

CHAPTER 15 COLORS

From the earliest times, warriors used a banner or other symbol to identify specific units and to serve as a rallying point for troops. In medieval days, the standard or banner was used to signal a general assault, which was generated by a cry of "Advance your banners." Until comparatively recent years, the flags that identified nations usually were based on the personal or family heraldry of the reigning monarch or ruling nobleman. As autocracies faded or disappeared, dynastic colors were no longer popular and national flags, as thought of today, came into being. These national flags, such as the Union Jack of Great Britain, the Tricolor of France, and the Stars and Stripes, are relatively new to history.

15-1. HISTORY

Flags are almost as old as civilization itself. Imperial Egypt as well as the armies of Babylon, Chaldea, and Assyria followed the colors of their kings. The Old Testament frequently mentions banners and standards. Many flags of different designs were present in parts of the American colonies before the Revolution. When the struggle for independence united the colonies, the colonists wanted a single flag to represent the new nation. The first flag borne by the Army as a representative of the 13 colonies was the Grand Union flag. It was raised over the Continental Army at Cambridge, Massachusetts, on 2 January 1776. That flag had the familiar 13 stripes (red and white) of the present flag, but the blue square contained the Crosses of St. George and St. Andrew from the British flag.

a. The Stars and Stripes was born on 14 June 1777, two years to the day after the birth of the Army. On that date, Congress resolved that the flag of the United States be 13 stripes, alternate red and white, and that the union be 13 stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation. The arrangement of the stars on the blue field was not specified.

(1) According to some historians, the Stars and Stripes was first raised over Fort Stanwix, New York, on 3 August 1777. In that Army version of the flag, the stars were arranged in a circle. (The Navy version had the stars arranged to form crosses similar to the British flag.)

(2) When Vermont and Kentucky joined the Union, the flag was modified so that there were 15 stars and 15 stripes. It was that flag, flying triumphantly over Fort McHenry, Maryland, on 13 and 14 September 1814, which inspired Francis Scott Key to compose the verses of "The Star Spangled Banner." That flag was the national banner from 1795 until 1818. Thus, when it was raised over Tripoli by the Marines in 1805, it was the first United States flag to be hoisted over conquered territory in the Old World. Later, it was flown by General Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans.

(3) Realizing that adding a stripe for each new state would soon spoil the appearance of the flag, Congress passed a law in 1818 fixing the number of stripes at 13 and providing for the addition of a star in the Blue Union for each new state. The star is to be

added and the new flag to become official on the Fourth of July following the admission of the new state to the Union.

(4) It was not until shortly before the Civil War that the Stars and Stripes actually became the National Color.

b. Before the Civil War, in lieu of a National Color, the US soldiers carried a blue silk color on which was embroidered the arms of the United States, and an American eagle bearing a shield on its breast, and in its talons an olive branch and arrows, signifying peace and war. After the National Color was authorized, the organizational color with the eagle became the regimental color. Because of the high casualty rate among the members of the Color party, plus the advent of modern weapons, the time-honored practice of carrying the Colors in battle was discontinued. Today, the Colors, with battle streamers attached, join their unit in formations during ceremonies to signify their presence during past battles.

15-2. THE COLOR AND COLORS

The National and organizational flags carried by Color-bearing units are called the National Color and the organizational Color. When used singularly, the term Color implies the National Color. The plural term Colors means the national and positional or organizational Colors. By regulation, the organizational Color is not authorized a *Salute*; however, in the past some organizations have observed the custom of saluting the organizational Color.

a. In garrison, the Colors are normally kept at the office or headquarters of the commanding officer. They are escorted to and from the headquarters or office by the Color guard. In the field, the Colors are normally displayed from reveille to retreat in front of the commanding officer's tent or command post. During inclement weather, they are cased and placed in the commanding officer's office, headquarters, or tent.

b. Individuals or units passing or being passed by uncased Colors out of doors render honors. Individuals, not part of a formation, salute six steps distance from the Colors and hold the *Salute* until they have passed six steps beyond the Colors. The individual in charge of a formation calls the formation to **ATTENTION** and **Present, ARMS**.

c. The Colors may be carried in any formation in which two or more companies, honor guards, or representative elements of a command participate.

d. Traditionally, the command sergeant major is responsible for the safeguarding, care, and display of the organizational Color. He is also responsible for the selection, training, and performance of the Color bearers and Color guards.

e. The regulation for individual flags and distinguishing flags for general officers and other dignitaries is the same as that for organizational Colors (AR 840-10).

f. During a review, parade, or honor guard ceremony, ordinarily only one National Color is present. The National Color is given the honor position and is carried on the marching right of positional and organizational Colors. The United States Army flag or the Army field flag (when authorized) is carried to the immediate left of the National Color. The organizational Color of the senior headquarters sponsoring the ceremony is carried to the left of the Army flag or field flag, if present. The Colors belonging to the headquarters conducting the ceremonies are positioned on line with and centered on the

command. Subordinate Color-bearing organizations ordinarily carry only their organizational Colors (four steps to the rear of their staff).

g. When the local commander wishes, or considers it more appropriate, he may authorize subordinate Color-bearing organizations to carry their National Color with their organizational Colors behind their staffs. Consideration must be given as to the number of times the spectators will be required to stand during the pass in review. Also, consideration must be given to the frequency of *Salutes* required by the reviewing officer.

(1) Another method in which subordinate Color-bearing units may carry their Colors is to have them participate in a massed Colors formation. Because of many complications caused by massed Colors, units should prescribe a local SOP governing the desired procedures.

(2) Examples of complications include: organizational Colors lose their identity, order of precedence, resizing of Color guards and bearers, uniformity when the first rank consists of five men rather than four, and presenting a good appearance when returning to the formation after being brought forward while keeping the National Color on the marching right.

h. When Colors are participating in a ceremony they will be received and dismissed as described in paragraphs 15-5 and 15-7.

