



# *Change of Command*



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## **AIR FORCE'S CHANGES OF COMMAND**

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1. **NOTE:** This may be changed to conform to your situation and parts may be combined with other formats. The following is general guidance regarding changes of command at most installations. For more information use the following references:
2. AFMAN 36-2203 (Drill and Ceremonies), para 7.31 (Change of Command)  
  
AFR 900-3 (Department of the Air Force Seal, Organizational Emblems, Use & Display of Flags, Guidons, Streamers, & Automobile & Aircraft Plates)
3. The primary purpose of a change of command ceremony is to allow subordinates to witness the formality of command change from one officer to another; therefore, the ceremony should be official, formal, brief, and conducted with great dignity.
4. The following is a sequence of events for a basic change of command held outdoors (but may be used indoors) and with a single flight of troops. See AFMAN 36-2203 for sequence of events when a change of command is conducted in conjunction with a parade, medal presentation, or retreat ceremony. Also see CAPP 3, *Guide to Civil Air Patrol Protocol*, and Quick Reference: Change of Command (Honor Guard Handbook) for diagrams of change of command.

Commander of Troops (COT): See AFMAN 36-2203, para 4.3 for Formation of the Flight.

**COT:** Flight is at the position of At Ease.

**COT:** (as spouses are escorted in) "FLIGHT, ATTENTION," "PARADE, REST"

**NARRATOR:** (after spouses are seated)

"Good morning/afternoon ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of (officiator) (rank, full name, title), I welcome you to the (installation) and today's change of command ceremony. During today's ceremony, (officiator) (rank, last name) will transfer command of the (name of unit) from (outgoing commander) (rank, full name) to (new commander) (rank, full name). The change of command ceremony you are about to witness is deeply rooted in military tradition, predating the Norman Conquest of England.

History reveals that in the Middle Ages it was not uncommon for the soldiers in the field to be unaware of who their commanders were or what they looked like. The formal change of command afforded these troops the opportunity to witness the proceedings and actually see their commanders.

Today, the primary purpose of a change of command is to allow subordinates to witness the formality of command change from one officer to another. The ceremony itself is simple and direct. The new commander takes (his/her) place before the officiating/reviewing officer, in this case, (officiator) (rank, last name). He/She salutes and states, "Sir/Ma'am, I assume command." Four words are spoken in all. But, in those few words we begin anew. For (new commander) (rank, last name) it heralds the beginning of a challenging tour of duty.

It is customary for everyone to stand during the entrance of the command party and remain standing for the playing of Ruffles and Flourishes and Honors March (if general officer officiating) and the National Anthem. Also, please stand for the departure of the command party. Again, thank you for your attendance today, and we hope you enjoy this morning's/afternoon's events."

**COT:** (faces about) "FLIGHT, ATTENTION" (faces about)

**NARRATOR:** "Ladies and gentlemen, the Commander, (officiator's unit, rank, full name) and command party."

**COT:** (faces about) "PRESENT, ARMS" (faces about and presents arms)

**CMD PARTY:** (officiator, outgoing commander, new commander walk in file or side-by-side to designated positions)

**BAND:** (after command party reaches their positions, band plays Ruffles and Flourishes and Honors March immediately followed by The National Anthem)

**COT:** (orders arms, faces about) "ORDER, ARMS" (faces about)

**CMD PARTY/GUIDON BEARER:** (move into positions at the same time)

**OFFICIATOR:** (walks out on the right, stops, executes a left face)

**OUTGOING CMDR:** (walks out on the left of the officiator, stops, and executes a right face)

**NEW CMDR:** (walks out on the left of the outgoing commander, takes one more step further than the outgoing commander, stops, executes a right face, takes one step forward to align himself/herself to the left of the outgoing commander)

**GUIDON BEARER:** (walks out and takes a position 1/2 step back and centered between the officiator and outgoing commander, and facing the audience)

**NARRATOR:** (after all are in position) "Civil Air Patrol, Headquarters (unit, base, state), Special Order number (order number), signed (full name, rank), Civil Air Patrol, (title). Effective (date), (outgoing commander) (rank, full name) relinquishes command of the (unit).

