

I'm not a bot



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The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. The 21-gun salute is one of the highest military honors, performed for dignitaries, heads of state and fallen service members. But what exactly is it? And why 21 shots?What Is the 21-Gun Salute?In military tradition, "guns" refer to artillery or cannons, not rifles. Some believe this practice dates to the Roman era, while others credit it to early European warfare. Either way, it's a solemn tradition with deep roots.It's different from the "three-volley salute" seen at military funerals, where a rifle fires three rounds in succession. The three-volley salute originates from battlefield customs when both sides would pause fighting to clear the dead and wounded before resuming combat.Why Is It Called a 21-Gun Salute?Why 21 shots and not, say, 20 or 22? The answer lies in centuries-old naval customs. In the early days of gunpowder warfare, warships would fire their cannons to show they had no hostile intent. A ship armed with seven cannons would fire all at once, and forts on land – where gunpowder was more plentiful – would respond with three shots for every cannon, totaling 21. Over time, this became the gold standard for honoring heads of state and military leaders.One historic anecdote comes from the British Royal Navy. In the 17th century, ships fired seven guns because the number aligned with celestial bodies known at the time. Some sailors believed this kept them in harmony with the cosmos. Whether superstition or strategy, the number stuck. The 21-gun version may be the most famous of these salutes, but it's far from the only one. The number of shots fired depends on the rank and occasion. Here's a quick breakdown:21-gun salute: Reserved for heads of state, U.S. presidents and foreign dignitaries19-gun salute: Given to vice presidents, prime ministers and certain other high-ranking officials such as the secretary of defense17-gun salute: For four-star generals and admirals15-gun salute: For three-star generals and admirals13-gun salute: For two-star generals and admirals2021-gun salute: For one-star generals and admiralsAlthough 21 represents the highest possible honor, a title has been bestowed on President Andrew Jackson receiving two 24-gun salutes when visiting the USS Delaware in 1833, perhaps to one-up his predecessors. Whether true or not, it speaks to the pride and spectacle of these ceremonies. The Origins and History of the 21-Gun SaluteAs we've seen, gun salutes trace their roots to early naval traditions."Salute by cannon or artillery is a military tradition that originated in the 14th century," according to the Arlington National Cemetery. "The British navy developed the custom of a seven-gun salute because naval vessels typically had seven guns (and possibly also due to the number seven's Biblical and mystical significance)."Read Next: Burial in Arlington National CemeteryAs gunpowder weaponry advanced, the custom evolved into a formalized military honor. Britain adopted the 21-gun salute by the early 1700s.In 1818, U.S. Naval Regulations were the first written instructions on the 21-gun salute, outlining the procedures for a presidential visit aboard a ship, according to the U.S. Navy.In 1875, the United States formally adopted the 21-gun salute, the same number used by Britain, France and other nations.When Is a 21-Gun Salute Performed?A 21-gun salute is typically reserved for solemn and significant occasions, such as:Presidential and state funeralsHolidays such as Memorial Day and Independence DayVisits by foreign dignitaries and members of a reigning royal familyThe inauguration of a U.S. presidentTo honor former presidentsA 1935 account of such a ceremony paints a picture of the celebratory mood of a 21-gun salute. The occasion was a visit by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to Charleston, South Carolina, where he disembarked from the USS Houston."Big Guns Roar Out 21-Gun Salutes," blared part of a headline in The Charlotte Observer newspaper. Four such salutes were fired in Roosevelt's honor that October day. One of them was from the ship, and another from the navy yard. "A smoke faded over the cruiser's bow, the ship band played first 'The Star Spangled Banner' and then tapped in military honors to the president."The 21-Gun Salute TodayIn modern times, the 21-gun salute is also fired at noon "on George Washington's birthday, President's Day, Memorial Day [and] Independence Day," according to the Arlington National Cemetery.The President's National Guard (PSNG) pairs of U.S. Army rifles serves under the 1st Headquarters (HQ) of the 1st Headquarters Company (HHC) of