



FORMING SQUADS AND GARRISONS

BACKGROUND

Established in 2007, the Finest is the premier G.I. Joe costume club in the world, with hundreds of members across several continents. The Finest is comprised of costumers who portray various G.I. Joe, Cobra, Dreadnok, and other characters at comic and pop-culture conventions worldwide. Members of the Finest assist local communities and participate in parades, children's events, and charity projects that support military and veteran organizations.



The Finest promotes a strong sense of community among our members and we maintain a standard of high-quality costumes. Our members strive to recreate the uniforms of their favorite characters with as much realistic detail as possible. Members of the Finest can be found each year at a variety of comic and pop culture conventions and other public appearances worldwide.

Continuous growth is essential to the success of the Finest, and to the success of our charity work. The larger impact we make at conventions and other appearances directly correlates to the amount of money our organization can raise for military and veteran charity projects. Therefore, the Command Staff of the Finest encourages all members to actively recruit and help maximize our impact at local, national, and international events. This document will guide members through the steps of forming a Squad or Garrison.

The Finest is comprised of Individual Members, Squads, and Garrisons, as described below.

Individual Members

Individual members are those in the Finest who are not associated with a Squad or Garrison. Individual members typically do not hold seats on the Finest Command Staff. Individual members typically engage in local recruitment efforts with the short-term goal of forming a Squad, and eventually, a Garrison. All individual members in the Finest are encouraged to take initiative toward the formation of a Squad.

Squads

Squads are comprised of four or fewer members and are led by a Squad Leader. The Squad Leader serves as the primary point of contact for the Command Staff. Unlike Garrisons, Squad Leaders do not hold seats on the Finest Command Staff. The primary goal of a Squad is to engage in recruitment efforts and to grow the squad into a Garrison.

Garrisons

Garrisons are comprised of five or more members and include a formalized command structure, including a Commanding Officer (CO) and Executive Officer (XO). Garrisons are typically grouped geographically (e.g., one or more U.S. states). The COs of each garrison hold seats on the Finest Command Staff, and take part in all Command Staff functions such as voting on membership applications and club-wide decision-making.



FORMING A SQUAD

Squads may be formed in any geographic area not currently covered by a Finest Squad or Garrison. To form a squad, an individual member typically takes the initiative to create the Squad name and insignia, and defines the geographic boundaries in which the squad will primarily operate. This information is provided to the Finest Command Staff for discussion and feedback. Once approved, the Finest member typically becomes the *de facto* Squad Leader and is authorized to begin squad activities, such as the production of Finest-approved marketing materials and merchandise (cards, t-shirts, patches, banners, posters, squad social media pages, etc.), and other recruitment efforts. Successful squads grow very quickly, and upon recruitment of the fifth Finest-approved member, officially become a Garrison.



A squad event at a public library in Tennessee.

Things to Consider

- Squad leaders do not need to wait for additional members to apply before approaching the Command Staff with ideas for a squad name and insignia. Many times, new members are drawn toward the formality of a professional squad name and insignia, hence making recruitment efforts significantly easier. As a Squad Leader, prospective members will appreciate the time and effort you have put into the formation of the Squad, and will be more likely to apply.
- Recruitment: Please remember that ALL members must be voted into the Finest through the official application process on our website. As you are recruiting, please remember to direct prospective members to the Field Manuals on the website (if applicable), and ***please make sure the applicant is prepared to send (at minimum) two full body photos (front and back) and a reference picture of the specific version of the character.***
- You do not need to be a professional graphic designer to come up with a insignia for your squad. If you are “graphically-disadvantaged,” submit a rough sketch of your idea to the Command Staff and a designer can help you produce a finished version. Many of our Club’s best designs started as a pencil sketch on a napkin!
- When selecting a name for your Squad, avoid the word “Squad”. Squads typically grow quickly into Garrisons, and do not want your name or merchandise to become obsolete as you grow.

FORMING A GARRISON

Upon recruitment of a fifth member, a Squad officially becomes a Garrison. With assistance from the Finest Command Staff, a vote among squad members is held, and the Garrison’s Commanding Officer (CO) is elected. The CO is added to the Finest Command Staff and takes part in all associated duties. The CO appoints an Executive Officer (XO) to assist in running the Garrison.

The primary goals of a Garrison are to continue growth (for both the Finest as well as the Garrison), and to make as large of an impact at public events as possible. Successful Garrisons should build strong relationships with convention organizers in their areas, and should exhibit at all major events, including conventions, parades, and other appearances. Garrisons should make every effort to maximize the impact of Finest-sponsored charity projects.



Just because your Squad becomes a Garrison doesn't mean the work is done. As your numbers rise, consider requesting additional tables and space at conventions to accommodate full-size props, vehicles, photo backdrops, or "playset" display areas. Set goals for expansion and never stop growing!

CREATING A SQUAD/GARRISON NAME

When creating a name for your Squad or Garrison, consider the state or territory you are representing. Many Squads and Garrisons are named after local features or landmarks, such as the Central Defense (U.S. Midwest area), the 602nd Desert Corps (Arizona), or the 31st Carrier Assault Brigade (North and South Carolina). You may also incorporate a number into the name (numbers are arbitrarily chosen). Your Squad or Garrison may also use a nickname (e.g., Capital Defense Regiment members are known as the "Renegades", although that backstory is classified!).



CREATING A SQUAD/GARRISON INSIGNIA

When creating an insignia for your Squad or Garrison, consider the state, territory, or country you are representing. For example, the insignia for the 13th Civil Defense Mobile Infantry Division symbolizes the Pennsylvania keystone, while the Georgia-based "Southern Command" insignia fittingly incorporates a peach. Consider the types of costumes in your group (all G.I. Joe, all Cobra, or a combination of both). Some Garrisons have "blended" insignias that incorporate G.I. Joe and Cobra imagery, while others have two Garrison insignias (one for each faction).

Also consider what designs and color combinations will translate well to patches and other merchandise. Keep in mind that complex, multi-color insignia designs with fine details will not always translate well into a 3" patch. A simple, bold design is usually the best approach.



As previously mentioned, you don't need to be a graphic designer to come up with an insignia for your Squad. Submit a rough sketch of your idea and the Command Staff will help you produce a finished version.

CHECKLIST

- Develop ideas for a Squad name
- Develop ideas for a Squad insignia
- Define your geographic area
- Submit Squad ideas and designs to the Finest Command Staff for discussion and feedback
- Upon Command Staff approval, produce marketing materials and merchandise (T-shirts, business cards, patches, banners, posters, etc.)
- Create two Facebook Pages for the Squad (use other social media as needed):
 - o Public Page (an "open" page for advertising to the general public)
 - o Members Only Page (private page for members to discuss Squad topics and events)
- Develop relationships with convention and event organizers in your area, and regularly attend and exhibit at those events
- Recruit additional members
- Grow your squad into a Garrison (upon recruitment of a fifth member)
- Hold elections for the position of Garrison Commanding Officer (CO)
- The CO chooses the Garrison Executive Officer (XO)
- Grow your Garrison until you outgrow a single table or booth at conventions
- Request additional tables and space at conventions to accommodate full-size props or vehicles, photo backdrops, and "playset" display areas



SQUAD/GARRISON INSIGNIA EXAMPLES



IL, IN, OH, MI



NY, NJ, PA



NC, SC



KS, MO



**DC, DE, MD,
VA, WV**



GA



FL



AZ



IRELAND/UK



UTAH



TN