



# **MARINE CORPS LEAGUE COLOR GUARD POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

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# **MCL COLOR GUARD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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# MARINE CORPS LEAGUE

## National Headquarters

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1. GENERAL. The Marine Corps League (MCL) provides thousands of color guard details for parades and ceremonies each year. This document will provide policies, procedures, and techniques to assist the Detachment Commandants in the development of a Detachment color guard program to support their community requirements. The Marine Corps Order 5060.20 Chapter 7 (Ref (a)) was used as a reference to ensure compliance of Marine Corps standards when the MCL is representing the Marine Corps when conducting a Color Guard. Uniform requirements for the Marine Corps League Color Guards are stated in this SOP and further guided by Enclosure (3) of the MCL National Administrative Manual (Ref (b)).

2. MISSION. The mission of the Detachment color guard detail is to support the numerous requirements within the community.

3. PURPOSE. The purpose of this Policy and Procedure manual is to standardize each Detachment color guard unit throughout the League. This will be accomplished through guidance and by providing the following:

- a. The administrative requirements of each member of the Detachment color guard detail.
- b. A list of the approved designated color guard uniform requirements.
- c. A list of the approved designated color guard equipment requirements.
- d. Training guidance to execute the “Movement of the Colors”.
- e. A list of items not authorized to wear.

4. RATIFICATION. The Marine Corps League Color Guard Policy and Procedures were presented to the National Board of Trustees by the National Color Guard Committee. They were approved by the majority vote of the National Board of Trustees on 23 April 2025.

5. EFFECTIVE DATE. Upon issue on 23 April 2025.

6. REVIEW AND APPROVAL



Russ Miller  
Corporate Secretary  
National Senior Vice Commandant



T. J. Morgan  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Commandant

**DISTRIBUTION:**

Bruce Rakfeldt  
National Judge Advocate

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## CHAPTER 1

### ESTABLISHING A DETACHMENT COLOR GUARD

**1000. GENERAL.** Every Department has at least one Detachment color guard detail that is well trained and equipped.

**1005. EXPECTATION**

a. The Strategic Objective is to establish a color guard detail in every Detachment throughout the Marine Corps League (MCL).

b. For the Detachment to use the authorized equipment as described in chapter 1.

**1010. COLOR GUARD DETAIL MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS**

a. Each color guard detail at a minimum, must have two riflemen, and a National Colors bearer. Although these are the minimum requirement, it is recommended that an Organizational Detachment flag bearer also is used.

(1) Two white leather flag staff harness and four white duty belts. These may be purchased from the MCL's Ship's Store.

(2) A National flag and an Organizational flag both measuring 5'6" x 4'4".

(3) A 9 ½ foot hardwood Flagpole (2 sections) with chrome barrel ferrules, chrome metal spearheads, and a chrome streamer attachment device may also be affixed to the organizational staff displaying the organization's award streamers. Metal flag poles are not authorized for use in the MCL color guard. See Section 3010 for details.

(4) Two authorized weapons. Contact local businesses and seek funding assistance for the harnesses and flags. Contact the US Army Tank-Automotive & Armaments Command (TACOM) ceremonial rifle program Life Cycle Management Command's Static Display and Ceremonial Rifle Team located in Warren, MI.

**1015. STEPS TO BEGIN THE PROCESS**

a. Network with another Detachment that has established a color guard detail.

b. Identify the uniform and equipment requirements.

c. Identify and recruit a Detachment member with color guard experience. In addition, recruit a minimum of six to eight members interested in forming a color guard detail.

d. Begin training and use this Policy and Procedure manual as your guide.

e. Establish an equipment and a uniform list, a budget, and begin fundraising activities to purchase the required equipment.

f. Contact US Army TACOM to request weapons. These weapons are controlled items and must be inventoried periodically, always locked in a secure location when not in use, controlled by the color guard detail when used, and annually reported to US Army TACOM. Here is the MCL's weblink:  
[https://www.mcleaguelibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Rifle\\_Ceremonial-Program-Intro.pdf](https://www.mcleaguelibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Rifle_Ceremonial-Program-Intro.pdf)

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## CHAPTER 2

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**2000. GENERAL.** The color guard detail is the ambassador of the local Detachment, the Department, and the MCL, in the execution of its duties within their communities. There are expectations that must be met when honoring and presenting the National Colors at the various activities and events. To ensure uniformity of each member in each detail across the MCL, policies and procedures have been established to standardize all color guard details as described in this manual.

#### **2005. KEY INDIVIDUAL'S ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### a. Detachment Commandant

- (1) Oversight and responsible for the administrative management of the color guard detail.
- (2) Fundraising and requisition of equipment.
- (3) Accountability management of Detachment Property to include the M-1s.
- (4) Recruitment.
- (5) Ensure the public is aware of the color guard availability through Detachment & Department webpages, social media and press releases.

##### b. Color Guard Commander

- (1) May be the senior color guard member or the supervisor of the color guard team.
- (2) Has the authority to choose to wear/not wear Ribbons and Shooting Badges, however, uniformity must be maintained. Ribbons and Badges are optional.

##### c. Senior Color Guard Member

- (1) Responsible for carrying National Colors.
- (2) Responsible for the administrative and scheduling management.
- (3) Color Guard detail training.
- (4) Inspection of Personnel and Equipment of the color guard detail and ensure uniformity of the color guard.
- (5) Works with the Detachment Commandant with accountability management of Detachment Property to include the M-1s.
- (6) Recruitment.

(7) The Detachment leadership and members are responsible to ensure the public is aware of the Detachment's color guard availability through Detachment & Department webpages, social media and press releases.

d. Individual Member

(1) Accountability and maintains personal uniform and equipment.

(2) Personal training.

(3) Accountability management of Detachment property.

e. The National Color Guard Committee are the technical experts and are available to answer questions and provide guidance in all matters pertaining to the operational requirements of the Detachment color guard detail.