**OUTGOING CMDR:** (takes the flag from the guidon bearer and presents it to the officiator)

**OFFICIATOR:** (gives the flag to the guidon bearer)

**OUTGOING CMDR:** (salutes) "Sir/Ma'am, I relinquish my command"

**OFFICIATOR:** (returns the salute)

**OUTGOING CMDR:** (takes two steps straight back)

**NEW CMDR:** (sidesteps to the right to a position directly in front of the officiator)

**OUTGOING CMDR:** (sidesteps to the left and then forward to the position previously held by the new commander)

**NARRATOR:** (after all are in position) "Department of the Air Force, Headquarters (unit, base, state), Special Order number (order number), signed (full name, rank), Civil Air Patrol, (title). Effective (date), (new commander) (rank, full name) assumes command of the (unit)."

**NEW CMDR:** (salutes) "Sir/Ma'am, I assume command"

**GUIDON BEARER:** (gives the flag to the officiator)

**OFFICIATOR:** (gives the flag to the new commander)

**NEW CMDR:** (gives the flag to the guidon bearer)

**OFFICIATOR:** "READY, POST"

**OFFICIATOR/NEW CMDR/OUTGOINGCMDR:** (face audience, pause, return to their seats/starting positions with the exception of the outgoing and new commanders changing positions)

**GUIDONBEARER:** (moves back to his/her ceremony starting position)

**COT:** (faces about) "PARADE, REST" (faces about and executes parade rest)

**NARRATOR:** (after COT is at parade rest) "Ladies and Gentlemen, (officiator) (rank, full name)"

**OFFICIATOR:** (goes to podium and gives remarks)

**NARRATOR:** "Ladies and Gentlemen, (outgoing commander) (rank, full name)"

**OUTGOING CMDR:** (goes to podium and gives remarks)

**NARRATOR:** "Ladies and Gentlemen, The Commander, (unit), (new commander) (rank, full name)"

**NEW CMDR:** (goes to podium and gives remarks)

**NARRATOR:** "Please stand for the playing of the Air Force Song and the departure of the command party."

**COT:** (comes to attention, faces about) "FLIGHT, ATTENTION" (faces about)

**BAND:** (after COT faces about, plays Air Force Song)

**CMD PARTY:** (walk out with officiator leading new commander and outgoing commander) (spouses are escorted out)

**NARRATOR:** "Ladies and Gentlemen, this concludes today's ceremony. I would like to remind our invited guests of the reception at (location). Thank you for joining us this morning/afternoon." (Audience begins to depart)

**COT:** (faces about) "ABOUT, FACE", "FALL OUT"

4. The script should be written, approved by all members of the command party, and distributed in ample time for the first practice. It is recommend the first practice include only the key players with executive staff to fill in for the officiator and outgoing and new commanders. All the "bugs" can be worked out during this session. The second practice should add all members of the flight, door guards, escorts, ushers, photographers, drivers, hat holders, etc. A recommended second practice should take place two or three days prior to the actual ceremony date. This will give you a chance to have another practice day if you feel you need it or in case your second practice gets rained out. It also gives the flight time to make uniform corrections. Be careful not to schedule your last practice so far in advance that people forget their roles. Practice the ceremony until everyone participating says they've "got it." The command party may also have a private practice session in a conference room a day or two prior to the ceremony. They should be given a refresher briefing just prior to the ceremony.