15-3. SALUTES

The National Color renders no *Salute* (dip). An exception to this rule is followed by naval vessels when, upon receiving a *Salute* of this type from a vessel registered by a nation formally recognized by the United States, the compliment must be returned.

a. The organizational Color salutes (dips) in all military ceremonies while the National Anthem, "To the Color," or a foreign national anthem is being played, and when rendering honors to the organizational commander or an individual of higher grade including foreign dignitaries of higher grade, but in no other case. The United States Army flag is considered to be an organizational Color and, as such, is also dipped while the National Anthem, "To the Color," or a foreign national anthem is being played, and when rendering honors to the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, his direct representative, or an individual of equivalent or higher grade, but in no other case.

b. When marching, organizational Colors salute when six steps from the person entitled to the *Salute*. They are returned to the *Carry* position when six steps beyond the person.

15-4. COLOR GUARD

The Color guard consists of two (three) sergeants and two specialists or privates. It is an honor to be selected as a member of the Color guard. The senior (Color) sergeant carries the National Color and commands the Color guard. He gives the necessary commands for the movements and for rendering honors.

a. When battalions or brigades carry their organizational Colors in a ceremony as part of a larger command, the battalion or brigade Color is carried four steps to the rear of the staff. A sergeant acts as Color bearer and two experienced specialists or privates, selected by the battalion or brigade command sergeant major, act as members of the Color guard.

b. The Color guard is formed and *Marched* in one rank at *Close Interval*, the bearers in the center. They do not execute *Rear March* or *About Face*. The Color guard marches at *Right Shoulder Arms* and executes *Facing* movements by wheeling to the right or left. The command for a *Facing* movement is **Right (Left) Wheel, MARCH**. To execute a *Wheeling* movement, the guard nearest the direction of turn serves as the pivot point and executes the movement by marching in place and simultaneously turning in the new direction. Other members shorten their steps and turn in an arc keeping abreast of each other to maintain alignment. When the movement has been completed, each member automatically marches in place until the command **HALT** or **Forward, MARCH** is given.

c. When passing in review, the Color guard executes *Eyes Right* at the prescribed saluting distance on the command of the Color sergeant. The commands are **Eyes, RIGHT** and **Ready, FRONT**. The organizational color salutes at the command **RIGHT**, and resumes the *Carry* at the command **FRONT**. The guard on the right flank of the Color guard does not execute *Eyes Right*.

d. During ceremonies, the Color guard remains at *Right Shoulder Arms* except when executing *Present Arms* (as specified in subparagraph f).

e. When not participating in a ceremony and a situation occurs that warrants a *Salute* by the organizational Color, the Color sergeant commands **Color, SALUTE**. The return to the *Carry* is made at the command **Carry, COLOR**.

f. When in formation with the Color company, and not during a ceremony, the Color bearers execute *At Ease* and *Rest*, keeping the staffs of the Colors vertical. The Color guard executes *Right Shoulder Arms*, *Order Arms*, and *Present Arms* with the Color company. During ceremonies when the Colors are not forward and remarks are to be made, the Color guards and Color bearers execute *Order Arms* and *Parade Rest* on command of the Color company commander. During any ceremony when the units are *At Ease*, the Color guard and Color bearers are at *Parade Rest*.

g. The uniform for Color guards should be the same as prescribed for participating troops.

15-5. RECEIVING OR DISMISSING THE COLORS BY THE COLOR GUARD

The Color guard uses the following procedures when receiving or dismissing the Colors.

a. When receiving uncased Colors on display in the commander's office, the Color guard is positioned in a single rank facing the Colors. The Color sergeant commands **Present, ARMS** and **Order, ARMS**. On completion of *Order Arms*, the Color bearers (without command) secure the Colors. The Color guard files outside (guard, National Color, organizational Color, guard) and re-forms in a line formation. The Color guards execute *Right Shoulder Arms* and the Color bearers assume the *Carry Position*.

b. To dismiss the Colors, the procedures are basically the same except that the Colors are placed back in their stands before executing *Present Arms*.

15-6. CASING AND UNCASING THE COLORS

Use the following procedures to case and uncase the Colors.

a. The Color guard forms in a line formation with the cased Colors at the *Carry Position* (*Order Position* when indoors). The command sergeant major (or his direct

representative) positions himself six steps in front of and centered on the formation. He then commands ***Sling, ARMS***.

(1) The Color guards immediately adjust their slings and assume *Sling Arms*. The command sergeant major commands **POST**. The Color guards face to the *Half Left (Right)* in marching, take four steps, halt, and execute *About Face*.

(2) The command sergeant major then directs **UNCASE THE COLORS**. The Color bearers lower the Colors (same as *Present Guidon*). The two guards move forward and untie and uncase the Colors. The Color bearers unfurl and immediately return the Colors to the *Carry (Order) Position*. While the Colors are being unfurled, the guards fold the cases and secure them in their left hand.

(3) When the Colors are in the *Carry Position*, the command sergeant major commands ***Present, ARMS***. The command sergeant major, Color guards, and the organizational Color salute.

(4) The command sergeant major commands ***Order, ARMS***, and then commands **POST**. On the command of execution **POST**, the Color guards place the folded canvas cases inside the cartridge belts (center rear) of the Color bearers. The Color guards assume their original positions, adjust their slings, and return to *Right Shoulder Arms*.