**2010. GUIDON.** At no time will a Guidon be used as part of or near the color guard detail. See Chapter 12 for further guidance.

**2015. RESOURCES.** This document along with Ref (b) serves as the primary resource document.

## CHAPTER 3

### FLAG NOMENCLATURE

**3000. GENERAL.** The following is a review of the general flag and indoor pole nomenclature.

a. NATIONAL ENSIGN. When flown from a flagpole, the National flag is also called the “National Ensign” or “Ensign.” Keyword is “flagpole.”

b. NATIONAL STANDARD. When mounted on a vehicle, the National flag is called the “National standard” and the organizational flag is called the “organizational standard.” Key phrase is “mounted on a vehicle.”

c. NATIONAL COLORS. When mounted on a staff (indoor pole) and carried by an individual on foot, or displayed or cased in a fixed location, the national flag is called the “National Colors”, and the Detachment organizational flag is called the “organizational colors.” Key phrase is “carried by an individual.”

### **3005. TERMINOLOGY**

a. In reference to the Detachment Color Guard Detail, the proper term for the US Flag will be the National Colors and Detachment/Department/National MCL Flag will be the Organizational Colors.

b. In lieu of the individual Detachment Organizational Colors, a USMC Flag may be used with the Detachment Streamers. The goal is to purchase a double-sided Detachment Organizational Colors.

### **3010. FLAGPOLE NOMENCLATURE**

a. Size of the Flag: An all-weather flag with a 5’6” x 4’4”.

b. Flagpole: Two-piece, 9 ½ foot hardwood flagpole (2 sections) with silver metal screw joint.

c. Military Flagpole Top: Chrome plated. Both flagpoles will use only a spearhead shape. No other style topper.

d. The Barrel ferrules are chrome plated.

d. The MCL Streamer Holder: Must be chrome plated.

### **3015. PROXIMITY OF OTHER FLAGS**

a. No other flag(s) and or Detachment guidons will be included within and or positioned near the color guard detail.

b. POW/MIA Flags will not be used at any time.

c. If a color guard is requested to carry another country’s flag, a state flag, or any other type flag, these additional flags must be carried separately within its own color guard.

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## CHAPTER 4

### MEMBERSHIP AND UNIFORM REQUIREMENTS

#### 4000. EXPECTATION

a. The expectation is for all Detachment color guard details throughout the MCL display the uniform requirements as described in chapter 4 and use the authorized equipment as described in Section 1010 and Section 3010.

#### b. Uniforms

(1) When a Detachment establishes a color guard detail, the black trousers; military style polished or patent leather, orthopedic shoes; undress white shirt; MCL red cover (only); white duty belt; and white gloves will be the minimum authorized requirements.

(2) The goal is for all members in every color guard detail throughout the MCL will be Dress Blue Trousers (red strip for regular members or no red strip for associate members); the Undress White shirt (short or long sleeve); military style shoes (polished or patent leather) or black orthopedic shoes; MCL red cover only; white duty belt; and white gloves will be the minimum authorized requirements.

#### c. Required Equipment

(1) When a Detachment establishes a color guard detail, they must acquire the equipment listed in Section 1010 to perform their duties.

(2) The goal is for each color guard detail throughout the MCL to acquire equipment listed in Section 1010 to perform their duties.

#### 4005. MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENT

a. Any Regular or Associate Member can volunteer for the color guard detail.

b. Each member (Regular or Associate) must be a current “Member in Good Standing” to participate.

#### 4010. COLOR GUARD MCL UNIFORM DESIGNATION

a. All MCL color guard details will be authorized to wear the Undress Short Sleeve or the Undress Long Sleeve uniform as designated by the color guard commander and in compliance with Encl 3 of Ref (b) and this SOP.

b. The color guard commander must develop an inclement weather condition plan prior to inclement weather operations. Identification of uniform items must meet various weather conditions for protection, comfort, and affordability. The items should be readily available from brick-and-mortar stores or online stores. Maintain a conservative color and military style garment to ensure uniformity and protection.

c. Inclement [rain and or cold] weather gear worn by the color guard members must be of an identical fashion, style, and color.

#### **4015. UNDRRESS SHORT SLEEVE UNIFORM**

##### a. Undress Short Sleeve

(1) Cover. The MCL Red Cover is the **ONLY** headgear authorized to be worn. Regular members will wear the EGA on their Cover and the Associate Members will wear the Sun Burst device on their cover. Military Order of the Devil Dogs (MODD) authorized members can maintain and wear their MODD patch on their Red Cover. Department and National Covers are **NOT** authorized to be worn while performing their color guard detail.

(2) Collar Emblems. Regular members will wear their Sun Burst collier devices on their collar and the Associate members will wear their block "MCL" device.

(3) Shoulder Patches. Regular members and Associate members will wear their authorized shoulder patches, such as, the American Flag, the MCL patch, and members of the MODD can wear their MODD Patch in lieu of the American Flag.

(4) Awards. Marine of the Year, Associate Member of the Year, Four Chaplain, MODD ribbons, and others are not authorized to be worn during any color guard detail.

e. Ribbons. The Color Guard Commander has the authority to choose to wear/not wear Ribbons, however, uniformity must be maintained.

f. Shooting Badges. The Color Guard Commander has the authority to choose to wear/not wear Shooting Badges, however, uniformity must be maintained.

g. Name Tags. Name Tags are **Not** authorized to be worn while performing their color guard detail.

#### **4020. UNDRRESS LONG SLEEVE UNIFORM**

a. Follow the same uniform procedures listed in Section 4015 paragraph a-g.

b. As stated in Encl 3 of Ref b, Tie, Plain Black with USMC gold (enlisted) or MCL gold tie bar or women's USMC black neck tab (no open collar) is authorized. All color guard members must wear the MCL Tie Bar.