5. Invitations should be coordinated with both the outgoing and new commanders and should be mailed NLT three weeks prior to the event. Normally, invitations are cut 5 3/8" (w) x 4 1/4" (h), printed on white card stock or parchment paper. The Civil Air Patrol seal, unit emblem, or general officer flag (for active duty general officer as the officiator) is printed at the top and centered. The following is sample wording:

*The men and women of  
(unit),  
Request the pleasure of your company  
At a change of command ceremony  
During which  
(Outgoing commander) (Rank, full name)*

*Will relinquish command to  
(New commander) (Rank, full name)  
On  
(Day of week), the (day of month spelled out) of (Month)  
Beginning at  
(hour spelled out) o'clock  
(base, location)  
R.S.V.P. by (date) (phone number)  
Military - Service Dress  
Civilian - Coat and Tie*

6. Programs may be simple or elaborate. Good judgment and economy should always be considered. The program cover may include the unit name, emblem, and date of the ceremony. Inside pages may include an explanation of the change of command ceremony, introduction, sequence of events, reception information, unit history, biographies, photographs, or a list of former commanders. Programs should be coordinated with both the outgoing and new commanders. Normally, programs are cut 5 1/2" (w) x 8 1/2" (h), covers are printed on white card stock or parchment paper. Inside pages are printed on white bond paper.

7. Receptions are normally hosted by the new commander and have a receiving line. By tradition, the outgoing commander does not attend. Receptions provide an opportunity for guests of the ceremony to personally meet and congratulate the new commander and his/her spouse and family.

8. Flags should be placed IAW AFR 900-3. If the Honor Guard is used they may provide their own flags. Flags may also be available for loan by other organizations depending on the installation.

9. Music may be taped or live depending on command party desires and band availability. If you choose to use a band, contact them as soon as possible for scheduling.

10. If your ceremony is planned for outdoors you should also have an inclement weather plan. Consider having an indoor script, practice, and "alert" telephone notification plan. Security police should be included in your planning process as they often receive questions from guests entering the gates.

11. Protocol offices can answer questions regarding DV guest seating. Coordinate a diagram of your seating arrangement and names and titles of your DVs two or three days prior to your ceremony. They will provide you with a recommended seating plan. It's a good idea to coordinate this with the command party too.

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# Civil Air Patrol's Change of Command Ceremony

Also See Tab 4, CAPP 900-2, *Ceremonies*

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This can be used for unit commander or cadet commander change of command.

Change of Command is a time-honored ceremony designed to mark the occasion when the responsibility of command is passed to the incoming commander. It is one of the most formal ceremonies conducted. The Change of Command signifies the end of one era and the beginning of the next. More often than not, it signals a new beginning - a renewal in progress of events and achievements of the organization. (Also, frequently the incoming commander receives a promotion prior to the actual Change of Command sequence.)

See Checklist for Ceremonies.

## Sample A

### Personnel:

Master or Mistress of Ceremonies (MC)  
Incoming Commander (Cadet Commander)  
Outgoing Commander (Cadet Commander)  
Senior or Past Commander  
Flag Bearer

**NOTE:** If promotion is required for assumption of Command, a short promotion ceremony precedes the actual Change of Command Ceremony. Consider use of both outgoing and incoming cadet commander when they are being changed concurrent with change of commander. Suggest the outgoing cadet commander present the flag to outgoing commander who will pass flag to new commander, and in turn to the new cadet commander.

### Person Speaking

### Script (Action)

MC

"The following will be the time-honored ceremony designed to mark the moment where the responsibility of command is passed to the incoming commander."

MC

"Ladies and Gentlemen - Please rise"

**Person Speaking**  
Senior Official

**Script (Action)**

"I, (state your name), (pause for repeat by incoming commander) having been appointed the \_\_\_\_\_ Commander of the Civil Air Patrol (Pause) Do solemnly swear (or affirm) (Pause) that I will support and comply (Pause) with the Constitution, Bylaws and Regulations (Pause) of the United States Air Force Auxiliary, (Pause) that I take this obligation freely, (Pause) without any mental reservation (Pause) or purpose of evasion, (Pause) and that I will well and faithfully discharge (Pause) the duties of the office (Pause) upon which I am about to enter. (Pause) So help me God."

