



NAVY CEREMONIAL GUARD: DUTY WITH HONOR

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Naval Aviation's dedicated personnel come from diverse backgrounds. On Memorial Day, as we salute all service members for their contributions, we highlight aviation personnel who serve in an elite group, the United States Navy Ceremonial Guard.

Sailors beginning their careers in the Navy are not always sure what they want to do after boot camp. Some attend an “A” school, while others go to the fleet as undesignated seamen, airmen or firemen. There are also those asked to become members of the guard.

These Sailors are chosen for their abilities as well as their commitment to the Navy, and are required to give up any “A” school assignment for a two-year tour with the guard. Why do they commit to another type of intensive “boot camp”? What makes them want to be a part of this special unit? Is it the chance to wear white cotton leggings and black patent-leather shoes with brass heel cleats?

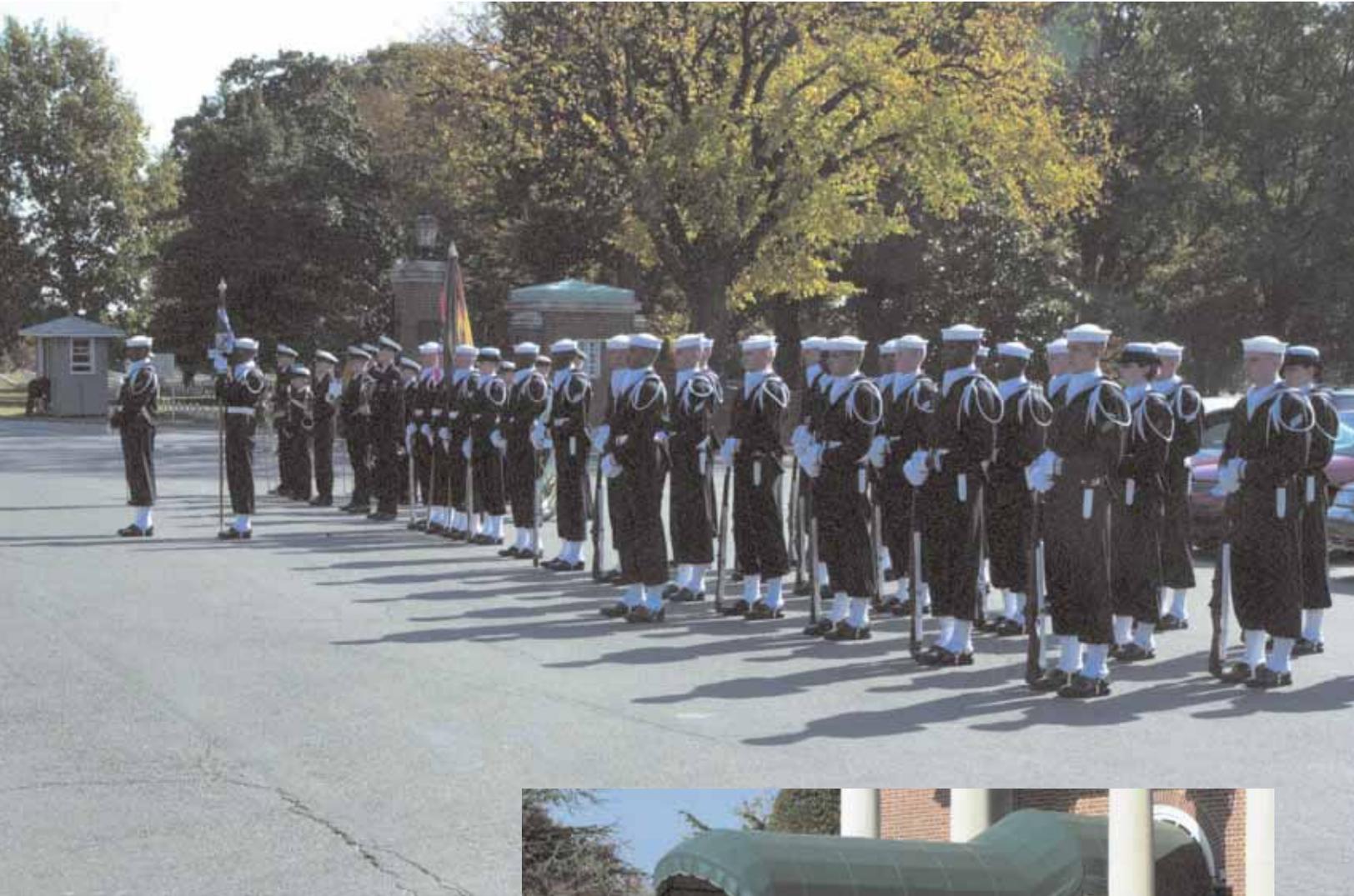
Two airmen who are members of the guard have different reasons, but their commitment is evident. Airman Jared Simons said, “I joined the guard for the