(5) If the command sergeant major or his representative is not present, the senior Color sergeant gives the necessary commands.

b. To case the Colors, the procedures are basically the same except *Present Arms* is given before the Colors are lowered.

c. When casing or uncasing the Colors with the command present, the commander directs **UNCASE (CASE) THE COLORS**. The command sergeant major and Color guards execute the movement (as previously stated) except that they execute *Present Arms* and *Order Arms* with the Color company. When the Colors are uncased and returned to the *Carry Position*, the commander directs **BRING YOUR UNITS TO PRESENT ARMS**. After the units have executed this directive, he then directs **BRING YOUR UNITS TO ORDER ARMS**.

d. If the Colors are to be cased or uncased during the receiving or dismissing by the Color company, the Color guards execute *Present Arms* and *Order Arms* on command of the company commander.

e. The command sergeant major uncases the organizational Color when it is displayed by itself. He may also assist the Color guards when uncasing more than two Colors.

15-7. RECEIVING OR DISMISSING THE COLORS BY COLOR COMPANY

The designated Color company receives and dismisses the Colors as follows:

- a. The Color company should receive the Colors before it forms with the battalion.
- b. The Color company forms at *Attention* with the commander facing to the front as the Colors near the Color company.
- c. The Color guard, guided by the senior sergeant, approaches from the front and halts 10 steps from the company commander.
- d. The company commander then faces about and commands ***Present, ARMS***, faces the Colors and salutes. He terminates his *Salute*, faces about, and commands ***Order, ARMS***.

e. The specialists or privates of the Color guard execute *Present Arms* and return to *Right Shoulder Arms* on the commands of the company commander (*Present Arms* and *Order Arms*).

f. The senior sergeant then marches the Color guard to its position within the company formation. If the company is in column formation, the Color guard forms at the rear of the company. When the company is in line or mass formation, the Color guard forms at the left of the company. The Color company may join the battalion before the battalion forms at the ceremony site or join with the battalion at the ceremony site. When the Color company joins the battalion, the senior Color sergeant marches the Color guard to its appropriate post in the battalion formation.

g. The Color guard is dismissed at the conclusion of the ceremony. This can occur in the vicinity of the ceremony site, in the Color company area, or at the battalion headquarters. At the designated area, the senior sergeant marches and halts the Color guard 10 steps in front of and facing the commander of the Color company. The actions for dismissing the Colors are the same as receiving the Colors. After being dismissed, the Color guard marches to the office, headquarters, or tent of the commanding officer.

h. The Colors are received and dismissed from organizations smaller than a company, such as a funeral escort, in a similar manner.

i. Casing and uncasing the Colors may be scheduled in conjunction with receiving and dismissing the Colors.

15-8. POSTING AND RETIRING THE COLORS

Formal assemblies conducted indoors begin with the presentation of the Colors, referred to as posting the Colors, and end with the retirement of the Colors. The following instructions outline the procedures for posting and retiring the Colors, with a head table and without head table. 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.

a. **Posting the Colors.** The Color guard forms outside the entrance to the dining area, auditorium, or meeting hall. The audience is directed to stand until the Colors are posted. If the playing of the National Anthem (or other appropriate music) and the invocation are scheduled, the audience will remain standing until they are completed.

(1) When the arrangements include a head table, the Color guard enters in a line formation, preferably, or forms in a line immediately inside the room and moves to a position centered on and facing the head table.

(a) When the Colors arrive at the predesignated position, the Color sergeant commands **Colors, HALT**, and **Present, ARMS**; and reports ***“The colors are present.”*** The host acknowledges the report and directs **POST THE COLORS**. The area should be arranged to allow adequate space for the Color guard to move between the head table and the flag stand.

(b) The Color sergeant then commands **Order, ARMS; Right, FACE**; and **Forward, MARCH**. On the command of execution **MARCH**, the Color guard marches to the rear of the head table (Figure 15-1, page 15-8).

(c) Once the Color guard is centered on the flag stand, they mark time and the Color sergeant commands **Colors, HALT** and **Right, FACE**. The Color guard should approach

the flag stands from the right to position the National Color bearer in front of the flag holder on the right, facing the audience.

(d) The Color bearers, without command, place the colors in the stand.

(e) When the Colors are in the stand, the color sergeant commands ***Present, ARMS*** and ***Order, ARMS***. The guards return to *Right Shoulder Arms*; the Color sergeant commands ***Left, FACE*** and ***Forward, MARCH***; and the Color guard exits the area.

(2) When a head table is not used, the Color guard enters and moves to a predesignated position centered on and facing the audience. This may require the Color guard to move in a column and use *Facing* movements. The movement must be planned so that the National Color is always on the right when in line and is leading when in column.

(a) When the Colors arrive at the predesignated position, the Color sergeant commands ***Colors, HALT; Left (Right), FACE***; and ***Present, ARMS***. Any scheduled music or the Pledge of Allegiance occurs at this time. The Color sergeant then commands ***Order, ARMS***.

(b) The Color sergeant commands ***Right (Left), FACE*** and ***Forward, MARCH***. On the command of execution ***MARCH***, the Color guard marches to the flag stand where the actions of the Color guard are the same as previously described.

b. **Retiring the Colors.** The audience is directed to stand for the retiring of the Colors.

(1) When a head table is used, the Color sergeant moves the Color guard to the head table.

(a) The Color sergeant commands ***Color guard, HALT; Present, ARMS***, and reports to the host, ***“Sir, request permission to retire the colors.”*** The host acknowledges the report and directs **RETIRE THE COLORS**.

(b) The Color sergeant commands ***Order, ARMS; Right, FACE; Forward, MARCH***; and moves the Color guard until they are centered on the flag stand where they mark time.

(c) The Color sergeant commands ***Color guard, HALT; Right, FACE; Present, ARMS***; and ***Order, ARMS***. Upon completion of *Order Arms* the color bearers, without command, retrieve the colors and assume the *Carry Position*.

