



Fact Sheet

United States Army
Military District of Washington

Guardian of the Nation's Capitol



The Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps

The Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps is the only unit of its kind in the armed forces, recalling the days of the American Revolution as they parade in uniforms patterned after those worn by musicians of our Continental Army. The crisp drill and patriotic music of The Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps provides a tangible demonstration of The United States Army's dedication, discipline and precision to the Nation and the World.

The unit was created in 1960 and is assigned to the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard), at Fort Myer, VA. The Corps travels extensively as an official representative of the United States Army, and averages nearly 500 performances annually.

Dressed in Colonial-style tricorne hats, white wigs and red greatcoats, the Corps brings added dignity to official ceremonies and civic functions. The Corps performs at all White House Full Honor Arrival Ceremonies for foreign Heads of State and has performed in every Inaugural Parade since the Inauguration of President John F. Kennedy, in 1961. At home the Corps has performed for NASCAR events, NFL events, the Kentucky Derby, the Indianapolis 500 and the Tournament of Roses Parade. On the International Stage, the Corps has been a part of the Virginia International Tattoo, The Nova Scotia International Tattoo and traveled to Australia, Panama, Germany and Belgium. The 69-member Corps uses 10-hole fifes, hand-made rope-tensioned drums and single valve bugles, all modern adaptations of traditional military signal instruments. The marching strength of the unit is normally 21 Soldiers and a Drum Major.

The Drum Major of the Corps wears a light-infantry cap that is made of leather and covered with bear fur. As a badge of distinction, he or she wears a white leather baldric draped over the right shoulder and hanging across the body. The Drum Major uses an espontoon, a weapon carried by infantry officers during the 18th century, to issue silent commands to the Corps.

The music played by the Corps is representative of traditional field music and has been carefully researched, largely from original 18th and 19th century sources. The Corps thrills audiences with tunes such as "Washington's Artillery March," "Downfall of Paris," "Duke of York's March" and "Yankee Doodle." Additionally, the Corps' performances include a breathtaking drum solo that is a real show of professional dexterity. The Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps is America in retrospect — rekindling the "Spirit of '76" in today's Army.