#### **4025. TROUSERS**

a. In the development of the Detachment Color Guard Detail, it will take time to meet the uniform and equipment requirements. When a Detachment establishes a color guard detail, the black trousers will be the minimum requirement to begin training and then participate in community activities and events.

b. The goal will always be Dress Blue trousers (with Red Blood stripe only if it is a Regular member). It takes time and money to stand up a color guard detail.

c. Black and Dress Blue trouser combination are **NOT** authorized.

d. Black Trousers

(1) Black trousers, with no cuffs, are required to be worn by male and female Regular and Associate members. Female members of the color guard are **NOT** authorized to wear skirts.

(2) Belt, black leather, with Marine Corps emblem (EGA) on square gold buckle.

(2) Although Black Trousers are authorized, work quickly to replace them with Dress Blue trousers.

(4) The goal is for all the members to purchase Dress Blue Trousers.

(5) The white duty belt is required by all members of the color guard.

e. Dress Blue Trousers

(1) Regular members are authorized to wear the Dress Blues trousers with a Red Blood stripe as listed in Ref (b).

(2) Associates members are authorized to wear the Dress Blue trousers but are **NOT** authorized to wear the Red Blood stripe.

(3) Belt, Marine Corps web belt with brass buckle.

(4) As a Detachment begins to stand up a new color guard detail, strive to purchase the Dress Blue trousers for male and female Regular and Associate members immediately.

(5) All members will wear a white Duty Belt with the EGA buckle plate and no other belt style.

**4030. WHITE GLOVES.** Standard, military style white gloves are required to be worn by members participating in a color guard.

**4035. SHOES.** Authorized black military style shoes that are polished or patent leather. Black orthopedic style shoes are authorized for those members required to wear those types of shoes.

**4040. MODIFICATION OF THE UNIFORM AND OR THE EQUIPMENT.** No additions to or modification(s) of the prescribed uniforms and equipment is authorized. Additional uniform details can be found in Ref (b); however, they DO NOT supersede color guard detail uniform requirements.

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## CHAPTER 5

### UNAUTHORIZED UNIFORM ITEMS

#### 5000. GENERAL

- a. The following items are **NOT** authorized to wear while participating in an MCL color guard detail:
- (1) Marine Corps full Dress Blues are never authorized for MCL Color Guards.
  - (2) Red Blazers (Casual Uniform).
  - (3) Any style shirt other than the MCL Undress white aviator shirt (short sleeves or long sleeves).
  - (4) Other colors or types of trousers or shorts except as listed above in Section 4025.
  - (5) MODD dog tags with ribbon.
  - (6) MOY/AMOY or Chapel of Four Chaplains medallion with ribbon.
  - (7) Swords, bayonets, or pistols will never be carried or used.
  - (8) Department or National MCL Covers.
  - (9) Helmets of any type.
  - (10) Barracks cover of any type.
  - (11) Brown Khaki Shirts.
  - (12) Honor Guard Rockers.
  - (13) Honor Guard Patch and or Pins.
  - (14) Do not use Black Harnesses.
  - (15) No other uniforms or items except those listed in Chapter 4.
  - (16) Any device or object that is not authorized by Encl 3 of Ref b.
  - (17) Cannot wear any ascots or Fourragère (shoulder) cords or shoulder epaulettes of any type.
  - (18) Only the National Color Bearer will call cadence to the color guard. No other individual(s) will call cadence, be co-located with, to the sides, or be behind with the color guard for any reason.
  - (19) The color guards will not wear “mourning bands.”

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## CHAPTER 6

### NATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL FLAGS

**6000. PERSONNEL.** When designating personnel or units as part of color guard detail then the appropriate singular or plural form of the word will be used, (i.e., color guard).

**6005. NATIONAL FLAG.** All MCL color guard details will carry the National flag without a gold fringe. A fringe National flag may only be displayed inside, never outside.

#### **6010. ORGANIZATIONAL (DETACHMENT) FLAGS**

a. Organizational Flag. The organizational (Detachment) flag is an official flag and will be acquired by the unit when formed as part of the stand-up requirements for a Detachment or more senior organizations requiring an organizational flag. The organization (Detachment) flag will always have fringe and can be displayed either inside or outside. Detachment can carry a standard “United States Marine Corps” organizational flag. In lieu of the individual Detachment Organizational Colors, a USMC Flag may be used with the Detachment Streamers. The goal is to purchase a double-sided Detachment Organizational Colors.

b. Financial Responsibility. Marine Corps League organizations will use their unit funds or donated funds to equip themselves with a National flag and an organizational flag both measuring 5’6” x 4’4”.

c. Safe Keeping of Unit Colors. The Commandant of the MCL unit is required to have unit colors. They will be responsible for their safe keeping and storage. He/she will ensure they are used in appropriate events and in accordance with this SOP.

d. Staff Poles. All colors carried by MCL color guard detail will be attached to a two-piece, 9 ½ foot hardwood flagpole with silver metal screw joint. Metal flag poles are not authorized for use in MCL color guard.

e. Carrying Colors. Unless otherwise directed for special ceremonies, the National Colors will always be carried when the organizational colors are carried, however, the national colors may be carried alone.

f. Flag Disposal. The National and organizational colors may only be destroyed when they have become soiled beyond cleaning or torn beyond repair. Units should conduct proper ceremonies or give them to a local organization that performs proper disposal.

g. Historical Significance. Flags that may have historical significance to the Marine Corps League should be preserved until proper guidance is received from Marine Corps League National Headquarters.

#### **6015. COLOR SALUTES**

a. Salutes by the National Colors. The National Colors (standard) render no salute.

b. Salutes by the Organizational Colors. In military ceremonies, the organizational colors salute while the “*National Anthem*,” “*To the Colors*,” “*Retreat*,” “*Hail to the Chief*”, or the “*Pledge of Allegiance*” is played, and when rendering honors to the unit commandant, individuals of higher rank, or the dead, but in no other case.