(d) The Color sergeant commands ***Left, FACE*** and ***Forward, MARCH***. The Color guard exits the area.

(2) When the head table is not used, the Color guard moves directly to the flag stands where the Colors are retrieved. The Color guard exits as previously described.

NOTE: These procedures will vary when the command sergeant major is in charge of the Colors during a formal dining-in.

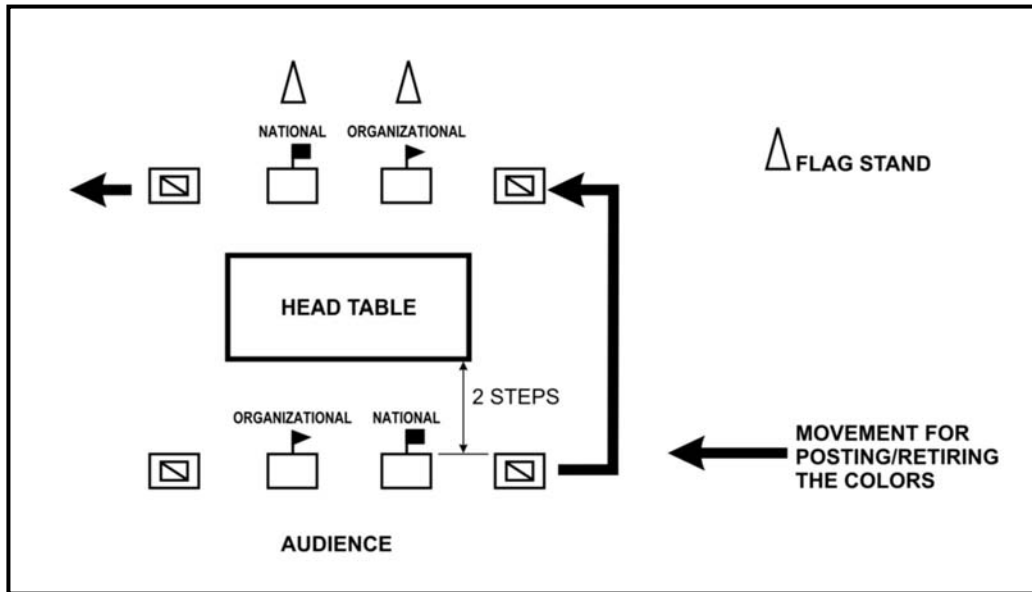


Figure 15-1. Posting and retiring the Colors.

15-9. MOVEMENT OF THREE-MAN COLOR GUARD TO THE REAR

To face a three-man Color guard to the rear, the command is *Colors Reverse, MARCH*, and each man simultaneously executes the following movements:

- a. Number 1 faces left while marking time, takes two steps forward, and faces to the left while marking time.
- b. Number 2 takes one full step forward, executes *About Face* while marking time, and takes one full step in the new direction, marking time.
- c. Number 3 takes one full step and two half steps forward, faces to the right while marking time, takes two full steps, faces to the right in marching, takes two full steps, and marks time.
- d. When all are abreast of each other, they step off together or halt, as commanded (Figure 15-2).

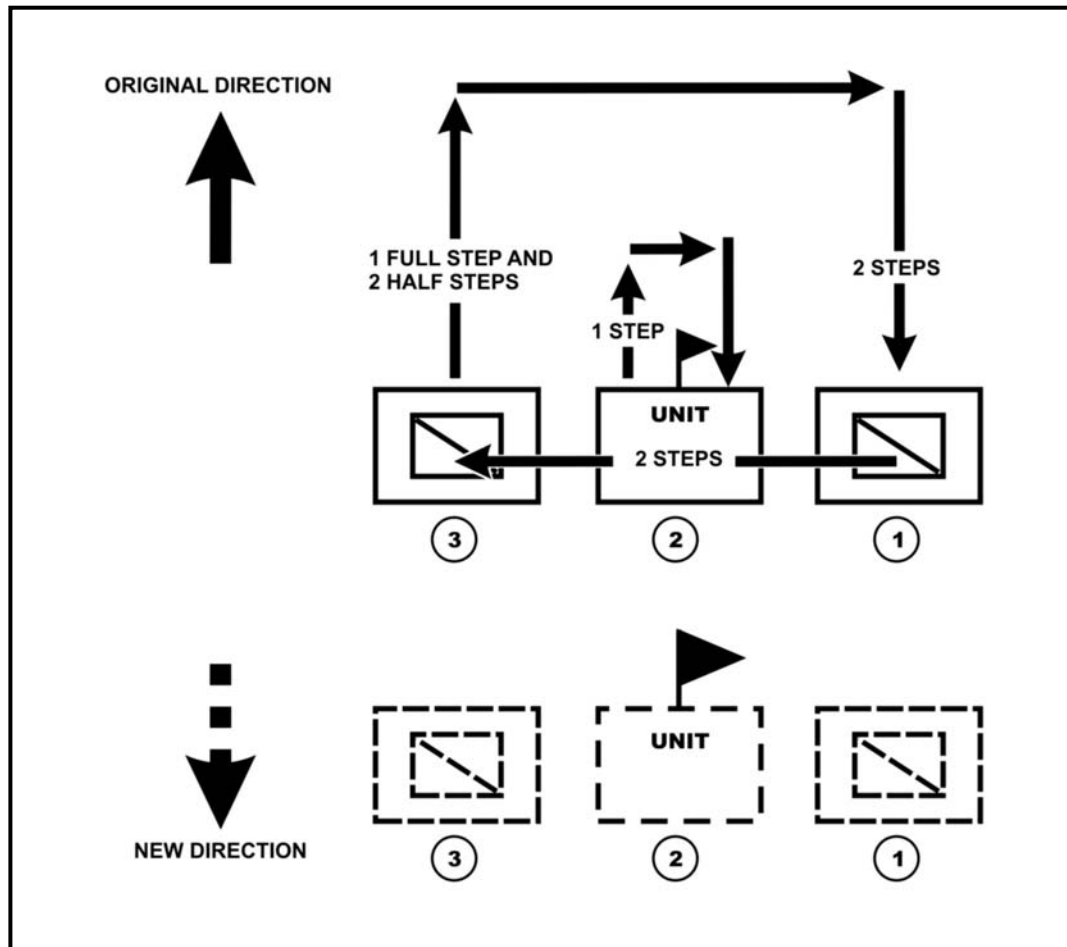


Figure 15-2. Movement of Three-man Color Guard to the Rear.

