change the lives of those applying for refugee status.

Later that evening, I was able to converse with Mr. Burt and his team in a less formal setting while having dinner at a local restaurant. The traditional cuisine laid before us was a wonderful combination of hummus, lamb, dolmas, rice, pitas, tabouli, and babaganoush.



During this fabulous meal, we spoke of our families and how USCIS continues the American tradition of "building a nation of immigrants."

How fitting it was to see such a mixture of cultures on the table, traditional Jordanian foods and the bright red Coca Cola can that is an icon of the United States. There we were, a team of American civilian employees, meeting in Jordan, bringing some of our culture with us, but with a common mission to resettle Iraqis back in the US where they'll bring their own experiences to merge with the great melting pot.

Mr. Burt's keen observation reminded me that our American ideals, civic history, and way of life is admired well beyond our nation's borders. Furthermore, our accomplishments as a nation are not solely attributed to one entity or ethnicity, but rather to the families of immigrants, their descendents, and a collective effort on behalf of the many people from different backgrounds that have made this country their home.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is something that all Americans can be proud of and I applaud the members of the Refugee Corps in Amman for their skill, professionalism and dedication to the USCIS mission.

  
Jonathan "Jock" Scharfen,  
USCIS Acting Director



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

## News You Can Use

[USCIS Changes Vaccination Requirements with Questions & Answers](#) - 07/24/2008

[USCIS Harlingen Office Closes Due to Hurricane Dolly](#) - 07/22/2008

[USCIS Seeks Comments On Draft Pamphlet For Immigrant Victims](#) - 07/22/2008

[USCIS Clarifies Fee Exemption Eligibility for Form I-601](#) - 07/21/2008

[Fact Sheet: Iraqi Refugee Processing](#) - 07/15/2008

[USCIS Extends Validity Period of EADs for Refugees](#) - 07/11/2008

[USCIS Continues Suspension of Premium Processing Service](#) - 07/09/2008

[USCIS Announces New Special Iraqi Immigrant Visa](#) - 07/09/2008

[USCIS Biometric Requirement Changes](#) - 07/08/2008

[USCIS Launches Online Service to Check Status of FOIA Requests](#) - 06/30/2008

## Celebrating Independence Day: At a Natz Near You



President Bush attends Monticello Naturalization

The 46th annual Monticello Independence Day Celebration and Naturalization Ceremony was held at the home of President Thomas Jefferson in Charlottesville, VA on July 4, 2008 with special guest and keynote speaker President George W. Bush.

On his final Fourth of July as president, Bush told an audience assembled in the Monticello lawn that he was honored to be present for the naturalization. "When you raise your hands and take your oath, you will complete an incredible journey. From this day forward, the history of the United States will be part of your heritage."

Bringing attention to the author of the Declaration of Independence, Bush cited Jefferson's words, saying "Throughout our history, the words of the declaration have inspired immigrants around the world to set sail to our shores. ... They made America a melting pot of culture from all across the world. They made diversity a great strength of our democracy."

"Those of you taking the oath of citizenship at this ceremony hail from 30 different nations,

" Bush noted. "You all have one thing in common — and that is a shared love of freedom, and this is the love that makes us all Americans."

"This is a fitting place to celebrate our nation's independence. Thomas Jefferson once said he'd rather celebrate the Fourth of July than his own birthday. To me, it's pretty simple — the Fourth of July weekend is my birthday weekend." Bush turned 62 on July 6.

Before his brief remarks, the president was given a tour of Jefferson's home. The ceremony was hosted by USCIS and the U.S. District Court, Western District of Virginia with presiding Judge James P. Jones. 76 candidates for U.S. citizenship were naturalized.

*Philadelphia District Welcomes 3,000 New Americans*



3,000 new citizens and hosted the largest ceremonies ever held in the district's history. Among the applicants taking the Oath of Allegiance were 11 members of the armed forces. Keynote speaker at the morning ceremony was Roberto Diaz, a newly naturalized citizen from Chile who is President of the world renowned Curtis Institute of Music. Sara Manzano-Diaz, Deputy Secretary of State for Regulatory Programs in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania addressed the new citizens in the afternoon. Both ceremonies were presided over by the

new Philadelphia District Director Karen Fitzgerald.