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## CHAPTER 7

### SYNCHRONIZING THE MANUAL OF ARMS FOR THE COLOR GUARD RIFLEMEN

**7000. GENERAL.** The manual of arms for color guards armed with rifles must be synchronized so that the rifles move (e.g., off of or to the shoulder) at the same time. Since the left rifleman is at left shoulder arms and the right rifleman is at right shoulder arms, moving to and from the right/left shoulder to the order, present or back the shoulder often involves different “counts” in the movement for each rifleman. To get the rifles moving together one or the other of the riflemen will have to do an occasional pause in the manual of arms so the other rifleman may catch up. When executing the rifle manual, both riflemen will wait for the senior color bearers command of “**Ready, CUT**” before executing the final count of the movement (ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, par 6.a). (NOTE – The use of pictures with MCL Members in Undress Short/Long Sleeves with Black Trousers [or Dress Blue Trousers] is for instructional purposes only. **At no time** will MCL members wear the full-Dress Blues in any honor guard or color guard activities.)

**7005. ORDER COLORS TO CARRY COLORS.** The command is “**Carry, COLORS.**” This is a four-count movement for both riflemen. The right rifleman goes to right shoulder arms and the left rifleman moves his rifle to left shoulder arms (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, par 6.a.1).

**7010. CARRY COLORS TO ORDER COLORS.** The command is “**Order, COLORS.**” This is a four-count movement for the right rifleman and a five-count movement for the left rifleman. In order to have the rifles move to the order together, the “counts” are modified as follows (ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, par 6.a.2):



a. Start



b. Count One. Right Rifle Stands Fast.  
Left Rifle, Re-grasps the Small of the Stock



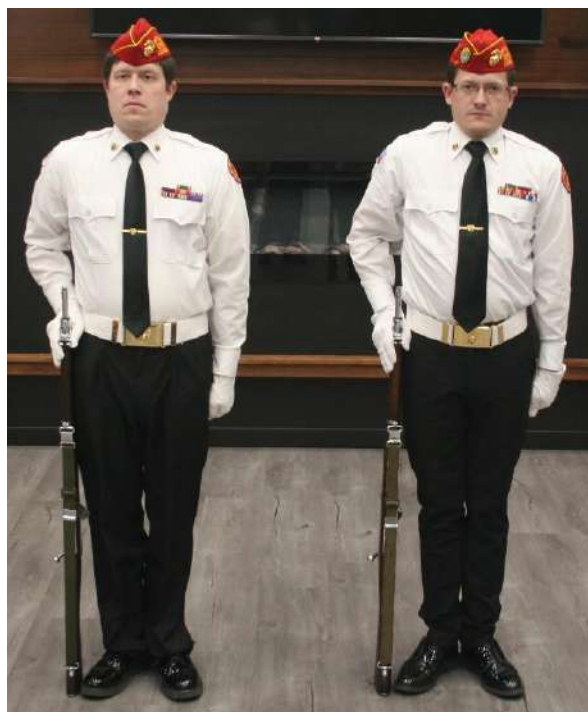
c. Count Two. Both Rifles Moved from the Shoulder



d. Count Three. Both Rifles Riflemen Re-grasp, the Barrel.



e. Count Four. Both Moved to the Right Side.



f. Count Five. Ready Cut.

**7015. ORDER COLORS TO PRESENT COLORS.** The command is “**Present, COLORS.**” This is a two-count movement for both riflemen, with both executing present arms with the rifle (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, par 6.a.3).

**7020. PRESENT COLORS TO ORDER COLORS.** The command is “**Order, COLORS.**” This is a three-count movement for both riflemen, with both executing order arms with the rifle (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, par 6.a.4).

**7025. CARRY COLORS TO PRESENT COLORS.** The command is “**Present, COLORS.**” This is a three-count movement for both riflemen; however, it becomes a four-count movement to synchronize the rifles being brought from the left and right shoulder to present arms (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, par 6.a.5).



a. Start.



b. Count One. Right Rifle Stands Fast.  
Left Rifle, Re-grasps the Small of the Stock.



c. Count Two. Both Rifles  
Moved from the Shoulder.



d. Count Three. Right Rifle Re-grasps the  
Small of the Stock. Left Rifle, Stands Fast.





e. Both Rifles Rotated to Present Arms.

**7030. PRESENT COLORS TO CARRY COLORS.** The command may be “**Carry, COLORS**” or “**Shoulder, ARMS.**” This is a three-count movement for the left rifleman and a four-count movement for the right rifleman to return the weapons to the left and right shoulder from present arms (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, par 6.a.6).



a. Start.



b. Count One. Both Rifles Rotated to Port Arms.





c. Count Two. Right Rifle Grasps the Butt of the Rifle. Left Rifle, Stands Fast.



d. Count Three. Both Rifles Moved to the Shoulder.



e. Count Four. Ready Cut.

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## CHAPTER 8

### MOVEMENT OF THE COLORS

**8000. GENERAL.** The presentation of the National Colors is a solemn and national honor. The manual of arms and colors is on full display and should be performed with as much perfection and dignity as possible. Regular practice of the manual of the colors is essential to ensure familiarity and confidence of all members.

#### **8005. ORDER COLORS**

a. At order colors, the lower ferrule rests on the deck touching the outside edge of the right shoe. The staff is gripped in a strong grip with the thumb wrapped around the front of the staff with the fingers wrapped to the rear. The right elbow is held close to the side so the forearm will help support the staff. The upper staff rests in the hollow of the right shoulder. The staff is vertical with the flat side of the spearhead facing the front. The color bearer is at attention (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, Sec. 1, par 1.a).



b. Color guard armed with rifles are at order arms when the colors are at the order (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, Sec. 1, par 1.b).