the 1st Battalion, 8th U.S. Infantry Regiment. It is charged with salutes conducted by the Army's 5 additional military honors, funerals and other ceremonial duties in the National Capital Region (NCR).Under the U.S. Navy, tradition dictates odd-numbered gun salutes (e.g., 7, 11) for various ranks, with 21 being the highest. The Navy has historically used a 21-gun salute to honor heads of state and high-ranking officers.When it comes to gun salutes, some historic enthusiasts thought the more, the better. In the summer of 1885, supporters of John A. Logan – a U.S. senator from Illinois and a prominent Union general during the Civil War -- wanted to arrange a 103-gun salute for his visit to Washington, D.C. However, district officials didn't share their enthusiasm. They nixed any salute within city limits that exceeded the standard 21 guns.Read More: Military Funeral HonorsThe first recorded use of a 21-gun salute was by U.S. president was at George Washington's funeral in 1799. However, it wasn't until later that it became the official standard.Execution of the 21-Gun SaluteThe ceremony follows strict guidelines:Cannons or artillery pieces fire at five-second intervals.The salute is typically conducted by an honor guard from all military branches.Safety protocols ensure blank rounds are used and that the firing area is secured.During a presidential funeral, the 21-gun salute is followed by taps, the solemn bugle call signaling the end of the day. Taps is played after the salute, creating a reflective mood.The Indiana National Guard supported the 152nd Crown Hill Memorial Service, May 30, 2022, at the Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis. The ceremony included keynote speaker, retired Marine Cpl. Josh Bleill, a joint-service color guard, the 38th Infantry Division band, a wreath laying ceremony and a 21-gun Howitzer cannon salute. (Sgt. Ronald Kaitian/Indiana National Guard)The Medal of Honor is presented to recipients of the highest military honor. The Royal Navy still fires 7-gun salutes for state salutes, with extra shots added for royal birthdays.India: The 21-gun salute is used for heads of state, but lower-ranking officials receive fewer shots.France: Uses 21-gun salute primarily for military and presidential honors.11-gun salute: The 21-gun salute remains a powerful symbol of honor, respect, and tradition from its naval origins to its modern-day execution.Read Next: The Medal of HonorWant to Know More About the Military?Be sure to get the latest news about the U.S. military, as well as critical info about how to join and all the benefits of service. Subscribe to Military.com and receive customized updates delivered straight to your inbox. Story Continues Becky R. asks: Why do they use 21 guns in the 21 gun salute? The 21-gun salute that we know today has its roots in the ancient tradition of warriors demonstrating their peaceful intentions by resting the point of their weapons on the ground. The notion of making a soldier's weapons useless to show that he came in peace continued even as warfare changed over the centuries. Gunpowder and cannons became commonplace among militaries and private forces, both on land and at sea around the 14th century. In order for a ship entering a foreign port to show those on shore that they came in peace, the captain would have his crew fire the guns. This rendered the weapons inoperable for a period of time, with early guns only being capable of firing a single shot before crews needed to reload them. Traditionally when a British ship entered into a foreign port, it would fire its guns seven times. The reason for the seven shots is widely debated to this day. One theory states that the majority of the British ships at this point only carried seven guns and so firing seven shots became the standard to signal those on shore that the ship was now unarmed. Ships carried enough gunpowder and ammunition to reload multiple times, but beyond symbolism, the idea here was that the lengthy process of reloading would allow the soldiers onshore more than enough time to disable the ship with their own weapons if needed. Another proposed theory for the number 7 is that it was chosen to honor the Virgin Mary. Power is the offing gun
