

U. S. AIR FORCE HONOR GUARD

The United States Air Force Honor Guard is the official ceremonial unit of the U.S. Air Force with headquarters at Bolling Air Force Base, Washington, D.C. The Honor Guard reports to the 11th Wing in the Air Force District of Washington.

Mission

The U. S. Air Force Honor Guard's primary mission is to render military honors to Air Force personnel and their families during funeral services at Arlington National Cemetery.

The Honor Guard also conducts military ceremonies at the White House, Pentagon and national memorials. Representing the Air Force in presidential, joint armed forces, Air Force and public ceremonies in the nation's capital, the Honor Guard is under the scrutiny of the highest ranking officials of the United States and foreign nations, including royalty.

The Honor Guard is the lead organization for support, training and standardization for Air Force base honor guard programs worldwide. The unit also promotes recruiting, retention and awareness among Air Force personnel and U.S. and foreign civilians.

Organization

The Honor Guard is a selectively manned unit with more than 250 ceremonial guardsmen and support personnel assigned. It is made up of three main elements – the color guard, body bearers and firing party – as well as the Air Force Honor Guard Drill Team, the traveling performance and exhibition unit.

Each unit performs a specific function at ceremonies and funerals. The colors element displays and guards the United States Flag, Air Force Flag and flags representing the many offices of visiting dignitaries, as well as every country's flag. Body bearers personally escort and carry flag-draped remains to burial sites and fold the flag for presentation to a family member. The 21-gun salute is executed by the firing party element with seven-man teams firing three volleys, or shots, in unison.

The drill team travels around the United States and overseas promoting recruiting, retention and awareness. Drill team members perform precision-oriented routines in which they spin, flip and toss 11-pound M-1 Garande rifles with fixed bayonets.

Because more than 50 members are assigned to each element, except the drill team, the Honor Guard can participate in multiple funerals and ceremonies daily. On average, the Honor Guard participates in more than 2,600 every year.

History

The Honor Guard traces its beginning to May 1948 when the newly-formed Air Force headquarters were instructed to develop plans for an elite ceremonial unit comparable to those of the other armed services. The result was a ceremonial unit activated within the 1100th Air Police Squadron in September 1948 with an authorized strength of 98 enlisted and two officers.

Because of transfers and personnel attrition, the ceremonial detachment was disbanded by the end of the year. It wasn't until March 1949 that sufficient personnel were assigned to enable the unit to function.

The Air Force Ceremonial Detachment continued to be assigned to the Air Police Squadron until December 1971. On January 1, 1972, the Air Force Honor Guard became a separate unit.

Point of Contact

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