**8010. CARRY COLORS FROM ORDER COLORS.** (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, Sec. 1, par 2.a-e.). When changing from order colors to carry colors, the command is “**Carry, COLORS.**”

a. At the Command “**Carry,**” change the grip on the staff to the “V” grip so as to grip it from the rear between the thumb and fingers of the right hand with the fingers around the staff.

b. At the command “**COLORS,**” raise the staff smartly with the right hand to a point where the lower ferrule is just above the sling socket. While raising it, keep the staff vertical. Grasp the staff at the lower ferrule with the left hand to steady it and align it with the sling socket. Do not look down. All organizational colors will be raised to the carry with the national colors.

c. Seat the lower ferrule in the sling socket. As the ferrule is seated, permit the right hand to slide down the staff to a position directly in front of the color bearer's chin.

d. Color guard armed with rifles execute right and left shoulder arms at the command “**COLORS**” so that the rifles are on the outboard shoulders as described in paragraph 3000.

e. All members of the color guard will halt their movements before executing the last count. On the senior color bearer’s command “**Ready, CUT,**” all members will move their free hands smartly to their sides. If the color staffs need additional support due to high winds, the color bearers will grip the staff with their left hands just below their right.



a. Raising Staff



b. Last Count



c. Carry Colors

**8015. COLORS FROM CARRY COLORS.** (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, Sec. 1, par 3.a-e)

a. Changing from carry colors to order colors, the command is **“Order, COLORS (ARMS).”** Execution is begun on the preparatory command.

b. At the command **“Order,”** grip the staff with the left hand above the ferrule and remove the staff from the sling socket. The staff remains centered on the body with the ferrule just forward of the sling socket.

c. At the command **“COLORS,”** lower the staff to a point approximately 2 inches above the deck along the outside edge of the right shoe; release the staff with the left hand and re-grip it above the right hand.

d. Relax both hands so the staff will slide down until the ferrule rests on the deck. Then trim or strip the colors by maintaining a grip on the staff with the left hand and raising the right hand to lightly grasp the fabric of the colors. Pull it down along the staff (do not attempt to throw or tuck it) and re-grip the staff with the right hand, with the fabric under the right arm. Then change the position of the right hand to that described for order colors.

e. Color guard armed with rifles will execute order arms from right and left shoulder as described in paragraph 3000. All members of the color guard will halt their movements before executing the last count. The senior color bearer will then command **“Ready, CUT,”** at which time all members of the color guard will return their left hands smartly to their sides and color guard will assume order arms.



a. Removing the Ferrule





b. Lowering the Staff



c. Trimming the Colors



d. All Movement Halted



e. Movement Complete

**8020. PRESENT COLORS FROM ORDER COLORS.** (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, Sec. 1, par 4.a.-d).

- a. To change from order colors to present colors the command is **“Present, COLORS (ARMS).”** Execution is begun on the preparatory command.
- b. At the command **“Present,”** change the grip on the staff in the same manner as for carry colors. The National Color bearer executes the movement to carry colors.
- c. At the command **“COLORS,”** organizational color bearer executes the movement to carry colors. The color guard executes present arms.
- d. On the senior color bearer’s command **“Ready, CUT,”** only the color bearers will move their left hands smartly to their sides.



a. Preparatory Command “Present”!



b. Command of Execution “Colors”!

**8025. SALUTES BY THE ORGANIZATIONAL COLORS.** (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, Sec. 1, par 5.a-d)

a. Once the color guard is at present colors, and when appropriate, the organizational color bearer will render a salute with the organizational colors by straightening the right arm and lowering the staff naturally to the front. The staff will rotate naturally as it goes forward causing the sharp edge of the spearhead to face down.

b. Salutes by the organizational colors are not automatic when presenting colors. They will be rendered only during honors to National Colors, to the commander of the organization represented by the colors or to an individual senior in rank to the organizational commander. (e.g., during a parade or review when the adjutant presents the command to the commander of troops, the organizational colors does not salute, unless the commander of troops is the organizational commander or of higher rank.)

c. When musical honors are played, the organizational colors will salute on the first note of music. The colors will be returned to the vertical position following the last note of music or the last volley of a gun salute. If no music is to be played and a color salute is appropriate, the organizational colors will salute immediately after the color guard has gone to present colors.

d. When marching, the salute is rendered when 6 paces from the reviewing stand or person to be saluted. Carry colors is resumed when 6 paces beyond the reviewing stand or person to be saluted.



**8030. ORDER COLORS FROM PRESENT COLORS.** Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, Sec. 1, par 6.a-c)

a. When changing from present colors to order colors, the command is **“Order, COLORS (ARMS).”**

b. At the command **“Order,”** if the organizational colors are still saluting, it will be brought back to the vertical position with the flat side of the spearhead facing the front. The color bearers then grip the staff with the left hand above the ferrule and remove the staff from the sling socket. The staff remains centered on the body with the ferrule just forward of the sling socket.

c. At the command **“COLORS,”** all colors are brought to the position of order colors. Color guard execute order arms from the shoulder as described in paragraph 3006. Colors are trimmed, if necessary, and the command **“Ready, CUT”** is given in the same manner as for order colors from carry colors.

**8035. PRESENT COLORS FROM CARRY COLORS.** (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, Sec. 1, par 7.a-c)

a. To change from carry colors to present colors, the command is **“Present, COLORS (ARMS).”**

b. At the command of execution **“COLORS,”** the color guard execute present from the shoulder as described in paragraph 3006.

c. The national color bearer remains at carry colors.

d. The organizational color will salute if appropriate.

**8040. CARRY COLORS FROM PRESENT COLORS.** (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, Sec. 1, par 8.a-c)

a. To change from present colors to carry colors, the command is **“Carry, COLORS.”**

b. At the preparatory command **“Carry,”** if the organizational colors are saluting, it will be brought back to the vertical position with the flat side of the spearhead facing the front.



c. At the command “**COLORS,**” color guard return to the shoulder as described in paragraph 3006. Before executing the last count, the color guard will await the senior color bearers command “**Ready, CUT.**”

**8045. REST WITH THE COLORS.** (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, Sec. 1, par 9.a-b)

a. The color guard assumes the parade rest position in lieu of at ease or rest. At ease or rest are not used by the color guard when carrying uncased colors. Only the senior color bearer or person in charge of a formation with which colors are posted gives the command from the position of order color. It is executed in one count.

b. At the command “**Parade, REST;**” “**AT EASE;**” or “**REST,**” all members of the color guard execute parade rest. The color staff will remain along the color bearer’s side and will not be thrust forward as with a guidon staff. The national and organizational colors bearers will grasp the sling socket with their left hand.



a. Front View



b. Back View

c. Modified position of Parade Rest. The rifle bears, move to place rifle across the body in front and with both hands gripping the barrel, Left hand over Right Hand.

