



The change of command is a military ceremony rooted in the time of the Roman Legions and the passing of a commander's baton in front of his legions, signifying to them who will lead them into battle.

It takes a village

By L. Cunningham

55th Wing Public Affairs

OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE Neb. — We witness the transfer of authority in a change of command ceremony approximately every two years. From squadron to wing level changes of command, they vary in size, but all uphold military traditions.

The change of command is a military ceremony rooted in the time of the Roman Legions and the passing of a commander's baton in front of his legions, signifying to them who will lead them into battle.

As you walk into the venue, you see men and women in uniform, the bleachers in the back and chairs lined up in front. Your eyes are drawn toward the stage and you see Old Glory, the United States flag with the Air Force flag to the left, all on center stage in preparation for the upcoming event.

The change of command ceremony represents the formal transfer of obligation and authority for a unit through the exchange of a flag/guidon as a symbolic gesture to ensure the unit is never without a leader. Signifying to Airmen the allegiance to their commanding officers and allowing them to witness the transfer of leadership.

As you approach, you begin to notice the base Honor Guard off to the side preparing. Your eyes drift back to the stage and you see the moderator at the podium reviewing his speech, the chaplain coming up the stage steps and multiple people in uniform checking the sound system in preparation for the ceremony.

You look around and start to notice so many others working through final details, there are even copies of the program on each chair for the guests to follow the schedule

of events during the ceremony. You open the program and see the official biographies of the current commander, the reviewing officer and the incoming commander.

If you could dial back the clock, six months before the ceremony as the wheels are set in motion to begin preparations, you would see the date and locations being selected and agreed upon by the presiding official, the current commander and the incoming commander.

You would see an officer being selected to be a main point of contact, being tasked with coordinating and contacting offices and squadrons required to make this formal ceremony flow smoothly.

Then protocol is notified and they begin compiling guest lists, preparing invitations, designing programs, updating biographies, making place cards for the reception, help in preparing the script and many other details required which also include a how to listing for anyone given the task of preparing for a change of command.

Next you would see the Public Affairs office being notified to ensure the scheduling of photographers and video technicians in order to provide coverage for the base website and social media. They send releases to local media for wing changes of command and make arrangements to provide escorts and transportation for the local media.

The officer would also contact the Medical Services flight to ensure an ambulance manned with a two-person emergency medical technician team to be on site. They notify the base Honor Guard who provides four highly experienced guardsmen to present and post the colors.

You will notice that they consult Air Force Regulations from time to time, such as Administrative Orders, Drills and Ceremonies, Guide to Air Force Protocol, Rank and Precedence and Command to name a few.

Most military ceremonies include the National Anthem. The change of command ceremony at wing level may require Ruffles and Flourishes and the Generals March if a general officer is in attendance.

The focus now moves to the Heartland of America Band's Offutt Brass to perform music selected by the musical director.

Shifting our focus that without the speakers put in place by the Tactical Radio flight, many of us in attendance would be unable to hear the ceremony. They provide a roll out system package that contains audio mixers, amps, and various other audio equipment, a podium and two to four Airmen for setup and troubleshooting.

You then would see Security Forces being notified, to be utilized and provided with guests lists, ensuring special security precautions for any distinguished visitors, they prepare to coordinate traffic, crowd control, the use of military working dogs for bomb sweeps, parking arrangement and provide escort vehicles if necessary.

Those are just a few of those involved in the preparations, there is also the personnel office that must provide the G-series orders that direct the change of command, transportation if required for distinguished visitors, the services squadron should billeting be required, there are the multiple people who help set up the bleachers, the guest chairs and the main stage for the ceremony. There is also the requirement of escort officers for the DVs and escorts all lined up to seat guests, answer questions, help direct flow of attendees and hand out ceremony programs.

Every detail has been planned and is about to put into action, and it seems that it takes a small village of Airmen behind the scenes to make it happen, all without interfering with their primary mission.



U.S. Air Force photo by Josh Plueger

Kids jump and duck under the rotating arms of one of several inflatable activities spread throughout the Offutt Appreciation Day Picnic. The picnic has been hosted by the Offutt Advisory Council for more than 20 years.

Picnic offers morale boost to Team Offutt

OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE, Neb. — The annual Offutt Advisory Council's Appreciation Day Picnic is scheduled for June 7 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Since the flood has damaged much of Offutt AFB and its facilities, including the base lake area, the picnic will be held at an alternate location.

For safety and security reasons, the location is being withheld from public announcements, but Team Offutt members can get the information from their leadership.

The new event location will have limited parking, so everyone is asked to take the transportation provided. Bus pick up locations are: the dorms, the 557th Weather Wing back parking area, the youth center by the old theater and Bellevue West.

The event is open to all Offutt AFB employees and their family members. There will be guards checking for Department of Defense IDs at the gate for entry. There will also be an ID check for adult beverages.

The annual picnic will feature the Heartland of America Band's raptor ensemble, bounce houses, rock walls, face painting, free food and drinks and

prizes.

This year's picnic will also feature cornhole tournaments for adults, ladderball tournaments for youth and rock wall climbing races.

There will also be a special challenge held with special prizes and comic book characters around the event to take photos with.

The picnic will have pony rides for children and the Henry Doorly Zoo will be on hand to show off some of their animals.

The event location has a strict no pet policy. Vehicles with pets will be turned away at the gate.

Visitors are also asked not to bring any coolers or backpacks. Patrons are encouraged, however, to bring their own folding chairs and sunscreen.

"This has been a hard year for our friends at Offutt Air Force Base and we just want to make sure you remember that this community is always here to support you," said Herman Colvin, OAC picnic coordinator.

"The annual picnic is just a way for us to show how much we appreciate what everyone at Team Offutt does, including your wonderful families."

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