salute. Traditionally, the salute is fired in three volleys, with the first volley consisting of three shots, the second of two, and the third of one. The enemy is to be deeply offended in power or injured by the act. He'll already had experienced around it in his role at the CIA. The end of that process became his insightful and provocative new book, The Perfect Kill, in which he outlines 21 laws for assassins. Here are 11 of them: Painting of Caesar's assassination by Vincenzo Camuccini, 1798. "The victim must be a dire threat to your existence, in effect giving you license to murder him. The act can never be about revenge, personal grievance, ownership, or status." (Photo: Lens Yung Dimashq) "Power is the usurpation of power, and assassination its ultimate usurpation. The act is designed to alter the calculus of power in your favor. If it won't, don't do it." "Count on the most important pieces of a plan falling at exactly the wrong moment. Double up on everything — two set of eyes, two squeezes of the trigger, double-time charges, two traitors in the enemy's camp." "Just as there are animals that let other animals do their killing for them — vultures and hyenas — you employ a trusted proxy when one's available." The assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat on October 6, 1981. "Assassination is the most sophisticated and delicate form of warfare, only to be entrusted to the battle-hardened and those who've already made your enemy bleed." President Lincoln shot by actor John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theater. "Exercise violence with vigilant precision and care. Grievances are incarnated in a man rather than in a tribe, nation, or civilization. Blindly and stupidly lashing out is the quickest way to forfeit power." British sniper team in action in Afghanistan. "It's better not to try rather than to try and miss. A failed attempt gives the victim a aura of invincibility, augmenting his power while diminishing yours. Like any business, reputation is everything." Jack Ruby shoots Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas on November 24, 1963. "A good, thorough cleanup is what really scares the shit out of people." Gavrilo Princip shoots Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, the act that torched off World War I. "You're the enemy within, which mean there's never a moment they're not trying to kill you." "If you're a CEO, you're a target." "The only way to win is to lose." Biblically speaking, it's better to create a win-win situation than to go off after a long journey. Yet another theory stems from the pervasive superstitious nature of sailors combined with the historic notion in certain regions that the number 7 is sacred, and that odd numbers are lucky and even unlucky. In fact, for a time it was common to use an even number of shots to signify the death of a ship captain when returning from the voyage the death occurred on. Whatever the underlying reason, the guns onshore would return fire as a form of welcome once the incoming ship finished firing the seven rounds. However, the shore bound guns fired three rounds for every one fired by the incoming ships, putting the total number of shots fired at twenty-one in these cases. As with the "7" number, it's not known precisely why in the regions that used this number scheme that they chose a 3 to 1 ratio. What is known is that as time went on where this was practiced, it became traditional for the ships themselves to start firing off 21 shots as well, perhaps due to the ships becoming larger and being equipped with more guns, with the captains ostensibly preferring a 1 to 1 salute. Photo: Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Oscar L Olive III This then brings us to when firing the 21 shots became considered a type of official salute, rather than a symbolic way to indicate peaceful intentions. This seems to have started around 1730 when it became a recognized salute to British government officials. Specifically, the British Navy allowed its ships and captains the option to perform the 21-gun salute as a way to honor members of the British Royal Family during select anniversaries. About eighty years later, in 1808, the 21-gun salute officially became the standard salute to honor British Royalty. While the British Navy adopted the 21-gun salute in 1808 as the standard, other nations, such as the United States, didn't adopt it until much later. In fact, the United States War Department decided in 1810 to define the "national salute" as having the same number of shots as there were states in the nation. That number grew every year that a new state joined the Union. Needless to say, this meant that the British salute was used for heads of state, but lower-ranking officials received fewer shots. The early regulations stated that although a ship would fire only seven guns, the forts ashore would fire three shots to eat one shot afloat, hence the number 21.[4] Odd numbers were chosen, as even numbers indicated a death.