15-10. MOVEMENT OF FOUR-MAN COLOR GUARD TO THE REAR

To face a four-man Color guard to the rear, the command is *Colors reverse, MARCH*. At the command **MARCH**, each man simultaneously executes the following movements:

- Number 1 takes two steps forward, faces to the left in marching, takes one full step and three half steps, faces to the left in marching, and takes two steps in the new direction.
- Number 2 faces to the left in marching and faces to the left while marking time.
- Number 3 takes one step forward, faces to the right in marching, takes two half steps, faces to the right in marching, and takes one step in the new direction.
- Number 4 takes one step forward, faces to the right in marching, takes one full step and three half steps, faces to the right in marching, and takes one step forward in the new direction.
- Numbers 2, 3, and 4 mark time after completing their movements until all men are abreast, then step off together or halt, as the situation dictates (Figure 15-3, page 15-10).

NOTE: This command may be given while marching, in which case the commands are given when the left foot strikes the marching surface.

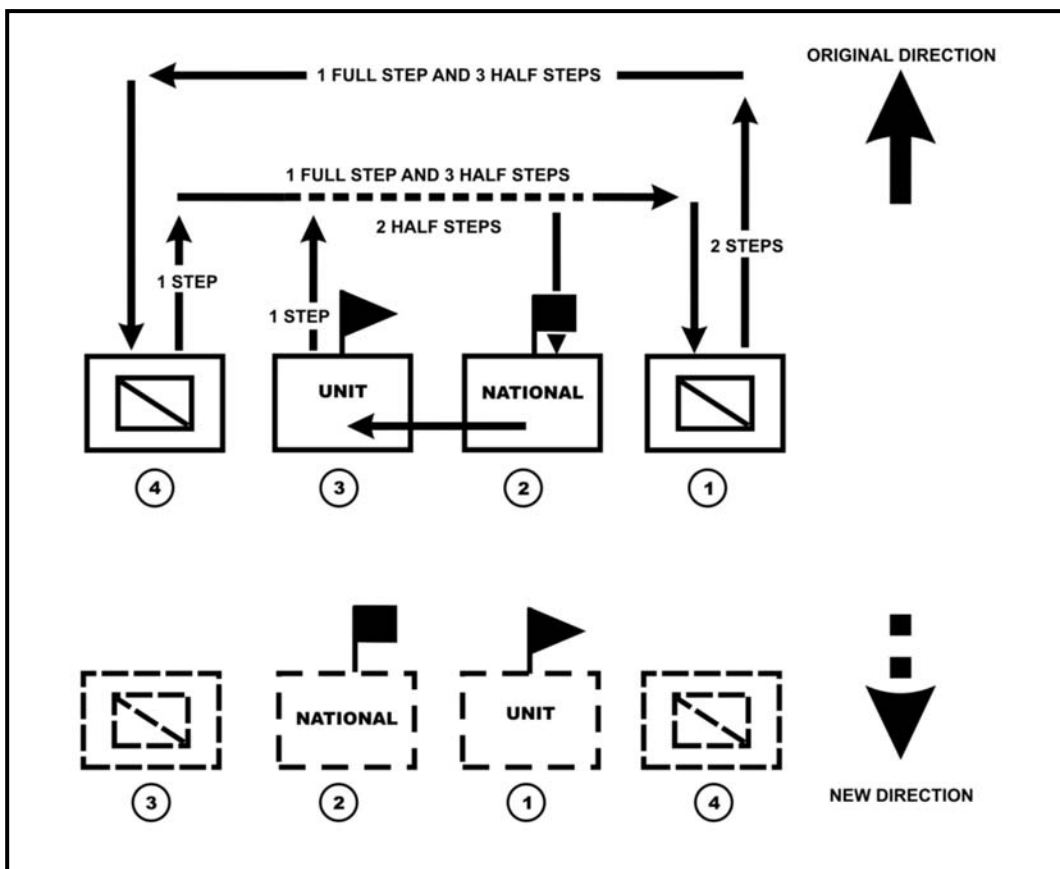


Figure 15-3. Movement of four-man Color guard to the rear.

NOTE: *Left About* may be used in lieu of *Colors Reverse*. The command for this movement is ***Left About, MARCH***. The Color sergeant is the pivot man for the movement. On the command of execution, the Color sergeant marches in place and turns to the left. Other members shorten their step and turn in an arc keeping abreast of each other and maintaining alignment. When the movement has been completed, each man marches in place until the command ***HALT*** or ***Forward, MARCH*** is given. This movement may be executed from the ***HALT*** or while marching.

15-11. MOVEMENT OF FIVE-MAN COLOR GUARD TO THE REAR

To face a five-man Color guard to the rear, the command is ***Colors Reverse, MARCH***. At the command ***MARCH***, each man simultaneously executes the following movements:

- Number 1 takes four steps forward, faces to the left in marching, takes four full steps forward, faces to the left in marching, takes four full steps in the new direction, and marks time.
- Number 2 faces left while marking time, takes two steps forward, and faces to the left while marking time.
- Number 3 takes one full step forward, executes about face while marking time, takes one full step in the new direction, and marks time.