(Incoming commander, outgoing commander, senior official, and flag bearer take positions. Senior official may make remarks before taking his/her position.)

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**Position**



INCOMING  
CC



OUTGOING  
CC



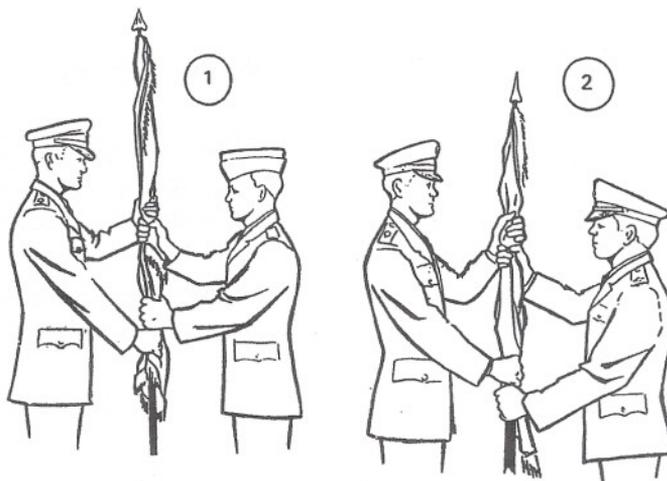
AUDIENCE

SENIOR OFFICIAL



UNIT FLAG BEARER

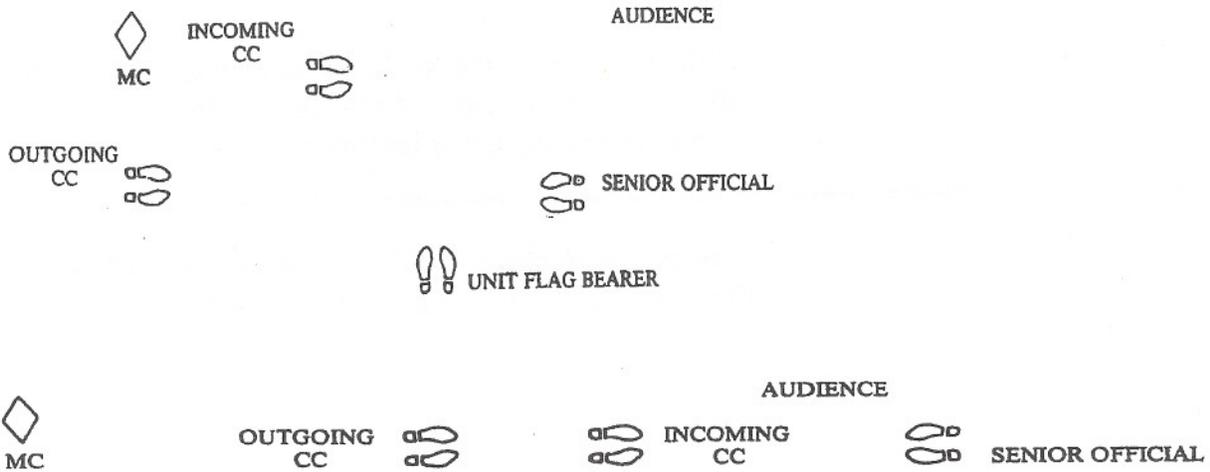
**Passing of Flag**



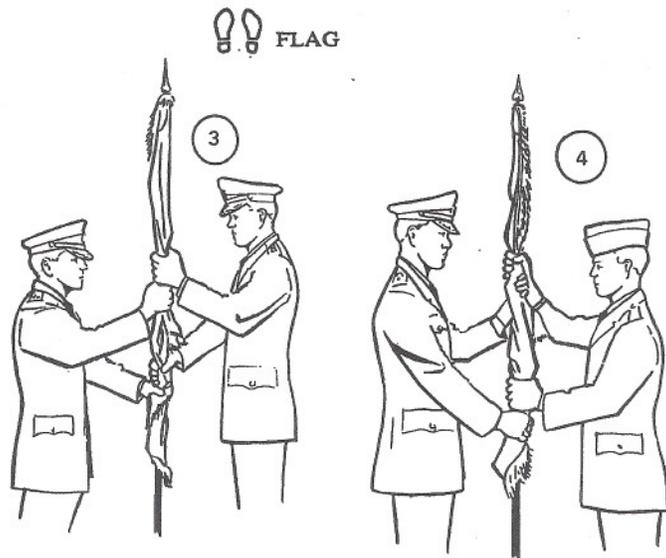
**Person Speaking**  
 Outgoing Commander