**8050. TRAIL ARMS WITH THE COLORS.** (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, Sec. 1, par 12.a-e)

a. When performing indoor ceremonies in a location that the doors, ceilings, etc. are not high enough to carry colors in the normal manner, the colors would be carried at the trail.

b. Trail arms are assumed without command on any command that will cause the color guard to move. (e.g., “**Forward, MARCH;**” “**Right Turn, MARCH;**” etc.)

c. Color bearers, on the preparatory command, raise the staff 6 inches off the deck. The color guard assumes trail arms.

d. On the command of execution, step off and move a short distance until given the command to halt.  
**NOTE:** If necessary to lower the colors to clear a doorway reach across the body with the left hand and grasp the colors. Left forearm is straight and parallel to the deck, with the palm to the rear. All colors are tilted forward sufficiently to clear the door or ceiling spearhead flat to the front.

e. When the command to halt is given, the color bearers return the colors to the order and move the left arm back to the left side. The Color guard armed with rifles return to the order.



Marching at Trail Colors

## CHAPTER 9

### INDOOR FLAG CEREMONIES

**9000. GENERAL.** Indoor ceremonies involving the colors are generally conducted in two ways. First, they may be marched on, honored with the *National Anthem* or the *Pledge of Allegiance*, and marched off. Second, they may be marched on, honored with the *National Anthem* or the *Pledge of Allegiance*, and posted. At the conclusion of the event the colors are retrieved and marched off. Close coordination with the master of ceremonies, and an on-site rehearsal (if possible) are needed to preclude confusion and misunderstandings during the ceremony.

#### **9005. INDOOR MARCH ON AND MARCH OFF CEREMONY**

a. The master of ceremonies asks the guests to please rise for the march on of the colors and to remain standing for the “*National Anthem*” and the retiring of the colors.

b. The color guard marches in from the designated entry and moves to its position at the front of and facing the audience. The senior color bearer then gives the command “**Present, COLORS.**” The color guard executes. After the “*National Anthem*” is played the senior color bearer gives the command “**Carry, COLORS.**”

c. The senior member of the color guard will then give the appropriate commands to move the color guard off the ceremonial area. This may include a halt and single file movement.

#### **9010. INDOOR POSTING AND RETRIEVING OF COLORS CEREMONY.** (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, Sec. 3, par 8.a-d)

a. The master of ceremonies asks the guests to please rise for the march on the colors and to remain standing for the “*National Anthem*” and posting of the colors.

b. The color guard marches in from the designated entry and moves to its position at the front of and facing the audience. The senior color bearer then gives the command “**Present, COLORS.**” The color guard executes. After the “*National Anthem*” is played the senior color bearer gives the command “**Carry, COLORS.**”

c. The senior color bearer would then give the commands necessary to move the color guard to within 3 paces in front of where the colors are to be posted, halts and gives the command “**Order, COLORS.**” Once the color guard is at the order, the organizational color bearer then steps to the right oblique and places the organizational colors in the stand. Once the organizational color bearer is back in position the National Color bearer steps to the left oblique and places the national colors into the stand. When the National Color bearer is back in position the senior color bearer commands “**Present, ARMS.**” The riflemen execute present arms, and the color bearers execute a hand salute. The senior color bearer then commands “**Order, ARMS;**” “**Shoulder, ARMS;**” and then using whatever commands necessary, marches the color guard from the auditorium.

d. When it is time to retire the colors, the color guard assumes its position to re-enter the auditorium for that part of the ceremony.

e. The master of ceremonies would than ask for the guests to rise for the retiring of the colors.

f. The color guard marches to a position 3 paces in front of where the colors are posted, halts and goes to the order. (See figure 7-25.) The senior color bearer then commands “**Present, ARMS,**” the riflemen execute present arms, and the color bearers execute a hand salute. The senior color bearer then commands “**Order, ARMS.**” The color guard goes to the order. The national color bearer then steps to the left oblique and retrieves the National Colors. When the national color bearer is back in position the organizational color bearer steps to the right oblique and retrieves the organizational colors. When the organizational color bearer is back in position the senior color bearer commands, “**Carry, COLORS**” and then, using whatever commands necessary, marches the color guard from the auditorium.

g. When performing an indoor ceremony, oddities will be encountered that will necessitate some adjustments by the color guard. Some examples are:

(1) If performing in a house of worship, covers are not worn, and weapons are not carried. Those portions of the ceremony requiring present arms are deleted and the riflemen may be omitted.

(2) The ceiling may be too low to carry colors; march in at the trail.

(3) The aisles may be too narrow for a color guard to march in normal formation. The color guard would then march in by two's or in column of ones. If marching in by twos then the color bearers lead, and the riflemen follow. Upon reaching the spot for presenting the colors, the riflemen would step into their normal position. If marching in a column of ones the order of march is **ALWAYS**, right color guard, national color bearer, organizational color bearer, left color guard. When reaching their spot the color guard would reform. Make sure the colors don't reform inverted.

(4) Once halted, countermarch, left or right turn, to face the audience. When marching on in single file, prior planning must be practiced. This will ensure the correct column movement is executed in order for the color guard to be facing the audience, without becoming inverted.

(5) The flag stands you will be posting the colors into may be on different sides of the stage. If this occurs, the recommended sequence is:

(a) Execute the ceremony as discussed earlier.

