

## What to Expect During Military Funeral Honors

Military Funeral Honors are intended to express deep gratitude for those who have served and protected our nation.

Typically, your request for Military Honors will be submitted by the funeral home in charge of the care of your loved one.



Appropriate documentation, including the DD-214 – Government issued Discharge Document (or its equivalent) – must be submitted and arrangements made within 48 hours of the anticipated date of interment as they will need the time to organize the resources for a military funeral honors detail.

If the burial is being arranged by the family, the request will need to be submitted to one of the local military organizations such as your local VFW or American Legion.

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### The Military Honors ceremony:

By law, military units are required to provide, at a minimum, a two-person uniformed detail to present the core elements of a funeral honors ceremony.

A United States flag is provided, at no cost, to drape the casket or accompany the urn of a deceased Veteran who served honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces. It is furnished to honor the memory of a Veteran's military service to his or her country. The VA will furnish a burial flag for memorialization for each other than dishonorable discharged. You may apply for the flag by completing an *Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes on the VA Website* and you may get a flag at any U.S. Post Office or VA regional office. Generally, the funeral director will help you obtain the flag.

- **American Flag Placement** - The flag is draped on a closed casket so that the union blue field is at the head and over the left shoulder of the deceased. When an urn is used, the flag is already in a military fold. The lead body bearer carries the folded flag to the right of the urn. Once the urn comes to rest, the body bearers unfold the flag and hold it at the pall over the cremated remains. The remainder of the ceremony is conducted in the same manner as casketed remains.
- **The Rifle Salute** – (following Chaplain remarks.) The Military funeral honors may include the firing of three rifle volleys over the grave during interment. The firing of three volleys over the grave of a fallen warrior has its origin in the custom of halting the fighting to remove the deceased from the battlefield. A firing party of seven service members traditionally fires the volleys. The fact that a firing party might consist of seven service members firing three volleys does **not** constitute a 21-gun salute. Anyone who is entitled to a military funeral (generally anyone who dies on active duty, honorably discharged veterans and military retirees) are entitled to the three rifle volleys, subject to availability of honor guard teams.

- **The Playing of Taps** - The National Defense Authorization Act of 2000 directed the playing of Taps at veterans' military funerals. Although a live bugler is preferred, a ceremonial bugle or a high-quality recording on a stereo player may be used. (A ceremonial bugle is an electronic device that fits directly inside the bell portion of a bugle and contains a recording of Taps.)
- **Flag Presentation Protocol** - The U.S. flag honors the memory of a service member or veteran's service to our country. The ceremonial folding and presentation of the flag is a tribute of lasting importance to our service members, veterans, and their families.
  - After Taps is played, the flag is carefully folded into the symbolic tricorn shape. A properly proportioned flag will fold 13 times on the triangles, representing the 13 original colonies. The folded flag is emblematic of the tricorn hat worn by the patriots of the American Revolution. When folded, no red or white stripe is to be evident, leaving only the blue field with stars.
  - If a Rifle Salute is performed, typically three fired cartridges are placed into the folded flag prior to presentation to the next of kin; the cartridges signify "**duty, honor, and sacrifice.**"
  - A uniformed representative from the veteran's service will present the flag as a keepsake to the next of kin or a close friend or associate of the deceased veteran if there is no next of kin.
  - The following words, mandated by the DOD, are to be used when presenting the American flag during the funeral service:
    - **“On behalf of the president of the United States, (the United States Army; the United States Marine Corps; the United States Navy; the United States Air Force or the United States Coast Guard), and a grateful nation, please accept this flag as a symbol of our appreciation for your loved one's honorable and faithful service.”**
  - The ceremony ends with final remarks from the Chaplain.

**These details of military funeral honors are intended to honor the service member or veteran's commitment and sacrifice to their country and provide comfort and gratitude to their families. Questions? Visit the Department of Veterans Affairs website or Call Military OneSource at 800-342-9647.**