**Script (Action)**  
 "Sir (or Ma'am), I relinquish command," (Salute, take flag from flag bearer and give to senior official.)  
 Outgoing commander takes two steps back.

**Position**



**Passing of Flag**



Incoming Commander

(Steps sideways to the right and position in front of senior official.) "Sir (or ma'am), I accept command."  
 (Takes flag from senior official. Incoming commander passes flag to flag bearer.)

**Position**

**Person Speaking**

**Script (Action)**

AUDIENCE



MC

OUTGOING  
CC



INCOMING  
CC



SENIOR OFFICIAL



FLAG

Senior Official

“Officers Front.” (Note: It is appropriate for senior official to make remarks, if not made earlier, as well as remarks from outgoing or incoming commander.)

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MC

“Ladies and Gentlemen - This concludes the ceremony. Please join in the receiving line and reception.”

## Sample B

### Personnel:

Master or Mistress of Ceremonies (MC)  
 Incoming Commander (Cadet Commander)  
 Outgoing Commander (Cadet Commander)  
 Flag Bearer

### Person Speaking

### Script (Action)

MC

“The following will be the time-honored ceremony designed to mark the moment where the responsibility of command is passed to the incoming commander.”

MC

“Ladies and Gentlemen - Please rise”

Senior Official

“I, (state your name), (pause for repeat by incoming commander) having been appointed the \_\_\_\_\_ Commander of the Civil Air Patrol (Pause) Do solemnly swear (or affirm) (Pause) that I will support and comply (Pause) with the Constitution, Bylaws and Regulations (Pause) of the United States Air Force Auxiliary, (Pause) that I take this obligation freely, (Pause) without any mental reservation (Pause) or purpose of evasion, (Pause) and that I will well and faithfully discharge (Pause) the duties of the office (Pause) upon which I am about to enter. (Pause) So help me God.”

(Incoming commander, outgoing commander, and flag bearer take positions. Outgoing commander may make remarks before taking his/her position.)

### Position

◇  
MC

AUDIENCE

  
 INCOMING CC

  
 Flag Bearer

  
 OUTGOING CC

Outgoing Commander

“Sir (or Ma’am), I relinquish command,” (take flag from flag bearer.)

**Person Speaking**  
Incoming Commander

**Script (Action)**  
“Sir (or ma’am), I accept command.” (salute, takes flag from outgoing commander and passes flag to flag bearer.) Officers Post.

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**Position**



MC

OUTGOING CC



**AUDIENCE**



INCOMING CC



Flag  
BEARER

Incoming commander faces left. Outgoing commander takes three left steps, halts, proceeds behind and to the left of the incoming commander, halts, faces right, goes forward, and halts to the immediate left of the incoming commander

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MC

(Optional: Remarks by the incoming commander.)

MC

“Ladies and Gentlemen - This concludes the ceremony. Please join in the receiving line and reception.”