### *San Juan Hosts Ceremony at Historic Location*



A naturalization ceremony took place on July 2 at the 243-year-old Fort San Cristobal in San Juan, PR. Within the walls of this historic Fort, 250 San Juan area residents became U.S. citizens. The ceremony was presided over by Jose A. Fuste, Chief Judge, United States District Court and USCIS Miami District Director Linda Swacina was the featured speaker. The new citizens hailed from 26 countries.

### *Vice President Cheney Surprises New Citizens in Boston*



On July 4, 26 new United States Citizens were sworn in by U.S. District Court Judge, Richard G. Stearns at the Boston Harbor dock. The U.S.S. Constitution served as a historical backdrop. Following the ceremony, Vice President Richard Cheney and his wife Lynn arrived to greet the new citizens.

After shaking hands, the Vice President and Mrs. Cheney were

escorted onboard "Old Ironsides" for a tour of the Harbor and a twenty one gun salute. Also in attendance were USCIS Chief of Staff Tom Paar and Boston District Director Denis C. Riordan.

### *Major League Baseball Player Joins the Field as New Citizen*

On July 9, the Detroit District of USCIS and the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Michigan were hosted by the Detroit Tigers for a naturalization ceremony that was held immediately preceding a game between the Detroit Tigers and the Cleveland Indians.

Approximately 100 new citizens took the oath of allegiance before United States District Court Judge Gerald E. Rosen on the field, including one of the Detroit Tigers players, second baseman, Placido Polanco. The Detroit Tigers Foundation donated three hundred tickets for the new citizens and their families to attend the game after the ceremony, many of whom were attending their first baseball game.

### **Would You Like to Work at USCIS?**

How would you like to work for an agency that changes lives everyday, invests time and money into the career development and growth of its employees, and comprises a diverse workforce providing unique opportunities? USCIS offers all that and more!

[Upcoming Recruiting Events](#)  
[Current Job Openings](#)  
[Career Descriptions](#)  
[Federal Employment Benefits](#)  
[Student Programs at USCIS](#)

USCIS opportunities are available nationwide, apply by visiting [USAJOBS](#) today!

## Construction Corner

### *Providence*



Construction continues on the new Providence Field Office located in Johnstown, RI. Interior stairwells have been laid up, structural steel is being erected and site work continues. Anticipated occupancy is in December 2008.

### *Denver*



The new Detroit District Office is underway with anticipated occupancy date in the first quarter of calendar year 2009.

## USCIS Career Opportunities in Buffalo, NY

How would you like to work for an agency that changes lives everyday, invests time and money into the career development and growth of its employees, and comprises a diverse workforce providing unique opportunities? USCIS offers all that and more! Contribute to the USCIS mission to maintain the integrity of our Nation's immigration system and build on America's promise and foundation as a beacon of hope and liberty.

The USCIS Verification Division is pleased to announce new career opportunities at its new Buffalo, New York office. This office will provide critical support to both the E-Verify and SAVE programs. The E-Verify program is a free electronic tool used by U.S. employers to verify the status of their newly-hired workers. The SAVE program is an electronic tool used by benefit granting agencies to determine status information.

Over 75 positions in this office will be announced at USAJobs.gov website in the coming weeks. Internal and external candidates will find exciting new opportunities in the following areas:

- Management and Program Analysis
- Status Verification Operations
- Quality Assurance

For more information about the fast-growing Verification Division and its mission visit

[USCIS Verification Division](#)

[USCIS Career Descriptions](#)

[Prep Guide for Adjudication Officers and Applications Adjudication Test Battery](#)

[Special Programs at USCIS](#)

[Federal Employment Benefits at USCIS](#)

[Current job openings at USCIS](#)

## A Day in the Life



SDAO Ely P. Borjal during Orlando Natz Ceremony on July 2, 2008

Ely. P. Borjal  
Supervisory Adjudications Officer  
Orlando, FL Field Office

*Start date:*  
May 21, 1996

*Previous jobs:*  
Retired U.S. Navy Chief Warrant Officer

*What made you want to work for USCIS?*

I met and became friends with an INS employee. He told me about INS and how satisfied he was with the work. I decided that it was important work with a good future, so I applied for a job with the agency when I retired from the Navy.