[3] This section needs expansion with: gun salutes for monarch, governor general, lieutenant governors, funerals, Remembrance Day, etc.. You can help by adding to it. (August 2023) The prime minister, heads of foreign missions, foreign heads of government, and the Vice President of the United States are entitled to a 19-gun salute.[5] A 17-gun salute is given to the Canadian Minister of National Defence when visiting a saluting station (limited to once a year), as well as foreign ministers of defence.[5] Before they were abolished in 1968 by the Trudeau government, royal salutes were fired in Ottawa, the provincial capitals, and Montreal and Vancouver also on the Queen's Accession Day (6 February), the Queen's actual birthday (21 April), the Queen's Coronation Day (2 June), the Birthday of the Duke of Edinburgh (10 June), and the Birthday of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (4 August).[6] 21-gun salutes are fired when welcoming heads of state to China, e.g. presidents, monarchs, governors-general. 19-gun salutes are fired when welcoming heads of government to China, e.g. prime ministers, chancellors, etc. 12-gun salutes are fired in three-volley form every year during commemorations of the repatriation of Chinese People's Volunteers soldiers from South Korea. The number of gun salutes fired at military parades depends on how many years of a specific event it is commemorating. For example, a 100-gun salute was fired at the CPC Centenary service in 2021. 21-gun salute from Kronborg Castle to mark the 69th birthday of Queen Margrethe II The day after the birth of Princess Benedikte in 1944 which took place during Nazi Germany's Occupation of Denmark, members of the Danish resistance group Holsteniansk performed a salute of 21 bombs in the Tivoli park in Copenhagen as a reference to the traditional 21-gun salute performed on the occasion of royal births.[7] A 2-gun salute was used during the funeral of the Parisian resistance group Les Francs tireurs during the German occupation of Paris in 1944. The 21-gun salute was used during the funeral of former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in February 2020.[9] A 21-gun salute was used after the funeral of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was sworn in on 8 June 2014.[10] A final 21-gun salute was also fired to honor King Farouk prior to his embarking on the yacht Mahrousa that brought him to exile in Italy in 1952.[11] 75mm gun firing 21 shots near Les Invalides for the inauguration of François Hollande as President of the French Republic The 21-gun salute is accorded to the French president, forming part of his "military honors" (honneurs militaires). The salute is given during the inauguration ceremony (by two 75mm guns) and during naval visits. These honors are extended to foreign heads of state during state visits. During the British Raj, India developed a formal hierarchical system of gun salutes. At the time of Indian independence in 1947, the hierarchy of salutes within British India stood as follows:[12] Number of guns Recipients 101 (Imperial Salute) The King-Emperor of India 31 (Royal Salute) The Queen-Empress and the Members of the Royal Family The Viceroy and Governor-General of India 21 Heads of state Foreign sovereigns and members of their families 19 Heads of government Governor-General of Portuguese India Ambassadors Commander-in-Chief, India (holding the rank of Field Marshal) 17 Governors of the Bombay, Madras and Bengal Presidencies Governors of Indian Provinces Governor of French India Envoys Extraordinary and Ministers Plenipotentiary Commander-in-Chief, India (holding the rank of General) Admirals, Generals and Air Chief Marshals 15 Lieutenant-Governors of Indian Provinces Plenipotentiaries and Envoys Ministers Resident Commander-in-Chief, East Indies Fleet Flag Officer Commanding Royal Indian Navy (rank of Vice-Admiral) Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Air Forces in India (rank of Air Marshal) Major Generals commanding Districts Rear-Admirals, Major-Generals and Air Vice-Marsals 11 Political Agents Consuls-General Chargés d'Affaires Brigades Commanders (including Major-Generals) Brigades Commanders (including Major-Generals) Air Commodores 9 Governor of Daman, Governor of Diu (Portuguese India) Prior to Indian independence in 1947, the Viceroy of India received a unique vicegeral salute of 31 guns. After 1947, the 31-gun salute was retained for honouring the Governor-General of India (1947–1950).[13] In addition, 118 out of the roughly 565 princely states were classified as "salute states". The rulers of salute states were granted gun salutes ranging from 9 guns to 21 guns. This system continued till 1971 when privileges and Privy Purses of ex-rulers were abolished by the Government of India. The 17-gun saluting battery from the 7th Field Artillery Battalion of the Indonesian Army during the national Independence Day ceremony in Indonesia, the 21-gun salute is done during state visits of foreign heads of state visiting Indonesia.[14] The modified 17-gun salute is executed during the commemoration of the