pride of the uniform, the Navy and my country.” The colors team member emphasized that the guard has left no doubt in his mind about a career choice. “Because of the things I’ve learned in the guard, such as leadership and discipline, my commitment to make the Navy a career is stronger than ever.” Airman King Gipson, a member of the firing party who wants to go to aviation electronics technician school when he is finished, added, “I thought this would be something interesting to do and I got a chance to come to D.C. In my job at the guard I get to participate in the 21-gun salutes and practice at the armory.”

Established in 1931 and based at Naval District Washington’s Anacostia Annex in Washington, D.C., the guard functions as the Navy’s official ceremonial unit. Its primary mission is to represent the Navy in presidential, joint armed forces, Navy and

Opposite, during funeral services for an aviator at Arlington National Cemetery, F-14 Tomcat pilots perform the “missing man” formation. Below, Ceremonial Guardsmen render honors at a graveside burial service.





Above, Ceremonial Guard members wait in formation outside the chapel. Right, members of the casket bearer squad carry the casket and place it on the Army's horse-drawn carriage to be taken to Arlington. Opposite, Cdr. Marty Martin, a Naval Flight Officer, is the first designated CO of the Navy Ceremonial Guard.



public ceremonies in the nation's capital under the scrutiny of the highest ranking officials of the United States and foreign nations, including royalty.

Five officers and four senior enlisted personnel, all fleet experienced, are in charge of the guardsmen. The leader of this specialized group is Commander Marty Martin, a Naval Flight Officer and the first designated commanding officer of the unit. Previously, the guard was led by an officer in charge. When asked why he volunteered for the job, Cdr. Martin explained that "this was a great opportunity to

lead a younger group of Sailors. What we do here is very important to me." Like all guardsmen, Cdr. Martin had to go through training before taking his position. "I had to requalify on sword manual and joint facing movements to get acclimated to the job requirements," the former P-3 *Orion* tactical coordinator said.

Once assigned to the guard, new members go through an 11-week indoctrination course conducted by current guard members. This gives the new guardsmen an opportunity to view the different types of jobs available and to decide which squad they want to join. Sailors receive most of their intensive training during this session. Cdr. Martin emphasized, "The Sailors have very little time for training after they complete the indoctrination course. Because our operational tempo is so extreme, they have to learn by doing. They can only practice two to four hours a week after they are assigned to a detail." About 70 percent of the unit's taskings involves funerals, followed by joint evolutions and other duties.

After successful completion of the training, a member may submit a request for placement in the Bearers and Firing Squad Division or the Drill Team and Colors Division. They are then assigned based on their interests and the needs of the guard. The details from which they can choose include Casket Bearer Platoon, Ceremonial Rifle Firing Detail, Ceremonial Drill Team and Ceremonial Color Guard. Personnel who are considered outstanding in their ratings but not assigned to details work in supply and administration or the guard's barber, uniform or tailor shop.

Members selected for drill billets must meet certain criteria, including:

- Minimum height of 6'0" for males and 5'10" for females, so that all guardsmen are the same height during joint service events
- Able to participate in ceremonies without the use of glasses (contact lenses are acceptable)
- Capable of strenuous marching/drilling and prolonged standing
- Outstanding personal appearance, military bearing and no unusual distinguishing features or poor facial complexion
- Good moral character with evident respect for authority
- Physically fit and superior natural posture
- Eligible for assignment to Presidential Support Activity in accordance with SECNAVINST 5312.12B
- A record free from conviction by court-martial, civic court or nonjudicial punishment during previous two years
- Petty officers must have an outstanding leadership record

There are approximately 180 junior enlisted Navy men and women assigned to the Ceremonial Guard's specialized details. Every year, five new training classes produce about 100 guardsmen.

After Sailors complete this challenging assignment, they usually receive their choice of specialized training at a Navy school and are designated for follow-on assignment in the fleet. The discipline they learn as members of the Ceremonial Guard promotes personal growth, and the early exposure to Navy traditions and customs adds to their overall experience. The members of this elite group who later join the aviation community bring unique knowledge and skills to the ranks of Naval Aviation and to its mission. ✈

To find out more information about the Navy Ceremonial Guard, visit www.ndw.navy.mil/CeremonialGuard/CeremonialGuard.html.