*Describe your career path:*

I started out as a GS-5 Inspector in Miami. It became clear to me that

my Master's Degree was not going to get me promoted. I needed to apply the same work ethic in this new career that I had applied to get ahead in the Navy.

I volunteered for the jobs that were hard and that no one else wanted, I worked hard and I worked smart and quickly rose through the ranks to become an Adjudicator and Supervisory Adjudications Officer. I tried very hard to make sure we denied benefits when they should be denied, that we granted benefits when they should be granted, and that we did it as quickly and efficiently as possible.

*Most rewarding part of your job:*

Nothing even comes close to a Naturalization Ceremony. I get to see the staff in action, guiding, directing, coordinating, assisting; all of them working hard to make this very important day the very best it can be for our newest citizens. I also get to see the results of our hard work culminate in the joy and heartfelt gratitude of hundreds of new citizens and their families. I was born in the Philippines and I am an American by choice, which makes the work I do even more rewarding to me.

Second to that is the genuine pleasure I get when I see my people get recognized and rewarded for their hard work. I am motivated by the enormous importance of my job and the quality of my coworkers. I feel very fortunate to be able to do a job I love, and do it among people that I truly like and admire.

*Most challenging part of your job:*

My biggest challenge is getting my staff here in Orlando to push themselves, day in and day out, to be the very best employee that they can be. I know that I can push them and get them to produce, but if I can get them to push themselves, they will

produce even greater results. I think that my staff is among the very best in USCIS, and they are getting better all the time.

*What advice would you give to a new USCIS employee?*

Put your heart into your work. Recognize the enormous importance of what we do. Work hard, work smart and be a team player.

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## Frequently Asked Questions at USCIS

*How Do I...Help My Relative Get Refugee or Asylee Status in the United States?*

If you are currently in refugee or asylee status, you may be able to help your relative get asylee or refugee status. You can start the process by filing a Form I-730, [Refugee/Asylee Relative Petition](#).

*Who are the relatives that I may file for?*

If you entered the United States (U.S.) as a refugee or were granted asylum less than two years ago, you may file an I-730 for the following relatives:

- Husband or wife
- Unmarried children under age 21

An I-730 petition must be filed within two years of entering as a refugee or being granted asylum. If it has been longer than two years since you entered as a refugee or were granted asylum, you may want to get legal advice to determine if there are any other immigration benefits available to your relative.

*What happens after I file for my relative?*

After you file the I-730 petition, we will mail you a receipt so you know we received it for processing. If your petition is incomplete, we may have to reject it, or ask you for more evidence or information, which will delay processing. Please send all required information the first time to avoid delay. If your relative is in the U.S., we may require him or her to appear for an interview with an immigration officer. We will notify you when we make a decision regarding your case.

If we approve your petition, and your relative is inside the U.S., we will send you an approval notice, notifying you that your relative is a refugee or asylee and what steps to take next. If we approve your petition and your relative is outside the U.S., we will send you an approval notice and forward your petition to the U.S. Embassy/Consulate nearest your relative. The U.S. Embassy/Consulate will notify your relative when and where to appear, inviting him or her to apply for a visa to enter the U.S.

*After I file, how long will it take before my relative's petition can be approved?*

The time it takes to process and approve your relative's petition depends on a number of factors. Once you file, we will send you a receipt. You can check and monitor current processing times on our website.

*If I marry after I become a refugee or asylee, can I file an I-730 for my husband or wife?*

You cannot file an I-730 for your husband or wife if you marry after you become a refugee or asylee.

However, you may want to get legal advice to determine if there are any other immigration benefits available to your spouse.

*Can I help any other relatives?*

The law limits eligibility to the relatives listed on this Fact Sheet.

If my relative is granted refugee or asylee status, can he or she file the I-730 for another family member?

If your relative was granted refugee or asylee status based on his/her relationship to you, he/she cannot file a Form I-730 for other family members.

### Get to Know Your USCIS Office Components



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

#### The Office of Citizenship

The mission of the Office of Citizenship (OoC) is to foster immigrant integration and participation of immigrants in American civic culture.