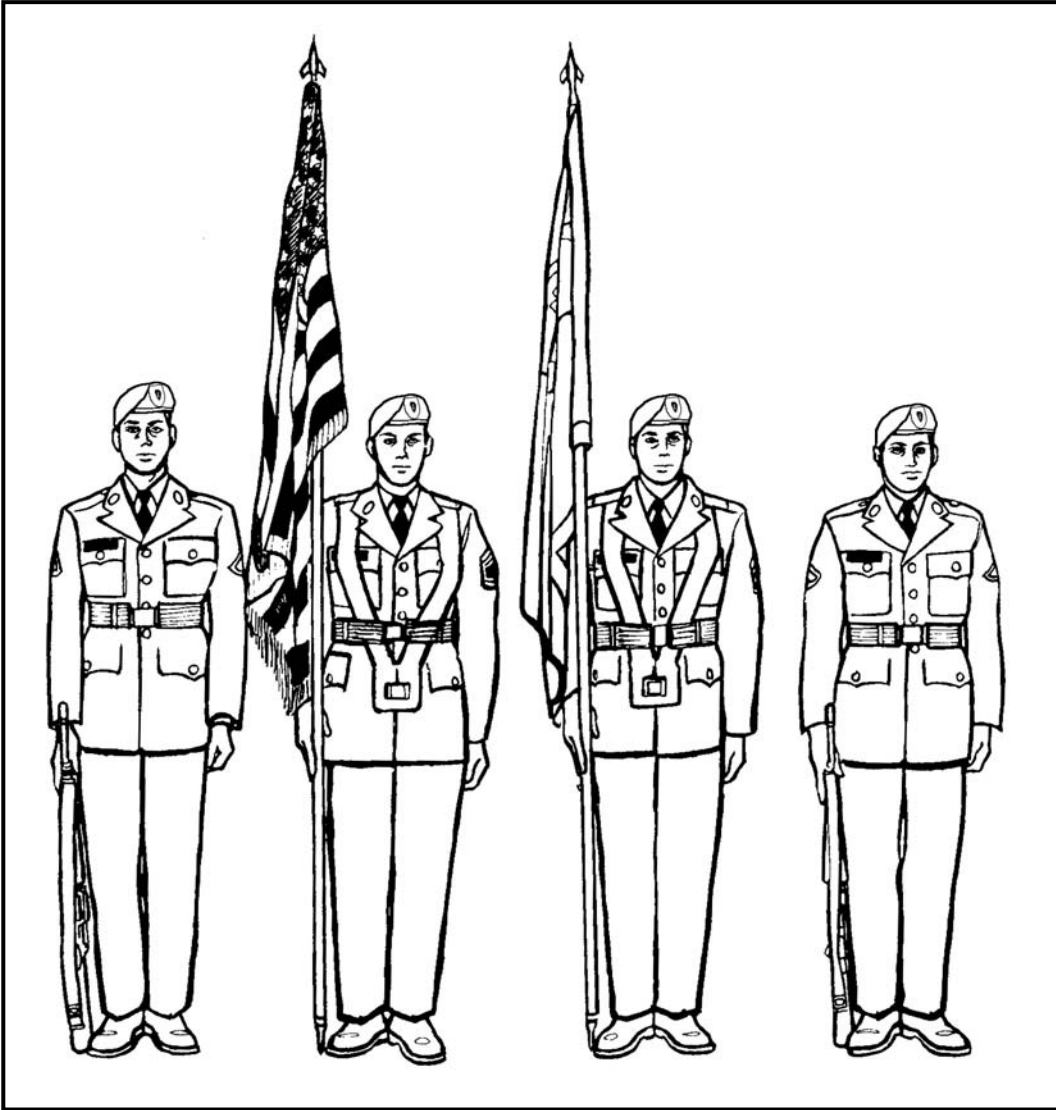


Figure 15-6. Position of the Colors at the Order.

15-14. POSITION OF THE COLORS AT THE CARRY

At the *Carry*, rest the ferrule of the staff in the socket of the sling. The socket is below the waist and adjusted to ensure that the finials of all Colors are of equal height (Figure 15-7). Grasp the staff with the right hand (even with the mouth) and incline it slightly to the front with the left hand securing the ferrule in the socket. The left hand may be positioned immediately below the right hand to more firmly secure the Colors on windy days.

