



A soldier of the Army's 4th Bn, 3rd Inf. Regt., adjusts the uniform of Army Sgt. Erik McGuire before a change of guard ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on May 23 at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. Soldiers of "The Old Guard" spend eight hours on average preparing their uniform for the watch.

FACTS AND RUMORS ABOUT TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER SENTINELS

Listed are some facts about the soldiers who have stood watch at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier:

- Army Sgt. Heather Johnson became the first woman to earn a Tomb Guard badge in 1996. Five other women have earned a badge since.
- A sentinel has stood in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier every minute since 1937 with no exception.
- The small green shack near the monument, called "the box" by sentinels, is used by guards to "retreat to" while flowers and "Taps" are being presented at the Tomb. The box also has a phone line to the Tomb Guard's quarters.

Rumors have been told about sentinels of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier since they began their duty in 1926. Many are true, but some bizarre claims are not. Here is a list of those rumors and the facts, according to the Society of the Honor Guard:

- Members of the guard stand watch 24/7 every day of the year. Tomb sentinels consider it an

honor to guard the tomb during inclement weather, including blizzards, hurricanes and thunderstorms. They do not stand down the watch.

- Guards are changed every 30 minutes from April 1 to Sept. 30 and every hour from Oct. 1 to March 31.
- Sentinels are allowed to drink alcohol during their tour at the Tomb if they are of legal age and not on duty. It is false that they are not allowed to drink during their tour or after for the rest of their lives.
- Tomb guards carry "fully functional" M14 rifles.
- Soldiers must be at least 5-feet-8-inches tall to be a sentinel.
- It has been said that sentinels need to commit two years to guard the Tomb — they don't. In fact, an average tour at the Tomb is 18 months.
- Another false rumor is that Tomb guards are never allowed to curse in public for the rest of their lives. They, indeed, are allowed.