(b) After the “*National Anthem*” the colors countermarch and halt facing the new direction. The senior color bearer would command “**Post the Colors.**” The National Color bearer and right rifleman step off to the left oblique and move to the flag stand and mark time. The right rifleman positions himself so as to be outboard of the National Colors. After the National Color bearer and right rifleman have cleared, the organizational color bearer and left rifleman step off in the right oblique and move to the flag stand and mark time. The left rifleman positions himself so as to be outboard of the organizational colors. Once both colors are in position the senior color bearer commands “**Colors, HALT,**” and “**Order, COLORS.**” The organizational colors are placed in the flag stand; then the National Colors is placed in the flag stand. The senior color bearer then commands “**Present, ARMS.**” The riflemen execute present arms, and the color bearers execute a hand salute. The senior color bearer then commands “**Order, ARMS;**” “**Center, FACE;**” and “**Forward, MARCH.**” The riflemen march at trail arms. The color guard moves to the center of the stage and marks time, slowly turning left or right towards the audience. The senior color bearer then commands, “**Colors, Halt;**” “**Shoulder, ARMS;**” and then marches the color guard from the auditorium.

(c) To retire the colors from separated flagpoles, the detail is marched into position facing the colors and halts. The senior color bearer then commands “**Present, ARMS.**” The color guard riflemen execute present arms, and the color bearers execute a hand salute. The senior color bearer then commands

**“Shoulder, ARMS.”** The riflemen return to the shoulder. The National Color bearer and right rifleman then step off to the left oblique and move to the flag stand and mark time. The right rifleman positions himself so as to be outboard of the National Colors. After the National Color bearer and right rifleman have cleared, the organizational color bearer and left rifleman step off in the right oblique and move to the flag stand and mark time. The left rifleman positions himself so as to be outboard of the organizational colors. Once all are in position the senior color bearer commands **“Colors, HALT,”** and **“Order, ARMS.”** The senior color bearer then retrieves the National Colors. The organizational color bearer then retrieves the organizational colors. The senior color bearer then commands **“Center, FACE,”** and **“Forward, MARCH.”** The color guard, at trail arms, moves to the center of the stage and marks time, slowly turning left or right towards the audience. The senior color bearer then commands **“Colors, HALT;”** **“Carry, COLORS;”** and then marches the color guard from the auditorium.

(6) The rule of thumb for all unusual situations not covered by this Manual is to perform in a military manner. However, never do something that would bring dishonor, shame, or embarrassment on the national colors or the Marine Corps League.

# **MCL COLOR GUARD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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## CHAPTER 10

### HOISTING, LOWERING AND FOLDING THE NATIONAL ENSIGN

#### 10000. GENERAL. (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, par 3.a-b)

- a. The ceremonial hoisting and lowering of the National Ensign shall be done at 0800 and sunset. Special ceremonies may dictate an alternative raising or lowering of the National Ensign.
- b. A detail consisting of a Commander of the color guard and two other members of the color guard will hoist and lower the national ensign.
- c. The Commander of the color guard will see that the proper Ensign is flown at the appropriate time and under all weather conditions.
- d. Positions of the Ensign: The ensign is flown from the peak or truck of the mast, except when directed to be flown at half-mast. The at half-mast is flown, when possible, with the middle point of its hoist opposite of the middle point of the mast. The middle point of a guyed mast is midway between the peak of the mast and the point of attachment of the guys. The middle point of a mast with a yard arm is midway between the peak of the mast and the yard arm. Technically, an ensign at any position other than the peak of the mast is half-mast. Local conditions may require other positions.
- e. Half-mast: To half-mast the Ensign, it is first hoisted to the peak and then lowered to the half-mast position. When lowering a half-mast Ensign, it will first be hoisted smartly to the peak and then lowered slowly.

#### 10005. HOISTING THE NATIONAL ENSIGN. (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, par 3.c):

a. Color Detail. The color detail for hoisting and lowering the National Ensign is a three-man detail consisting of a Commander and two Members. The Color Guard Commander is senior and gives all commands.

b. Color detail Movements.

(1) Forming the Detail. The detail will form behind the unit formation or ceremonial area. The Commander will carry the folded National Ensign on both forearms' arms extended at 90 degrees from the elbow. The 90-degree corner of the ensign will be pointed forward. He will secure the ensign with the fingers of each hand wrapped around the top edge of the Ensign. The commander will be positioned in the center of the three-man color detail and will give all orders.

(2) Moving the color detail. The Commander marches the detail to the flag mast and halts them. He gives appropriate orders to position the two members of the detail on opposite sides of the mast. The halyards are manned by the two members where one member attaches the National Ensign to the halyards. The flag's blue field should be clearly noted so that the blue field is raised first. Additionally, the ensign should be pulled sufficiently, prior to the beginning of colors, to ensure the blue field is hoisted first. This action precludes the embarrassment of hoisting the ensign upside down.

(3) Hoisting the Ensign. The Commander is responsible for the timing of hoisting the National Ensign. At his command of "**Colors**," or the first note of the "*National Anthem*" or "To the Colors," the member tending the halyard attached to the blue field of the national ensign, begins to swiftly and smartly hoist the National Ensign. The commander continues to hold the ensign until it is hoisted clear of his grasp to prevent it

from touching the deck. When the Ensign is clear, the Commander executes a hand salute. After the Ensign is hoisted to the peak, the other members of the detail grasp the halyard in their left hand and execute a hand salute. On the last note of the “*National Anthem*” or “To the Colors,” the Commander commands “**Ready Two.**” If the Ensign is to be flown at half-mast, the Commander gives the order, “**Half Mast the Ensign.**” And it is then lowered slowly to that position. The halyards are then secured to the cleat of the mast. The details are then reformed and marched into a designated area behind the formation or ceremonial area for dismissal.

**10010. LOWERING THE NATIONAL ENSIGN.** (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, par 3.d)

a. Color Detail Movements

(1) Forming the detail. The detail will form behind the unit formation or ceremonial area, once again, where they began when hoisting the National Ensign. The commander will be positioned in the center of the three-man color detail and will give all orders.