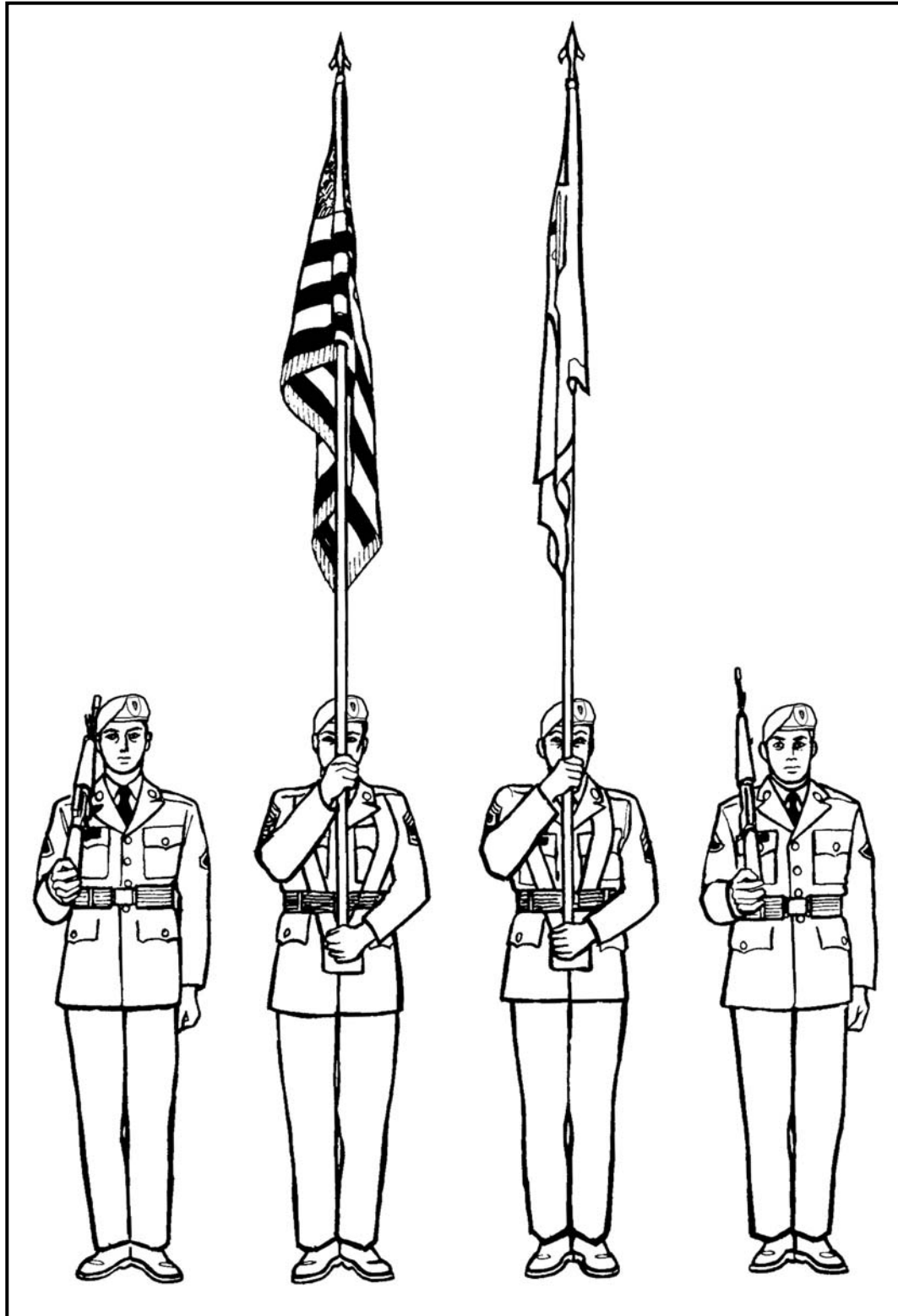


Figure 15-7. Position of the Colors at the Carry.

15-15. POSITION OF THE COLORS AT PARADE REST

Parade Rest with the Colors is executed with staffs vertical. The *Order* and *Parade Rest* are executed with the Color company except during ceremonies when the Colors remain at the *Carry Position* (Figure 15-8).