OoC promotes education and training on fundamental civic principles and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, provides federal leadership on civic integration issues and celebrates the meaning of citizenship for immigrants and citizens.



### Seattle, WA



82 year old Eduardo Mariano Orbeta was born in Manila, Philippines into family of six children. Moving in Quezon City after World War II, Eduardo worked as a security guard at a bank for 30 years. Married to Andreлина Racasa Obeta for almost 50 years, they raised three children - Edylynn, Ferdinand, and Johnas.

After retiring, Eduardo relocated to the United States when his daughter Edylynn petitioned for his entry. He adjusted his status to Lawful Permanent Resident on October 10, 1998.

Eduardo became a Naturalized U.S. Citizen during a private ceremony conducted by USCIS Seattle Officers on July 2 at the Arden Rehab & Healthcare Center in Shoreline, WA, accompanied by his family, USCIS officers and nursing staff.

### Dallas, TX

Mrs. Iram Akram was a lawful permanent resident working in a convenience store in Dallas, Texas. While at work on July 27, 2007, she was robbed at gunpoint and shot in the neck. Today, Iram is a quadriplegic and recuperating at Dallas Parkland Hospital.



Less than one year after this tragic event in her life, Mrs. Akram celebrated becoming an American. On June 20, USCIS Dallas Field Office Supervisory Adjudications Officer Alfonso Gonzalez and Adjudications Officer Jackie Russell made a "house call" to Ms. Aram's bedside and administered the naturalization exam and the Oath of Allegiance fulfilling Ms. Akram's wish to be a citizen of the United States while her husband proudly watched the ceremony.

### Houston, TX



Houston Field Office Director Sandra Heathman administered the Oath of Allegiance to medically retired soldier, Javier Negrete. Mr. Negrete served 5 years in the U.S. Army and completed 2 tours of duty in Iraq. When asked how he felt about becoming a U.S. citizen, Mr. Negrete replied, "I'm really, really, really, really nervous." The 24-year-old soldier was in an automobile accident that left him disabled. An interesting note is FOD Heathman administered Javier's international

adoption application when he was being adopted by a U.S. citizen couple in 1989.

### Los Angeles, CA



When Rember Colocho, originally from El Salvador, graduated from Los Angeles High School, he wanted to give something to the country that gave his family freedom and opportunity. So he joined the U.S. Army National Guard, hoping to "see the world."

The part of the world this father of four wound up seeing was Iraq where, in 2007, he sustained injuries to both his knees while serving as turret gunner on a Humvee. Nonetheless, he stayed on duty for two more months following his injury. "I just didn't want to leave my buddies," he explained.

Returning home in May 2007, he had surgeries on both knees. Colocho is still serving, doing light duty at the armory in Corona, where the family lives. Today Colocho attends the College of Oceanering, where he's training to be an underwater welder. He'll reluctantly leave the Army when his commitment expires; knowing that the physical demands of the job are too much for his damaged knees. "I'd like to be able to run with my three sons when they're older," says Colocho.

## DHS Deputy Secretary Paul Schneider Visits Baltimore District Office



DHS Deputy Secretary Paul Schneider addresses Baltimore District employees. DHS Deputy Secretary Paul Schneider visited with Baltimore District Office employees and was the keynote speaker at a naturalization ceremony on Friday, June 27.

During the all-hands town hall event, Deputy Secretary Schneider expressed why he thinks USCIS is a great place to work and how USCIS contributes to the mission of DHS.

“I’m proud of the relationships USCIS has built with other agencies and I sincerely appreciate the work USCIS employees perform on a daily basis,” Schneider said.

The Deputy Secretary also said that the first priority for USCIS should be its transformation from a paper-based system to electronic business processes. At DHS Headquarters, Schneider remains focused on getting DHS ready for a seamless political transition, developing a “bullet-proof” budget for 2010 getting all the agencies of DHS to work more closely together.

Speaking at a naturalization ceremony held after the town hall, the Deputy Secretary addressed 52 new citizens, “I urge you to further educate yourselves not only about the issues that are important to you, but also about America’s rich history and traditions.”