proclamation of the independence of Indonesia on the 17 of August[15] at 10:00 near the Merdeka Palace in Jakarta. It is also done in other cities in Indonesia during the independence day commemoration ceremonies. See the 17-gun salute in Indonesia here: Indonesian Independence Day 17-gun salute In Israel the practice of gun salute has been eliminated due to the country having "suffered many terror attacks".[16] A 21-gun salute is carried out for National Day Parades in Singapore by the Singapore Artillery during the presidential inspection of parade contingents.[17] In a rare occurrence, the 21-gun salute was given to the former Prime Minister and founding leader Lee Kuan Yew during his state funeral.[18][19] Traditionally, the Sri Lanka Navy accords a 25-gun salute to the nation on the National Day, which is held on 4 February each year. The salute is fired from the guns of the Royal Naval Dockyard, Colombo. The salute is given to the President of the Republic of the United States, Speaker of the House of Representatives, President pro tempore of the Senate, Chief Justice of the United States, and the Vice President of the United States, as follows:[30] Number of guns Recipients 21 The President of the United States, former Presidents and Presidents-elect, Foreign heads of state, heads of government and reigning monarchs 19 Vice President of the United States, Speaker of the House of Representatives, President pro tempore of the Senate, Chief Justice of the United States, and the Vice President of the United States, as follows:[30] Number of guns Recipients 21 The President of the United States, former Presidents and Presidents-elect, Foreign heads of state, heads of government and reigning monarchs 19 Vice President of the United States, Speaker of the House of Representatives, President pro tempore of the Senate, Chief Justice of the United States, and the Vice President of the United 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edit Ferenc Puskás (links | edit) 21 (number) (links | edit) USS Wasp (CV-7) (links | edit) USS Shenandoah (1862) (links | edit) USS New York (LPD-21) (links | edit) Victoria Day (links | edit) Governor of Massachusetts (links | edit) List of governors of Guam (links | edit) Battle of Monterey (links | edit) Colchester (links | edit) President of the Philippines (links | edit) Patriotcheskaya Pesnya (links | edit) Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu (links | edit) New Westminster (links | edit) State visit (links | edit) Fayne Stewart (links | edit) Trooping the Colour (links | edit) Peter Phillips (links | edit) View (previous 50 | next 50) (20 | 50 | 100 | 250 | 500) Retrieved from "WhatLinksHere/21-gun_salute" Becky R. asks: Why do they use 21 guns in the 21 gun salute? The 21-gun salute that we know today has its roots in the ancient tradition of warriors demonstrating their peaceful intentions by resting the point of their weapons on the ground. The notion of making a soldier's weapons useless to show that he came in peace continued even as warfare changed over the centuries. Gunpowder and cannons became commonplace among militaries and private forces, both on land and at sea around the 14th century. In order for a ship entering a foreign port to show those on shore that they came in peace, the captain would have his crew fire the guns. This rendered the weapons inoperable for a period of time, with early guns only being capable of firing a single shot before crews needed to reload them. Traditionally when a British ship entered into a foreign port, it would fire its guns seven times. The reason for the seven shots is widely debated to this day. One theory states that the majority of the British ships at this point only carried seven guns and so firing seven shots became the standard to signal those on shore that the ship was now unarmed. Ships carried enough gunpowder and ammunition to reload multiple times, but beyond symbolism, the idea here was that the lengthy process of reloading would allow the soldiers onshore more than enough time to disable the ship with their own weapons if needs be. Another proposed theory for the number seven relates to the Bible. After creating the world, the Bible states that God rested on the seventh day (or for the seventh "event"- there is some debate over the "day" vs. "event" translation). So it has been theorized that the number could have been chosen in reference to its Biblical