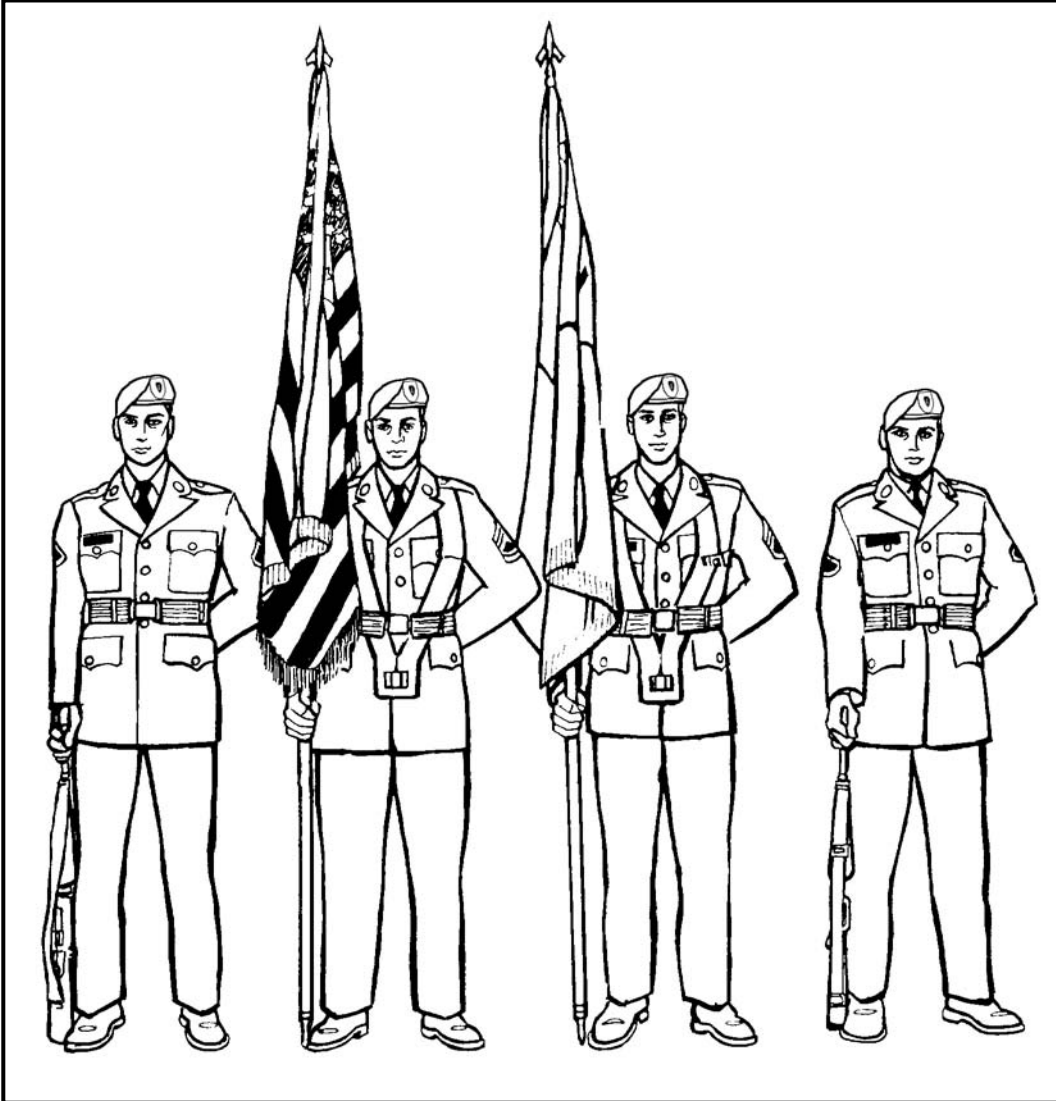


Figure 15-8. Position of the Colors at Parade Rest.

15-16. POSITION OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL COLOR AT COLOR SALUTE

This position is assumed from the carry by slipping the right hand upward about 4 inches and then thrusting the arm forward shoulder high and horizontal to the marching surface forming an approximate 45-degree angle. When the Colors salute with troops who execute *Present Arms* from the *Order*, the Color bearers assume the position of *Carry* at the command **ARMS** and then execute the *Color Salute* (Figure 15-9). When casing or uncasing Colors indoors (at the *Order*), the organizational Color bearer salutes (dips) by

slipping his right hand upward and grasping the staff firmly, with the forearm horizontal and the staff thrust forward until the arm is fully extended.

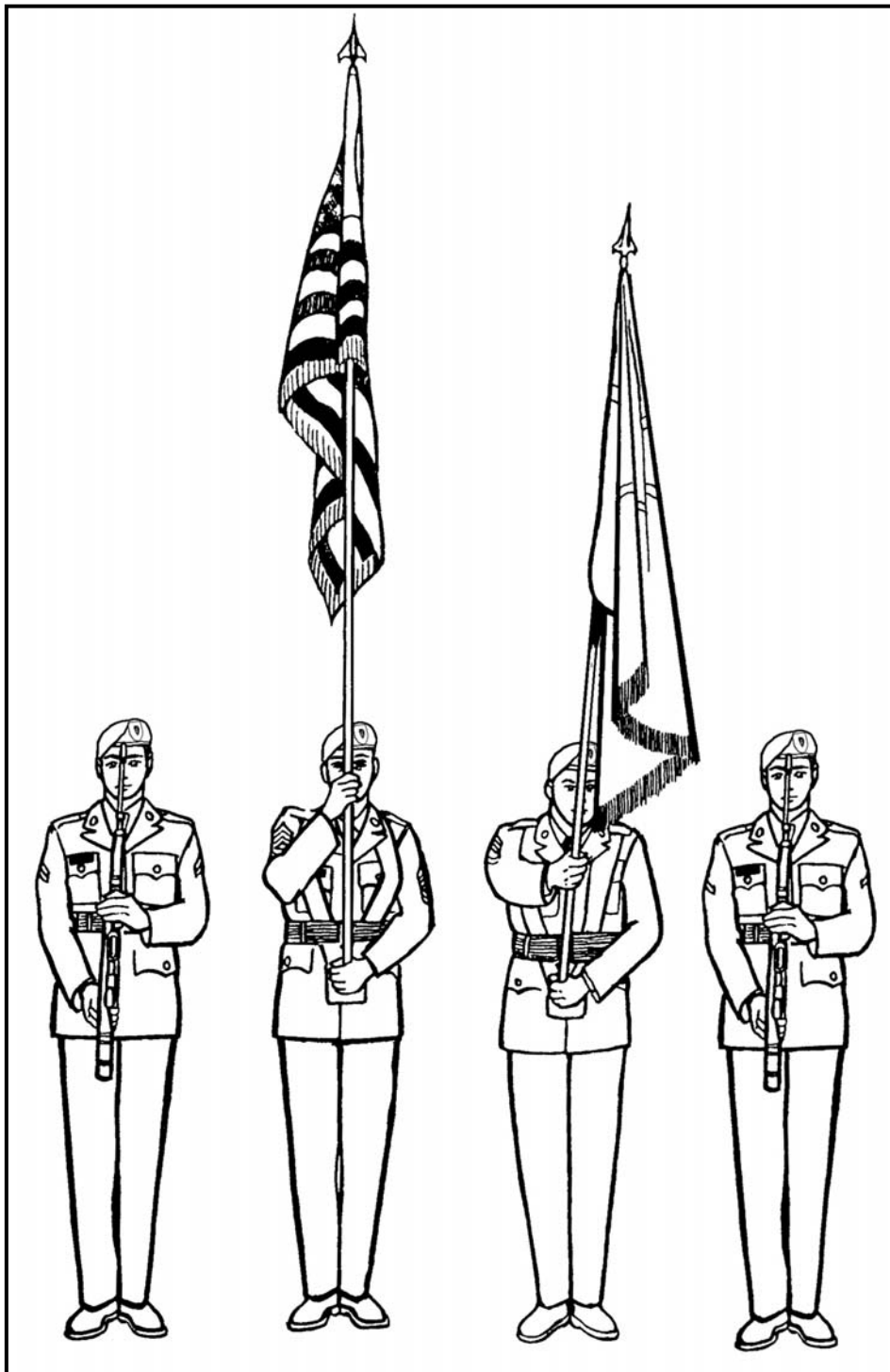


Figure 15-9. Position of the organizational Color at Color Salute.