## Adopted Valor: Foreign Born American Heroes



Felix Sosa-Camejo  
Born: Cuba  
Branch: U.S. Army  
Rank: Captain  
Commendation: 12 citations for valor, including the Bronze Star (2), the Silver Star (3) and Purple Heart (2)  
Combat Theatre: Vietnam

Felix Sosa-Camejo came to Miami, FL as a 20 year-old refugee from Fidel Castro’s regime in Cuba. He enlisted in the Army in 1963. Serving for five years, Captain Sosa-Camejo earned 12 citations, including the Bronze Star, three Silver Stars and two Purple Hearts.

On February 13, 1968, in the heat of the Tet Offensive on the streets of Hue, his platoon was pinned down by enemy fire and unable to

reach a wounded comrade. With disregard for his safety, Captain Sosa-Camejo ran through the intense enemy fire and pulled the wounded man to safety. After ensuring that the wounded man was receiving medical treatment, Captain Sosa-Camejo returned to the firefight and again exposed himself again to fire by assaulting an entrenched enemy position bunker with grenades. He killed two North Vietnamese soldiers before he was mortally wounded. This action would earn Captain Sosa-Camejo his second Bronze Star and cost him his life.



The Outstanding American by Choice initiative recognizes the outstanding achievements of naturalized U.S. citizens who have made significant contributions to both their community and their adopted country. Through civic participation, professional achievement, and responsible citizenship, recipients of this honor have demonstrated their commitment to this country and to the common civic values that unite us as Americans.

Donald Zacherl was born in Canada and became a citizen of the United States in 1970. He is the president and chief executive officer of T3 Technologies, a business process and custom software development firm in Virginia. A retired Army Lieutenant Colonel, Mr. Zacherl attended the Military Academy at West Point.

While in the Army, Mr. Zacherl served as a Field Artillery officer, was qualified as an Airborne Ranger, and commanded a battalion. Mr. Zacherl also served as the operations officer for the Counter-Terrorist Joint Task Force, and was personally congratulated by General Colin Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for successful leadership and coordination of a national crisis management program.

Mr. Zacherl's post-military accomplishments include selection as one of the 100 premier technology leaders in the United States in 2001 by ComputerWorld magazine. Mr. Zacherl was also profiled in 2001 in InfoWorld magazine as a business technology leader and executive. Mr. Zacherl founded T3 Technologies, a service disabled veteran owned small business, in March 2004.

In addition to West Point, Mr. Zacherl earned multiple advanced degrees from Hofstra University and George Washington University. He participated in the Stanford University Chief Information Officer Executive Program and is a member of Beta Gamma Sigma, an international honor society.

## Latest from the Leadership Journal

Visit the [DHS Leadership Journal](#) for the latest news and opinion from DHS decision makers.

## September is National Preparedness Month – Get a Kit, Make a Plan, Be Informed, Get Involved

National Preparedness Month (NPM) is a nationwide effort sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security's Ready campaign and is held each September with the goal of increasing public awareness of the importance of preparing for emergencies at home, work and school.

September 2008 is the fifth annual National Preparedness Month and this year the focus is on important preparedness steps:

- Get an Emergency Supply Kit
- Make a Family Emergency Plan
- Be Informed
- Get Involved

The USCIS Emergency Preparedness Organization includes the Office of Emergency Management and Safety (OEMS) as well as Emergency Management Coordinators (EMC) at each field office.

Please visit [www.ready.gov/america/index.html](http://www.ready.gov/america/index.html) for helpful information and links to resources in your community.

Please take a moment to get prepared.

## USCIS Annual Report Wins National Award



The USCIS FY2007 Annual Report was selected as a winner in the 2008 American Inhouse Design Awards. [http://www.gdusa.com/issue\\_2008/08\\_aug/aidaresults/index.php](http://www.gdusa.com/issue_2008/08_aug/aidaresults/index.php)

This competition is the premier showcase for printed media done by corporate, non-profit and institutional in-house departments.

There were more than 5,000 entries and less than 600 were recognized for this honor.

To view the Annual Report, click these links: [part 1](#), [part 2](#).

The USCIS FY2008 Annual Report is currently in production.