significance, perhaps of resting with the ship coming to port after a long journey. Yet another theory stems from the pervasive superstitious nature of sailors combined with the historic notion in certain regions that the number 7 is sacred, and that odd numbers are lucky and even unlucky. In fact, for a time it was common to use an even number of shots to signify the death of a ship captain when returning from the voyage the death occurred on. Whatever the underlying reason, the guns onshore would return fire as a form of welcome once the incoming ship finished firing the seven rounds. However, the shore bound guns fired three rounds for every one fired by the incoming ships, putting the total number of shots fired at twenty-one in these cases. As with the "7" number, it's not known precisely why in the regions that used this number scheme that they chose a 3 to 1 ratio. What is known is that as time went on where this was practiced, it became traditional for the ships themselves to start firing off 21 shots as well, perhaps due to the ships becoming larger and being equipped with more guns, with the captains ostensibly preferring a 1 to 1 salute. This then brings us to when firing the 21 shots became considered a type of official salute, rather than a symbolic way to indicate peaceful intentions. This seems to have started around 1730 when it became a recognized salute to British government officials. Specifically, the British Navy allowed its ships and captains the option to perform the 21-gun salute as a way to honor members of the British Royal Family during select anniversaries. About eighty years later, in 1808, the 21-gun salute officially became the standard salute to honor British Royalty. While the British Navy adopted the 21-gun salute in 1808 as the standard, other nations, such as the United States, didn't adopt it until much later. In fact, the United States War Department decided in 1810 to define the "national salute" as having the same number of shots as there were states in the nation. That number grew every year that a new state joined the Union. Needless to say, this quickly became a cumbersome way to salute the United States and its dignitaries. That said, the United States did make the "Presidential Salute" a 21-gun salute in 1842, and in 1890 officially accepted the 21-gun salute as the "national salute." This followed the 1875 British proposal to the United States of a "Gun for Gun Salute" of 21-guns to honor visiting dignitaries. Essentially, the British and French, among other nations, at this point were all using 21 guns for their salutes, but the U.S. system required many more shots for their dignitaries. Besides needing to fire off more cannons, this also potentially signified greater honor to the U.S. dignitaries than to those of other nations. Thus, the British proposed a 1 for 1 shot, with 21 being the number, which was accepted by the U.S. on August 18, 1875. The 21-gun salute still represents a significant honor today. In the United States, the 21-gun salute occurs to honor a President, former president, or the head of foreign state. It can also be fired in order to honor the United States Flag. The salute also occurs at noon on the day of the funeral of a President, former President, or President-elect along with on Memorial Day. You may have noticed that there's no mention of the 21-gun salute occurring during military funerals and that's a common misconception. Known as the "3 Volleys," the salute that occurs during soldiers' funerals follows a battlefield tradition where both sides stopped fighting so that they could remove their dead from the field. The series of three shots, or volleys, let the other side know that the dead had been taken care of and that that battle could resume. Therefore the number of volleys is more important than the actual number of shots. Even the United States Army Manuel's section on the Ceremonial Firing Party at a funeral named the number of riflemen as between five and eight, rather than an exact number. If you liked this article, you might also enjoy our new popular podcast, The BrainFood Show (iTunes, Spotify, Google Play Music, Feed), as well as: Bonus Facts: When ships were engaged in battle during the 14th century, the common practice was that the captured or defeated ship needed to expend all of its ammunition in order to make it helpless in the presence of the other ship and signify surrender. A 62-gun salute was fired upon the birth of Prince George of England. The 21-gun salute was increased to 41-guns because the guns were fired from a royal park or residence and an additional 21-guns were added in order to pay respect to the city of London. Expand for References