

## Flag Folding Ceremony (Air Force Script)

For more than 200 years, the American flag has been the symbol of our nation's unity, as well as a source of pride and inspiration for millions of citizens.

Born on June 14, 1777, the Second Continental Congress determined that the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternating between seven red and six white; and that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field representing a new constellation.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1777 and 1960, the shape and design of the flag evolved into the flag presented before you today. The 13 horizontal stripes represent the original 13 colonies, while the stars represent the 50 states of the Union. The colors of the flag are symbolic as well; red symbolizes hardiness and valor; white signifies purity and innocence; and blue represents vigilance, perseverance and justice.<sup>1</sup>

Traditionally, a symbol of liberty, the American flag has carried the message of freedom, and inspired Americans, both at home and abroad.

In 1814, Francis Scott Key was so moved at seeing the Stars and Stripes waving after the British shelling of Baltimore's Fort McHenry that he wrote the words to The Star Spangled Banner.<sup>3</sup>

In 1892 the flag inspired Francis Bellamy to write the "Pledge of Allegiance," our most famous flag salute and patriotic oath.<sup>3</sup>

In July 1969 the American flag was "flown" in space when Neil Armstrong planted it on the surface of the moon.<sup>3</sup>

Today, our flag flies on constellations of Air Force satellites that circle our globe, and on the fin flash of our aircraft in harms way in every corner of the world. Indeed, it flies in the heart of every Airman who serves our great Nation. The sun never sets on our US Air Force, nor on the flag we so proudly cherish.<sup>3</sup>

Since 1776 no generation of Americans has been spared the responsibility of defending freedom... Today's Airmen remain committed to preserving the freedom that others won for us, for generations to come.

By displaying the flag and giving it a distinctive fold we show respect to the flag, and express our gratitude to those individuals who fought, and continue to fight for freedom, at home and abroad. Since the dawn of the 20th century, Airmen have proudly flown the flag in every major conflict on lands and skies around the world. It is their responsibility ... our responsibility ... to continue to protect and preserve the rights, privileges and freedoms that we, as Americans, enjoy today.

The United States flag represents who we are. It stands for the freedom we all share and the pride and patriotism we feel for our country. We cherish its legacy, as a beacon of hope to one and all. Long may it wave.

(1) From a report Secretary of Congress Robert Thompson wrote to define the Seal of our Nation (1777).

(2) Text from President Woodrow Wilson's Flag Day message (1917).

(3) Based upon historical facts.