

Grand Guard

Relief of the Guard

- After inspection the officer of the day will direct guards to their post.
- The old guard will be paraded and Present Arms on the approach of the new guard.
- Officers approach each other and salute commanding “Shoulder-Arms, Order Arms”
- Upon returning to his command the officer of the new guard will detail the advance guard to be formed and marched to its post.
- The relief will take two paces to the front and the corporal of the new guard will take charge of it and relieve the sentinels, accompanied by the corporal of the old guard.
- The relief will march in two ranks by the flank at the support arms conducted by the corporal on the side of the leading front rank man.
- Should an officer approach, the corporal will command “carry arms” and resume the support once he has passed.
- The sentinels at the guard-house or tent will be relieved first and the others in succession.
- When the sentinel sees the relief approaching, he will halt and face it at the shoulder arms.
- Six paces to the post the corporal will halt the relief and command “No. 1, 2, etc” according to the post number, “Arms-Port”.
- The new sentinels will approach the old, and the old will whisper the counter sign to the new, shoulder arms and take a place behind the relief.
- When the relief is complete and the old guard has moved off fifty paces, the new commander will have his men stack arms, visit the sentinels and question them and the NCOs as to their instructions.

Duties of Guards

- Sentinels should be relieved every two hours, each relief being inspected by the commander of the guard. The corporal reports to him, accepts the new guard and presents the old guard upon his return.
- The countersign is given to everyone allowed to pass though the lines. Interior guards only present the countersign of a challenge, i.e. reply to the countersign, when ordered.
- Neither officer nor soldiers are to take off their clothing or accouterments while on duty.
- Sentinels are not to take orders from anyone other than a NCO of the guard, officer of the guard or commanding officer.
- Arms are to be carried at the support or shoulder, but never touch the ground.
- No talking, unless addressed by a superior
- If pressed or given an incorrect sign the sentinel will call for the corporal of the guard. If the danger be great he must discharge his firearm and call out “Fire at No.X”, “X” being the number assigned to his station, and fall back to the guardhouse.
- After retreat until daylight the sentinel challenges everyone who approaches, come to the position of arms port, allow no one within five paces of him until he has given the correct countersign.
- When challenging he will call out “Who comes there?”, the answer will be “Friend with the countersign” he will reply “Advance friend, with countersign”. If the answer is “Relief, patrol or grand rounds” he will reply as such. Note, the challenge and countersign may be a sound or a movement. This is usually done when the enemy is very close as not to give away the positions of the guards and sentinels.

- Anyone passing through at night must be examined by a NCO after the sentinel has passed them.
- When the officer of the guard wishes to make rounds he will be escorted by a NCO and two men.

The Big Picture

There are two or three lines of posts extended around the main body. First are the police guards that monitor camps and guard the regiment both in front and rear, overlap from regiment to regiment. The next line are called pickets, strong detachments posted on the main approaches to camp, support exterior body when pressed. Then there are the grand guards that are posted to observe the enemy, and support the outposts, which are the extreme outward line. “The duties of the outposts, and of the grand guards which form their supports, are strictly those of observation. If attacked, they offer no resistance other than to enable them to feel the enemy, and never lose sight of him. The task of holding the enemy in check, so as to procure sufficient time for the main body to make ready for battle is that of the pickets.” When you read accounts of battles and the author states that “we drove in their pickets...”, the author is not just making conversation. It was a big deal for the picket line to be broken and it meant the main body was susceptible to attack, possibly unexpectedly.