CHAPTER 14. COLOR GUARD
MILITARY CLASS AND MILITARY OPEN CLASS

PURPOSE:
This chapter presents basic procedures for the Color Guard, composed of members of The American Legion Family, in a military manner with dignity, style, and bearing that advances the colors to open a meeting, retires the colors to close a meeting, or to perform at various functions. The intent of the color guard classes composed of either full members of The American Legion, or mixed American Legion family (Legion, Auxiliary, Sons of the Legion) is to honor the American Flag. The flag is to be honored in a military manner with dignity, style and bearing associated with a military ceremonial Color Guard or to be creative, innovative, and entertaining while keeping the National Colors as an integral part of the performance. The American Legion Competitive Flag Code is essential.

Formal assemblies begin with the presentation of the Colors, referred to as Posting the Colors, and end with the Retirement or Retrieving of the Colors. The following instructions outline the procedures for posting and retiring the Colors. Since indoor areas vary in size, configuration, and intended purpose, these instructions do not apply to all situations. Therefore, persons planning an indoor ceremony can modify these instructions based on their specific floor plan.

MILITARY COLOR GUARD HISTORY:
Color guards have been an important part of American history. In early history, flags were used for a number of purposes. A detachment of soldiers was usually assigned to protect the flag. As history moved forward, color guards were used to lead marching bands, drum and bugle corps and other types of marching units. A color guard competition also became a feature of The National American Legion and Department of Florida Conventions. Since then, The American Legion, having its foundation in the military, has designated these classes of competition to the preservation and education of our country’s rich and patriotic history of honor guards by all of our Legion Family Organizations. The Legion is dedicated to upholding proper protocol, point of honor, and due and proper respect for our National Colors in all ceremonial situations.

CLASS DEFINITIONS

Military Class
All unit members in this class must meet all the requirements for full American Legion membership and be over 18 years of age. This class is composed of not less than four (4) or more than five (5) members including the Color Guard Unit Commanding Officer.

Military Open Class
All Color Guard members must be members of The American Legion and/or Legion Family (i.e. Sons of the American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, and American Legion mixed participants). All unit members competing in this class must meet all the requirements for full membership in their respective organization and be over 18 years of age. Units are composed of seven (7) members or less including the Color Guard Unit Commanding Officer.
UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT
The style and color of uniform will be optional with each unit provided they are within the
dignity and propriety required when carrying the National Colors. Headgear is required to be
worn by all members of the unit. If the Color Guard does not wear Color Guard headgear
specific to the Color Guard such as helmets or berets, members shall wear the official uniform
hat of the member’s organization within The American Legion Family.

Required authorized equipment will consist of National Colors*, American Legion
Organizational Banner, and at least two weapons.

Additional authorized equipment, such as flags, sidearm, sabers and swords may be carried and
can be simulated. “Replica rifles” may be used, as long as they have the same weight as the real
rifle, plus the bolt mechanism. “Simulated rifles” (rifles of lesser weight with or without
simulated bolt mechanism) should not be used.

CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION POSTS: Exceptions to the weapons rules can be made as
necessary for security reasons at American Legion Posts located in correctional institutions. The
use of any real, replica or simulated sabers, sidearm, swords, or rifles is left to the discretion and
approval of the Chief of Security, the Superintendent, or the Warden of the correctional facility.
The American Legion Department of Florida has created a special category for color guard
competition without weapons for correctional institution color guard units.

*DEFINITION – The Institute of Heraldry, Washington, D.C., has specified in
Title 4 of the U.S. Flag Code, the 50-Star American Flag is the Flag of our Country (U.S.
Colors); therefore, all others shall be treated as banners. All banners and flags shall be dipped at
a reviewing stand except the 50-Star Flag of our Country.

Use of National Color staff head finial piece, as defined by flag code, is mandatory. If a
directional piece is used, care should be taken to make sure the directional piece is facing the
assemblage.

Minimum size of U.S. Colors is 3 feet by 5 feet. No flag shall be larger in size than the U.S.
Colors. All U.S. Colors used in American Legion Department of Florida ceremonies must be manufactured in United States of America.