(2) Moving the color detail. The Commander marches the detail to the flag mast and halts them. He gives appropriate orders to position the two members of the detail on opposite sides of the mast. The halyards are manned by the two members. Both members will hold tight the halyard on their side of the mast and position their hands on the halyard to begin an immediate lowering of the National Ensign on order.

(3) Lowering the Ensign. The Commander is responsible for the timing of lowering the National Ensign. At his command of “**Colors,**” or the first note of the “*National Anthem*” or “Retreat,” the Commander executes a hand salute while the member tending the halyard for lowering the National Ensign, begins to slowly and respectfully lower the National Ensign. The other member allows the halyard to slip through their hands in such a manner as to keep firm control and tightness on the halyard until the National Ensign is detached from the halyard. As the flag comes into view of the Commander, he terminates his salute and reaches out to secure the corner of the ensign and continues to gather in the Ensign until the halyards are detached and secured to the mast. This action precludes the embarrassment of the Ensign touching the ground.

(4) Lowering the Ensign when at Half Mast. At his command of “**Colors,**” or the first note of the “*National Anthem*” or “Retreat,” the Commander executes a hand salute while the member tending the halyard for lowering the National Ensign, swiftly and smartly hoists the National Ensign to the peak and then begins to lower the National Ensign slowly and respectfully. They continue lowering the ensign as noted in sub-paragraph 3) above.

(5) Folding the Ensign (ref(a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, par 3.f). Once the halyards are secured to the mast, the Commander takes charge of folding the National Ensign. The National Ensign must always be folded when moved by a color detail. The Commander may carry the National Ensign bunched up due to extreme foul weather at the immediate time of lowering, may be an exception if folding the ensign is not practical.

(6) March Off. When the flag is properly folded, one of the members presents the Ensign to the Commander who will salute the colors before accepting them. Once delivered to the commander, the member presenting the colors executes a hand salute. The Commander then reforms his detail and marches them to the rear of the formation or ceremonial area. The details will be dismissed and carry the ensign respectfully to a covered location for transportation or storing.



## CHAPTER 11

### COLOR GUARD PROTOCOL

**11000. GENERAL.** (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, Sec. 3, par 1) The primary mission of the color guard is to ensure that the National Colors are handled and displayed with the utmost care and respect. Upon receiving or uncasing the National Colors, the color guard assumes a ceremonial posture; meaning that all movement will be by marching at attention and the most relaxed halted position will be parade rest.

**11005. RECEIVING THE COLORS BY THE COLOR GUARD.** (Ref (a), Encl 1, Ch. 7, Sec. 3, par 2.a-h). The color guard will use the following procedure in receiving the colors.

a. The color guard gathers in a secluded location from the public to uncasing the colors and form the color guard. The senior color bearer commands **“Color Guard, Fall In.”**

b. Once the colors are uncased and taken by the color guard, the color guard is considered active, and all activities from that point are ceremonial and conducted with dignity, respect, and honor.

c. The senior color bearer then marches the color guard to the start point for the ceremony.

**11010. RETURNING THE COLORS BY THE COLOR GUARD.** The color guard will use the following procedure after completion of the ceremony.

a. The senior color bearer moves the color guard to the point where colors were originally uncased. With dignity, respect and honor, the colors are furled and cased.

b. To case the colors, the color guard will be formed at carry colors. The individual(s) with the cases will center on the color guard and salute the National Colors. The organizational color bearer followed by the National Color bearer will lower their staff so that their colors may be furled and cased. Rather than wrapping the colors around the staff, the colors should be folded on top of the staff and held until the cases are slipped on. The rope and tassel and streamers, if any, are kept clear until the colors are folded onto the staff, and then are placed as flat as possible, on the colors. This may require two people to accomplish. Care should be taken to ensure that color cases fit easily over the colors. Cases constructed with too narrow of a diameter cause undue wrinkling and may even damage the colors.

**11015. DISMISSING THE COLOR GUARD.** Once the colors are cased, the senior member of the color guard commands **“ORDER, ARMS”** then **“DISMISSED.”**

# **MCL COLOR GUARD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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## CHAPTER 12

### DETACHMENT GUIDON PROTOCOL

**12000. GENERAL.** The guidon symbolizes a rallying point for Marines and to mark the location of the Detachment. The guidon is an identifying marker bearing the Marine Corps emblem and the abbreviation of the Detachment to which it is authorized.

**12005. DETACHMENT GUIDELINES.** The following are general Detachment guidelines when a Detachment elects to utilize a “guidon” at Detachment functions.

a. A Detachment guidon may be carried by a Detachment for which the guidon is authorized, such as Detachment meetings, picnics, on marches, or at other Detachment events. It can be used in a parade when the Detachment members are marching in the parade as a Marine Corps League unit and the guidon precedes the members marching. **The Guidon cannot be used in place of the American Flag, nor can it be used in any color guard detail.**

b. The organization guidon shall be made of red polyester cloth upon which insignia, letters, and numbers, as required, of gold polyester cloth shall be sewn on each side, similar to the Marine Corps official Guidons. This guidon shall measure 1.83 feet on the hoist and 2.33 feet on the fly. A Marine Corps emblem consisting of eagle, globe, and anchor made of gold polyester cloth, shall be placed in the center of each side of the guidon. The emblem shall measure approximately 8 1/2 inches from tip to tip of the eagle's wings, globe 5 1/2 inches in diameter, and anchor 11 inches overall. A maximum of 22 letters, numerals or spaces will be used on the guidon, and this must be consistent in size. The letters and numbers should be approximately 4 inches; (Note – the size of the letters/numbers can be adjusted for the abbreviated name and Detachment number can fit on the guidon.) (i.e., “MCLAUGHLIN DETACHMENT 1091” the EGA in the middle, and “MARINE CORPS LEAGUE” at the bottom. It is also permissible for the letters “MCL” be on top of the guidon, the EGA in the middle and the Detachment name at the bottom. This is only a guide and may be made different because a Guidon is not considered an official flag of the Marine Corps League.

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