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Former POW Guest for NYC 2004 Countdown
NEW YORK

This year's special guest for the **Times Square** countdown to 2004 will be Shoshana Johnson, who spent 22 days as a prisoner of war in Iraq after being shot during an ambush.

Johnson was in a war "that was started right across the street from where we are today, on 9-11," Mayor Michael Bloomberg told a news conference Thursday at a hotel facing the World Trade Center site.

He called the 30-year-old former U.S. Army specialist from El Paso, Texas - who has relatives in New York City - "the perfect choice to be our New Year's guest." He said she'll push the globe triggering the drop of a 1,070-pound Waterford crystal ball and lead a 60-second countdown to 2004.

Johnson, who was discharged from the Army last week, told New Yorkers: "Thank you for your support of my Army, my armed forces, my fellow soldiers, who were willing to do what is necessary for our freedom, for us to sit back and enjoy such a wonderful **New Year's Eve.**"

She was a cook for the 507th Maintenance Company when it was ambushed in March. She was shot in both ankles and captured with five other soldiers, including Jessica Lynch. Nine soldiers died in the attack.

Johnson was awarded the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart and the Prisoner of War Medal for her service in Iraq.