

Military Funeral Services

Military Funeral Honors for a current or former member of the United States Military is a long-standing tradition. Since the War of 1812, special ceremonies have been performed at the graveside of military burials to honor their dedication and sacrifice to our country. In the modern day, the military is legally required to offer a two-uniformed person detail to any active duty member or veteran to perform the free services that are associated with a military service. To request military honor services, you can either reach out to a funeral director to make the arrangements, or contact a funeral honors coordinator through the Military Funeral Honors Directory at <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/resources/tools/military-funeral-honors-directory/>. It is suggested that the person responsible for managing the funeral arrangements submit the required documentation as soon as possible to ensure the arrangements are made within the funeral timeline.

The standard funerary services provided by the military are 1) the playing of Taps and 2) the presentation and subsequent folding of the flag. The flag, which is provided by the military, honors the memory of a person's service to their country. The flag will be draped over the casket with the blue corner laid over the left shoulder and head of the deceased. If the deceased was cremated, the flag will already be folded as the urn is carried into the service. The flag will then be unfolded and held over the urn.

At this time, Taps will be played as a sentiment of grief and mourning for the loss. If possible, Taps should be played as a live performance, but a high quality recording with a good speaker is an acceptable substitute.

After Taps is played, the flag will be folded in the traditional fashion. The flag is folded thirteen times to represent the original thirteen colonies. Once folded, only the blue field of the flag will be visible. The flag is then presented to the deceased's next of kin with the words:

"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."

Other military honors that may or may not be performed include a twenty-one gun salute, three volley rifles over the grave, military flyovers, and burials at sea for Navy and Coast Guard veterans.

A twenty-one gun salute is reserved as the highest military funeral honor. It is only done for current and former presidents, heads of state, and royalty. The three volley rifles over the grave tradition dates back to early American war times. Every so often, both sides would cease their fighting and allow each other an opportunity to clear their dead from the battlefield. When both sides were finished caring for their dead, riflemen would fire three shots to signal that the fighting could resume. It is seen as a sign of respect and care for those who died serving their country. A military flyover or burial at sea is not a part of the standard military honors, but can be arranged on a case-by-case basis through requests made to the Veterans Association.

Other military funeral etiquette includes veterans and active duty members dressing in their uniforms and everyone standing for the duration of the service. When specific rituals are being performed such as Taps or the flag folding, military members should salute. Civilians who are non-military affiliates should not salute, but should remove any hats and place their right hand over their hearts.

Other resources for Military Honors Services and Military Funerals:

- <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/military-funeral-honors/info-for-families/what-to-expect-during-military-funeral-honors/>
- <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/resources/tools/military-funeral-honors-directory/>
- <https://www.193sow.af.mil/News/Commentaries/Display/Article/439307/do-you-know-proper-military-funeral-etiquette/>
- <https://www.mountainviewtacoma.com/resources/military-funeral-traditions>
- <https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/what-to-expect-at-military-funeral/>