

REF: USAF HGMAN 1 January 2012 124 Chapter 10

RETIREMENT CEREMONY

NOTE: Two AF personnel in Service Dress will perform in the ceremony.

1.1. Personnel.

1.1.1. Officer-in-Charge (1) or Non-Commissioned Officer-in-Charge (NCOIC) (1).

1.1.2. Fold (1).

1.2. Equipment.

1.2.1. 5' x 9.5' Interment or All Purpose flag.

1.2.2. **White gloves (non-siliconed), leather gloves or gloves with the grip material.**

1.2.3. **The ceremonial hat and ceremonial belt will not be worn for this ceremony.**

1.3. Preparation.

1.3.1. Schedule at least one practice one day prior to the ceremony with the Retiring Official and narrator of the ceremony. **Note: Music is not to be played during this ceremony.**

1.4. Sequence of Events.

1.4.1. At the appropriate time the OIC/NCOIC commands **Ready, STEP** in a normal conversational tone. OIC/NCOIC and Fold step off together, shoulder-to-shoulder and Fold will have suspended arm swing. **Note: Ready Step is the only command given by the OIC/NCOIC throughout the ceremony.**

1.4.1.1. OIC/NCOIC will have the flag in hand prior to ceremony start time and the flag will be folded in a triangle shape.

1.4.2. When OIC/NCOIC and Fold approach the pre-designated performance area, they separate in a column formation (OIC/NCOIC walks in front of Fold). Upon arriving to their pre-determined positions, in-between the audience and the retiring member, they will automatically halt.

1.4.3. Once halted, OIC/NCOIC performs a three-count **About Face**. OIC/NCOIC begins to perform the "Half Dress" sequence.

1.4.4. Fold begins to unfold the flag. **Note: See section 10.7. for official authorized Retirement script with Fold and narrator's cues.**

1.4.5. Once the flag is completely unfolded, both members secure the four corners of the flag and bring it to “table top” position only. **Note: Do not tilt and face the flag towards the audience or “pop” the flag open!**

1.4.6. When the flag is folded, Fold will perform a “Full Dress” sequence and hand off the flag to the OIC/NCOIC.

1.4.7. When the flag is secured to the OIC/NCOIC’s chest, both OIC/NCOIC and Fold will step off simultaneously. Fold will exit to a pre-determined area out of sight from the ceremony. OIC/NCOIC will proceed to the Retiring Official, hands off the flag and renders a 3-second salute.

1.4.7.1. OIC/NCOIC grasps the flag with the right hand, keeping all fingers joined and pause. Rotate the flag in a clockwise motion with the right hand while simultaneously lifting the flag until the top of the flag is at eye level. The left hand comes up and joins the right hand, ensuring the fingers are joined and remain together.

1.4.8. The Retiring Official will take the flag from OIC/NCOIC, left hand over right. OIC/NCOIC will look at the flag without moving his/her head and perform a 3-second salute. OIC/NCOIC will exit to a pre-determined area out of sight from the ceremony.

1.4.9. The Retiring Official presents the flag to the Retiree and recites a message to the Retiring individual, followed by a slow salute to the flag. **Note: The Retiring Official must rotate the flag so the flat edge is facing the Retiree.**

1.4.9.1. The message is: *(Rank and Name,) on behalf of our squadron [or other unit], your friends and your family, I present this flag in recognition of your [number] years of faithful service with the United States Air Force.*

Retirement Script

(Narrator begins reading when the flag is draped over OIC/NCOIC's arm)

For more than 200 years, the American flag has been the symbol of our nation's unity, as well as a source of pride and inspiration for millions of citizens.

Born on June 14, 1777, the Second Continental Congress determined that the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternating between seven red and six white; and that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field representing a new constellation. (1)

(Flag is at "table top" position)

Between 1777 and 1960, the shape and design of the flag evolved into the flag presented before you today. The 13 horizontal stripes represent the original 13 colonies, while the stars represent the 50 states of the Union. The colors of the flag are symbolic as well; red symbolizes hardiness and valor; white signifies purity and innocence; and blue represents vigilance, perseverance and justice. (1)

Traditionally, a symbol of liberty, the American flag has carried the message of freedom, and inspired Americans, both at home and abroad.

(Begin the first triangular fold)

In 1814, Francis Scott Key was so moved at seeing the Stars and Stripes waving after the British shelling of Baltimore's Fort McHenry that he wrote the words to The Star Spangled Banner. (3)

In 1892 the flag inspired Francis Bellamy to write the "Pledge of Allegiance," our most famous flag salute and patriotic oath. (3)

(Flag lands in the union)

In July 1969 the American flag was "flown" in space when Neil Armstrong planted it on the surface of the moon. (3)

Today, our flag flies on constellations of Air Force satellites that circle our globe, and on the fin flash of our aircraft in harm's way in every corner of the world. Indeed, it flies in the heart of every Airman who serves our great Nation. The sun never sets on our US Air Force, nor on the flag we so proudly cherish. (3)

(OIC/NCOIC is tucking the flag)

Since 1776 no generation of Americans has been spared the responsibility of defending freedom... Today's Airmen remain committed to preserving the freedom that others won for us, for generations to come.

By displaying the flag and giving it a distinctive fold we show respect to the flag, and express our gratitude to those individuals who fought, and continue to fight for freedom, at home and abroad.

(OIC/NCOIC has the flag in hand)

Since the dawn of the 20th century, Airmen have proudly flown the flag in every major conflict on lands and skies around the world. It is their responsibility...our responsibility...to continue to protect and preserve the rights, privileges, and freedoms that we, as Americans, enjoy today. The United States flag represents who we are. It stands for the freedom we all share and the pride and patriotism we feel for our country. We cherish its legacy, as a beacon of hope to one and all. Long may it wave.

****The Retiring Official should not say the message of retirement until the narrator completes the reading.***

(1) From a report Secretary of Congress Robert Thompson wrote to define the Seal of our Nation (1777).

(2) Text from President Woodrow Wilson's Flag Day message (1917).

(3) Based upon historical facts