

# Old Guard Selects First Woman to Command Tomb Sentinels

*By Specialist Tremeshia Ellis*

*Reprinted from the "Guidon," Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, 11 March 2004.*

The 3d Infantry Regiment, the "Old Guard," added a new chapter to its own rich history, and to the history of women in the military, with the selection of a new commander of the guard for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Captain Carrie Wibben is the first woman and the first military police officer chosen to serve in the position. The 26-year-old officer had commanded the 289th Military Police Company (-), which is attached to Headquarters Company, 3d Infantry Regiment. Captain Wibben assumed her new duties 15 May 2004.

The new commander grew up in a small town in Iowa, but wanted to join the Army "to see the rest of the world." After high school, she attended the US Military Academy Preparatory School before going to West Point and graduating there in 2000. The more she learned what it meant to be a military officer, the more she wanted to set herself apart by becoming a good leader.

"I think many people are unaware they possess leadership potential until they are put into a leadership role," she said. "I didn't know I was a leader until I was given the opportunity to lead." Now this military police officer is leading the way for others as a member of the Army's oldest active unit. Women sentinels are rare, and only a few have served at the tomb since sentinels began standing guard there in 1948. The sentinels are also responsible for giving the final honors for those who are buried at Arlington National Cemetery. The tomb guards belong to a special platoon of 3d Infantry Regiment soldiers, officers, and noncommissioned officers who are selected as sentinels. All are "three-time volunteers" explained one officer. They volunteer for the Army, the unit, and sentinel duty.



**Captain Carrie Wibben leads a formation in Arlington, Virginia.**

Commanders of the guard are chosen from the ranks of officers within the regiment. The regimental commander and deputy commander conduct a highly selective process to pick the best candidates for the position. Candidates are evaluated in three areas: quality of service, physical ability and composure, and Army longevity. The aim is to choose officers who will eventually take the Old Guard's discipline, standards, and ethos back to regular Army units.

A series of five progressively tougher tests will prepare Captain Wibben for her post by examining her mastery of the uniform; her knowledge of the history of the sentinels, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers, and Arlington National Cemetery; and her familiarity with the rituals of sentinel duty. After the final trial—the "badge test"—she will be allowed to wear the tomb badge as a temporary award. Only after serving honorably for nine months with the tomb guards will she be awarded permanent orders for her Tomb Identification Badge. Captain Wibben, who has been an officer in the Old Guard since June 2003, will be responsible for the sentinels who guard the tomb 24 hours daily. She will also be responsible for training and coordinating with outside agencies and organizations, as well as units within the Military District of Washington. As the first woman commander of the tomb guards, she will deal with the public more than most platoon leaders because of the visibility of the tomb.

"It feels good to be a part of a unit that renders honors to those who have gone before us and those who have served their nation as a career," she said. "I am proud to be a part of a unit that thanks them for what they've done for this country and our military."