

CHAPTER 06

17 IN THIS VOLUME

Standing watch.

HONOR GUARD COORDINATOR

The Honor Guard is the ceremonial core of the funeral – the officers in white gloves who stand watch at the casket, fold the flag, and deliver the final salute.

The Honor Guard Coordinator owns the choreography of every ceremonial moment – casket watch at the mortuary, the viewing, the vigil, the funeral service, the procession, and the interment. This is the person who makes certain the flag is folded with thirteen perfect folds, the shell casings are placed inside, and the final presentation to the next-of-kin happens exactly as rehearsed.

The family and every attending officer will remember the precision of the work long after the words of the eulogy have faded. Done well, the Honor Guard transforms a service into a true ceremony of honor. Done poorly, the omissions live in the family's memory forever.

The role is broader than the cemetery. The Honor Guard travels with the casket from mortuary, through every public moment, to interment – and at every stop the watch is unbroken, the bearing is the same, and the standard is the same.

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE – FROM AGENCIES WHO HAVE DONE THIS

- 01 **Rehearse on the ground where you will perform.** Indoor practice on carpet is not the cemetery. Walk the grave, stand at the casket, time the march — once in uniform, in shoes, on the grass.
- 02 **Always run two-deep.** Every position needs a live alternate. Grief, stomach bugs, and flat tires are not excuses the family will forgive.
- 03 **Count the flag fold aloud in practice, silently on the day.** The discipline of the silent count comes only from loud practice the day before.
- 04 **Inspect the flag.** Corners, stitching, color. A folded flag that shows a frayed edge to the widow is a forever memory. Replace it if there is any doubt.
- 05 **Assign somebody to the bugler.** One officer whose only job, for fifteen minutes, is to keep them warm, hydrated, instrumented, and at the ready. The backup bugler is a real person, not a theory.
- 06 **Plan for the volley.** Ear protection within five yards. Pre-published PIO notice. Coordination with dispatch in case a neighbor calls 911.
- 07 **Stand taller than you think you need to.** Every honor guard in the country has watched a funeral and judged the honor guard. Show them the standard.

MODERN CONSIDERATIONS • 2026

- **Livestream framing.** Coordinate camera placement with AV lead. The flag fold and presentation should be visible to remote family without intruding. No close-ups of family faces during committal.
- **Pre-recorded taps backup.** Bluetooth-capable speaker tested with venue AV; backup battery within reach of the bugler position.
- **Blank-fire public advisory.** PIO publishes a 60-second-prior social-media notice to suppress "shots fired" calls. Local dispatch notified.
- **Body-worn cameras & weather gear.** Department policy clarified before formation. White glove cold-weather liners, weather-protective flag bag, heat-relief rotation in summer.

TURN THE PAGE FOR THE CHECKLIST →

CHECKLIST 06 • HONORING THE FALLEN

Honor Guard Coordinator checklist.

A working one-page reference. Begin at first assignment; complete through service close.

FIRST 24 HOURS • SETUP

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| ☐ Receive assignment from Chief in writing. | ☐ Build roster — primary plus alternates, two-deep on every role. |
| ☐ Schedule rehearsals — minimum two before the first watch. | ☐ Acquire casket flag and a separate practice flag. |
| ☐ Inventory ceremonial equipment. | ☐ Confirm pallbearer roster (6 named, 2 alternates). |
| ☐ Confirm Flag Folding Detail (10 members, alternates). | ☐ Confirm bugler (primary + backup + recorded). |

WATCH & SERVICE

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| ☐ Casket watch at mortuary — rotation set, supervisor named. | ☐ Viewing & vigil details scheduled. |
| ☐ Funeral service detail briefed in uniform. | ☐ Cemetery walk-through completed on the ground. |
| ☐ Rifle detail confirmed (blank rounds, range safety). | ☐ PIO notified for blank-fire public advisory. |
| ☐ Weather plan, gear, and relief rotation set. | ☐ Encrypted comms group active. |

FINAL HONORS & PRESENTATION

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| ☐ Uniform inspection photo at formation time. | ☐ Shell casings folded into the flag. |
| ☐ Chief briefed on the presentation script. | ☐ Flag presented to next-of-kin per family wishes. |
| ☐ Additional flags / plaques rehearsed and assigned. | ☐ Pre-recorded taps tested at the graveside position. |
| ☐ Post-service equipment inventory and return. | ☐ Honor Guard debrief scheduled within 7 days. |