



# AIA Honor Guard hits the mark

Members of the Air Intelligence Agency Honor Guard fire a 21-gun salute during a POW/MIA ceremony.

Photo by Gloria Trevino

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**F**or members of the Headquarters Air Intelligence Agency Honor Guard, the additional duty satisfies their desires for greater discipline, honor and respect for the members of the military, past and present.

The AIA Honor Guard participates in events such as POW/MIA ceremonies, parades, weddings and retirements, to opening sporting events, and most importantly, rendering military honors at funerals.

The AIA Honor Guard is devoted to rendering last respects to deceased Air Force members. This ceremony is looked upon as the highest honor AIA, the U.S. Air Force and the country can pay to that member and his or her surviving family and friends.

"To me, the Honor Guard epitomizes everything being an officer stands for and the most important service we provide is the performance of the military honors at funerals," said Capt. Martin Solis, branch chief, Air Force Information Warfare Plans and Programs Branch of the Infrastructure Directorate and Honor Guard flight commander.

"I know when I hand the folded American flag over to the next of kin, it provides a final, positive memory of the deceased and closure for the grieving

family. For me, it's a great honor to be allowed to perform that mission at funerals. As a family man myself, I'd be lying if I said I'm able to keep the tears out of my eyes while doing it."

The somber and disciplined manner in which the last respects are paid leaves an everlasting impression on the family and friends attending.

Senior Airman Justin McCarthy, a database applications developer in the AFIWC and three-year member of AIA's Honor Guard, recalls a touching moment at a funeral.

"I was in a funeral where the sister of the deceased military member had two boys, about 5 and 7 years of age. After the funeral she walked up to the honor guard members and said, 'I hope my boys grow up to be just like y'all.' We try to keep these ceremonies special to the families."

The AIA Honor Guard is one of the few honor guards in the Air Force with an all-volunteer force.

"I like being on an all-volunteer guard; you know everyone will give 100 percent because they want to be there," said Senior Airman Robert Cowan, assistant NCOIC of AIA's Honor Guard.

When volunteering, it's a one-year minimum commitment, although 90 percent of all members stay on well over that time. In most cases, this additional duty exempts a member from other duties. A member of the

honor guard can expect to participate in anywhere from two to 10 events a week, including an occasional event during off-duty hours.

In addition to the hard work and dedication, the relationship between the members is further enhanced by non-duty, group activities, such as a quarterly camping excursion.

If that's not enough incentive, some other benefits of joining the AIA Honor Guard are free dry cleaning, a free uniform and the opportunity to hold leadership positions.

"Working at the headquarters as a lieutenant, you don't manage a lot of people. Working with the guard, you get to go out and work with enlisted people and gain those skills and experience. It's a sense of accomplishment to work in a group," said 1st Lt. Michael Quirk, chief of Space Operations, AIA Directorate of Operations.

Some join for the sense of teamwork.

"I enjoy the camaraderie and the teamwork aspect of knowing you can't do the detail by yourself. It gives a sense of belonging, similar to that of a family," Cowan said.

For others, it's an overwhelming determination for developing self-discipline.

"One of the first things I wanted from the Air Force was to be and look sharp, anything to make myself a better person. It takes a lot to stand in a



From left, Senior Airmen Forest Parks, Justin McCarthy, Airman 1st Class Michael Newson and Senior Airman Robert Cowan march to their post during a retirement ceremony.

ceremony for 30 minutes without moving," said Senior Airman Shayne Aune, a command and control network analyst in the AFIWC.

Airman 1st Class Michael Newson, Local Area Network administrator, AIA Plans and Requirements, Plans Division, agrees.

"I love to drill because of the discipline and the precision. We get out in the community and it's meaningful to people and it's something I wanted to be a part of," he said.

Not only does being a member of the AIA Honor Guard create a great feeling of personal accomplishment, it's one of the greatest ways to preserve military tradition.

"I believe every individual in some form or fashion should serve their country, and I wanted a military career," said 1st Lt. Joshua Lechowick, AIA Honor Guard commander and intelligence officer of the AFIWC's Information Warfare Support Team.

"The honor guard aids in the professional development of the military member. It's a way for them to pay respect to their country and honor military traditions, while being a visible part of the community. I get to work with some of the

sharpest people in the Air Force," said Lechowick.

"The Air Force is a great career opportunity for young people because you get out into the world and have an opportunity to get an education. The Honor Guard is a great experience for people wanting to make the Air Force a career," concluded Newson. ■



Airman 1st Class Laurie Kastrup serves as the general's aide during a retirement ceremony.



From left, Airman 1st Class Deryck Schnee, Senior Airman Shayne Aune, Airmen 1st Class Michael Newson and Keith Lloyd stand post at AIA's 50th Anniversary remembrance ceremony.