Rifles are defined as weapons that are hand operated and designed to be fired primarily from the
shoulder. The surface of the rifle must have bore lands and grooves to impart rotary motion to
the projectile, which conform to the original design of military rifles, past or present. Sights,
slings, barrels, trigger and trigger housing are optional. Bolts or simulated bolts are required.

Side arms are defined as weapons, which are hand held and fired by means of a primer,
percussion cap, or cartridge enclosed igniter.

Sabers (swords) are defined as weapons which are designed to be hand held for cutting, thrusting
or slashing an enemy, with either a curved (saber) blade or straight (sword) blade which may be
constructed of any material and must have hand guard.
POST AND RETRIEVE
This maneuver includes the U.S. Flag and The American Legion organizational banner. The U.S. Flag is to be posted to the right of the Saluting Point with its front facing the field. Colors must be properly guarded at all times; for guarding purposes, weapons shall at all times be in the possession of the guarding member. During the ceremony of Posting and Retrieving, two (2) salutes are required, to be executed simultaneously by all members; one directly following posting and one salute directly prior to retrieving colors. A color is deemed posted immediately upon the release of the pike. A color is deemed retrieved upon the intentional grasp of the pike. The U.S. Flag and Banner may be posted simultaneously, if not so posted the U.S. Flag must be posted last. The U.S. Flag and Banner may be retrieved simultaneously. However, if not so retrieved, the U.S. Flag must be retrieved first.

POSTING (ADVANCING) COLORS
Color Guard consisting of a minimum number of four (4) is formed at the rear of the room/hall in a rank or file, whichever may suit the situation best, formation facing the Commander’s station.

In forming a rank, the National Color is to the right of the Post Color and the two Guards are on the respective flanks. In forming a file, the National Color is second in file, preceded by a Rifle Guard and followed respectively by the Post Color and a Rifle Guard.

To properly form the Guard, the following sequence of Commands may be used: “Fall In”-“Dress Right Dress”-“Ready Front”-“Right or Left Shoulder Arms”-(Color bearers should assume the position of carry or any other suitable position at this command) “Forward March.” The above-mentioned commands put the Guard in a forward motion.

Upon arriving at a position in front of the Commander’s station, the following commands may be used: “Guard Halt-Post Colors” (The National Color bearer steps off in the direction of the Flag receptacle to the right of the Commander’s station, halting and facing front upon arriving in front of same). The Post Color bearer follows the same procedure to the Flag receptacle to the left of the Commander’s station. During this procedure the Rifle Guards will assume the position of Port Arms. The next command may be “Place Colors.” Colors may be placed by stepping forward with one foot and placing Colors into the receptacles, making sure any top ornament on each respective color is facing the assemblage. It must be remembered that the Colors may be posted simultaneously, or the Post Color is posted first followed by the National Color. The Color Bearers then return to the position of attention. The next command may be “Present Arms.” The Rifle Guards should render the prescribed salute with their pieces and the Color Bearers should render a right hand salute. (Post Color Bearer should either face the National Color or turn toward the American Flag while executing the salute).

The next command sequence may be “Right Shoulder Arms” (Color Bearers recovering from hand salute on same), “Assemble March” (Color Bearers may face the center and step off respectively in the direction from which they came and assume their positions in the formation
facing the rear of the competition area. The Rifle Guards may execute an about-face on command and be prepared to move out on the next command with Guard intact).

The next command may be “Forward March” and upon arriving at the starting point, the Guard should be halted with the command of “Guard Halt” and then the Guard may be given “Fall Out.”

**RETRIEVING COLORS**

Retrieving the Colors may be executed in nearly the same manner except substituting the command of “Retrieve Colors” for “Post Colors,” and giving the command “Present Arms” upon the Color Bearers arrival in front of their respective colors (Color Bearers will salute at this time).

The next sequence of commands may be “Right Shoulder Arms” (Color bearers will assume position of attention) “Take Colors” (Color Bearers putting one foot forward to take Colors and assuming position of attention, after securing same). It must be remembered that the Colors may be retrieved simultaneously, or the National Color is retrieved first followed by the Post Color. The next commands may be “Assemble, March” (Color Bearers executing same marching as in returning from Posting). The Rifle Guards will execute about-face after Colors have arrived in respective positions. The Guard may be retired in the same manner as it was in Posting, with the exception of the last command, which should be “Dismissed.”