## CHECKLISTS FOR AWARD CEREMONY

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### A. PRE-CEREMONY CHECKLIST

1. What is the ceremony and what award/promotion will be given? Who will assist in the presentation? Are appropriate grade/rank insignia available? Do clips for medals have to be obtained to make pin-on easier? Have all medal/awards/certificates/plaques arrived with correct engraving or signatures? All presentation elements should be available three days before the ceremony. Will items be kept by recipient or returned?
2. Who is to be honored and are they available (awardee, promotee, retiree, incoming Commander)?
3. Select participants to be in the ceremony. Will they be available to participate?
4. Confirm time and date. Reserve room large enough for estimated guests and attendees.
5. Personnel who should attend - key staff members, family, unit members, friends, relative, others? Notify by letter, follow-up by phone call. Will additional VIPs be invited? Are visitors expected from wing, region or national levels?
6. Schedule a photographer. (Encourage family/friends to bring cameras.)
7. Refreshments may be served. Select project officer to be in charge. (In some instance, other individuals or the honorees offer to provide refreshments - optional, of course.) Who pays? Who handles cleanup? Consider food, beverage, utensils, tablecloths, napkins, servers, etc.
8. Obtain a short biographical sketch of the honoree. Should include name, rank, duty title, job description, short personal history, career highlights, ultimate achievements, future plans, names of family members who will attend - one or two pages.
9. Select type of format to be followed (conference room, office, auditorium, roast/toast, luncheon, special presentation, etc.)? Where will ceremony take place? How should the room be arranged - theater seating, tables, chairs, flags, microphone, sound system, lighted lectern?
10. Will any special items also be presented (i.e. pen and pencil sets, paperweights, models, etc.)? Who will assist in the presentation? Have they been briefed?
11. Select the narrator (master/mistress of ceremonies).

12. Commander should provide the narrator with copies of all writeups, letters, citations, etc. Names and units should be written out phonetically so that the narrator can pronounce them correctly.
13. Inform honoree, presenter, and narrator of the uniform combination to be worn.
14. Prepare sketch of ceremony. Determine special seating arrangements, if needed. Prepare agenda. Get copies to honoree, presenter, narrator and others as necessary. Brief principals on ceremony details. If needed, prepare a narrative package (award, biographical sketch, agenda, etc.)
15. If appropriate, invite local media, send a news release with ceremony details, and provide point of contact for further details. Have the public affairs officer draft a local story.

## **B. DAY OF CEREMONY CHECKLIST**

1. Make sure ceremony area is clean. Ensure chairs, flags, tables, name tags are arranged properly and according to plan. Set up refreshments, coordinate with hosts or hostesses. Have honoree's and presenter's places marked with tape on the floor at appropriate ceremony area.
2. Walk/talk through ceremony with commander/honoree/narrator and others. (Also with family members, if participating.) Have any grades/rank changed that are not on award recipient paperwork that must be covered by MC during reading of documents.
3. Walk through with photographer - on photo opportunities - suggest types of photos - point out VIPs, etc. Brief media representatives on agenda and story ideas. (Public Affairs can assist.)
4. Be sure narrator has all material needed.
5. Be sure award assistant has all award/items.
6. Establish procedures for congratulations (receiving line) by audience after ceremony.

## **C. ACTUAL CEREMONY CHECKLIST (see separate agendas).**

1. At appointed hour, narrator or designee calls room to attention asks audience to stand, for arrival of commander. Give a brief biographical sketch of honoree. (Presenter/Commander may prefer to do this without notes.) Family and guests recognized.
2. Honoree called to front of audience - reports to presenter.

3. When honoree is properly positioned, presenter asks narrator to read citation, letters, as required.
4. Assistant provides award/promotion/retirement elements to presenter who pins on or hands to recipient. Photos follow. (Have persons stand close together, avoid "Grip and Grin," face each other, have them pose for the best possible picture with emphasis on recipient.)
5. Allow honoree a few personal comments, then call family forward for additional photos.
6. Continue with additional agenda items, as necessary.
7. Presenter concludes the ceremony and invites all to stay for refreshments (if pertinent) after they have offered congratulations to honoree.
8. Return presentation area to normal after ceremony.
9. Follow-up should be done by public affairs for the local media story/coverage. Prepare notice to the *Civil Air Patrol News*, or other media as necessary.
10. Learn from problems encountered. Keep a record. Prepare for the next ceremony.

