

Oct. 13, 2021, 11:43 a.m. | 7 minute read | 95,492 views

What to Expect During Military Funeral Honors

From the folding of the flag to the sounding of Taps, here is a guide to what you can expect during [military funeral honors](#).

The Military Funeral Honors Program includes traditions, within the funeral honors, intended to express [deep gratitude for those who have served our nation](#).

To receive military funeral honors, you must:

- Submit your request with the appropriate documentation as soon as possible. The military services need the time to organize the resources for a military funeral honors detail.
- Request military funeral honors through the eligible veteran's funeral director/planner or [funeral honors coordinator](#).

The sounding of Taps, folding of the flag and more

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. This includes the playing of Taps and [the folding and presentation of the U.S. flag](#). A uniformed representative from the veteran's service will present the flag.

Taps and the ceremonial bugle: The version of Taps we know today was officially recognized by the U.S. Army in 1874. Beginning in 1891, the playing of Taps became standard at military funeral ceremonies and was legislated in 2013 as the "National Song of Military Remembrance." The National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal 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 and flag folding: 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.

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.

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.

It is then presented 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 flag presentation protocol is as follows:

- Stand facing the flag recipient and hold the folded flag waist high with the straight edge facing the recipient.
- Lean toward the flag recipient and solemnly present them with the flag.

Effective April 17, 2012, the Department of Defense standardized the flag presentation language for military funeral honors ceremonies. 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."

Burial flag: To receive a burial flag, complete a [VA Form 27-2008, "Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes,"](#) and take it to your funeral director, any Veterans Affairs regional office or a post office. (Call ahead to make sure your local post office has burial flags.)

- Burial flags are provided at no cost.
- The flag will be presented to the veteran's next of kin. If no claim is made for the flag by the next of kin, it may be given, upon request, to a close friend or associate of the deceased veteran.
- Additional information can be obtained from the [VA's website](#).

Additional funeral honors elements: Depending on available resources and personnel, other elements may be added to the minimum two-person uniformed detail. These elements may include a rifle volley, color guard, pallbearers, a caisson and a military flyover. Trained

volunteers through the Authorized Provider Partnership Program and veteran services organizations may augment the two-person service detail as members of the firing party or color guard. They can also serve as pallbearers and assist in other elements of the process.

- **Military flyovers:** Military flyovers are not part of the mandated funeral honors ceremony as required by Title 10, Section 1491 United States Code, but can be arranged if supporting personnel and aircraft are available. It should be noted that requests for a [military flyover](#) are just requests. Approval must go through an administrative process within each military service. Approval is based on many factors, including the eligibility of the deceased, the availability of personnel and aircraft, the location of the funeral service, the time and date of the funeral and weather conditions.
- **Burial at sea:** Burial at sea is a means of final disposition of cremated or casketed remains that is performed on U.S. Navy and Coast Guard vessels. The Coast Guard will not normally provide burial at sea for casketed remains. Family members are not routinely authorized to be present, especially for the Navy, as the committal service is performed while the ship is deployed. The commanding officer of the ship assigned to perform the ceremony will notify the family of the date, time and longitude and latitude once the committal service has been completed. For additional information concerning eligibility and procedures, refer to [Navy Personnel Command](#) or [the Coast Guard](#).

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? You can ask your [military funeral honors coordinator](#) or call Military OneSource at 800-342-9647. OCONUS/International? [Click here for calling options](#).