



Department of Defense

Report to Congress

on

Military Funeral Honors for Veterans

*As Required by
Section 567 of the Strom Thurmond
National Defense Authorization Act for
Fiscal Year 1999*

MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS FOR VETERANS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is our national obligation to demonstrate the country's gratitude to those who, in times of war and peace, have faithfully defended our country. In that vein, Section 567 of the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999 (Public Law 105-261) directs the Secretary of Defense to submit a report on a number of issues associated with the provision of military funeral honors for veterans. The following is a summary of the Department of Defense report.

Background

Section 567 of the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999 (Act) directs specific actions to address the growing national concern about the availability of military funeral honors for America's veterans. These actions include a requirement for a conference, convened by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs with participation from Veterans Service Organizations, to determine means of improving and increasing the availability of military funeral honors for veterans. For the purposes of this report, the Congressionally-directed conference will be referred to as the Roundtable. The Act also includes a requirement for the Department of Defense to provide an honor guard detail of not less than three persons and have the capability to play a recorded or live version of Taps for the funeral of any veteran that occurs after December 31, 1999. The Act does not require that these three individuals be uniformed military personnel. (The complete text of section 567 of the Act is found at Appendix 1 to this report.)

The Conference Report accompanying the Act (Appendix 2) indicated that the intent of the conferees was that the requirement to provide a three-person funeral honor detail, upon request, would be effective only if the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs did not recommend an acceptable alternative.

The Executive Roundtable

The Roundtable process began with extensive conversations with Veterans and Military Service Organizations and with DoD participation in several of their annual conventions. Focus groups were also held with their memberships to discuss their concerns. Additionally, the Department began gathering data on actual requests for funeral honors and the support provided.

As required, the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs held a conference, subsequently entitled the Military Funeral Honors Executive Roundtable, on November 17, 1998. It was attended by over 100 representatives, which included senior officials from the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, Veterans and Military Service organizations, the leadership of two major funeral directors associations, and congressional staff. The Roundtable participants reviewed: current policies and practices; trends in veteran deaths

and in military force structure; potential demand for funeral honors; alternative methods for providing funeral honors; costs associated with various approaches; and communication concerns. Discussion focused on the following:

- *The importance of this mission.*
- *The need to communicate the military funeral honors benefit more clearly.*
- *The need to ensure quality control and establish standards for the delivery of funeral honors.*
- *The need to consider a joint and combined approach to meet increasing demands.*
- *And the need to balance this mission with readiness.*

Review of Current Policies and Practices

Department of Defense. Currently, DoD Directive 1300.15, “Military Funeral Support” of September 30, 1985, directs the Military Departments to provide “appropriate tribute within the constraints of available resources.” This Directive specifies different levels of support for 1) members on active duty and Medal of Honor recipients; 2) retirees; and 3) veterans and National Guard/Reservists not on active duty. The levels of support indicate minimum requirements, but are subject to the availability of resources. The Military Departments have developed policies and operating procedures to implement the Departmental policy.

Department of Veterans Affairs. The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) within the Department of Veterans Affairs does not provide funeral honors. The Department of Veterans Affairs provides an American flag to drape the casket of a deceased veteran or eligible reservist.

Trends in Veterans’ Deaths and Military Force Structure

Recent and projected increases in the deaths of veterans have made it difficult for the Military Services to meet requests for funeral honors. Deaths of veterans are projected to increase from 537,000 in 1997 to 620,000 by the year 2008. The difficulty in meeting requests is compounded by the fact that the active duty strength of the active forces has been reduced by 33% since 1989, and the strength of the Selected Reserve by 25% for the same period. Deployments, overseas assignments, and training requirements, further limit availability of the current active force to perform military funeral honors.

Potential Demand for Military Funeral Honors

Based upon several data points, including the number of cemetery headstones provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs, requests for military funeral honors in national cemeteries, and an independent survey conducted by the National Funeral Directors' Association, it is anticipated that about 45% of the families of eligible veterans will request funeral honors under the policies that we propose in this report.

New Strategies and Alternative Methods for Providing Military Funeral Honors

It has been determined from the extensive data collected from the veterans organizations and requests for funeral honors made to the Military Services that the most important component of military funeral honors is the folding and presentation of the flag. The second most important component is the playing of Taps. Further data gathered indicates that having the deceased's parent Service provide funeral honors is preferred, but not essential. Veterans and Military Service Organizations do, however, express a preference for having a member of the deceased's parent Service present the flag. The Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) also indicate a strong preference for a uniformed presence. Using the above information as a framework, the Roundtable participants considered the following as alternative methods and strategies:

Expanded Participation of the Reserve Forces. National Guard and Reserve personnel currently perform funeral honors as resources and time allow and provide support primarily in a volunteer status; however, current funding and legislation inhibits increased activity. Funding and other incentives need to be explored to increase reserve force participation.

Joint and Combined Honor Guards. Veterans and Military Service Organizations agree with using joint Service honor guard teams and have also expressed interest in combined honor guard teams using military personnel and VSO members.

ROTC Participation. The Veterans and Military Service Organizations do not object to the use of the ROTC for veterans' funerals and ROTC units have been used for this purpose. There are concerns, however, about the use of JROTC because of the ages of the members.

Resources Outside DoD Available for Providing Military Funeral Honors for Veterans

Veterans Service Organizations. Performance of military funeral honors for veterans by VSO Honor Units is a widespread practice. However, VSO honor details face some of the same issues as DoD honor details - limitations on manpower, insufficient notification time, multiple taskings and distances to funerals.

Section 567 of the NDAA for FY99 provided authority to the Department to pay expenses for individuals who participate in honor guard details, as long as they are not employed by the federal government. Veterans Service Organizations could train with the military in delivering honors and reimbursement could be predicated on receiving training. The VSOs also recommended that DoD pursue some kind of formal recognition for participating members and provide easier access to military clothing sales stores to obtain proper military uniforms and insignia.

Analysis of Costs Associated with Providing Military Funeral Honors

The Roundtable participants reviewed the costs associated with various degrees of support in terms of military man-years and dollar costs. The estimated cost of providing honors to 45% of the veterans' funerals expected in 1999 ranged from 1,196 man-years and \$74 million for a single-person (E-7) detail to 3,588 man-years and \$192 million for a three-person detail.

The Department of Defense Plan

Subsequent to the Roundtable, senior leaders of the Department of Defense met to review the issue and develop a proposed DoD solution which would provide appropriate honors for veterans and be supportable within DoD resources. Consensus within DoD was that even though the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1999 does not require a uniformed presence to provide funeral honors or that the deceased veteran's parent Service be present, these elements should be a part of a military funeral honors ceremony. After consultation with representatives of the Veterans and Military Service Organizations, the Department proposes to institute a military funeral honors policy as follows:

Proposed Departmental Policy on Military Funeral Honors

The following is an outline of proposed DoD policy regarding military funeral honors for veterans. The policy would not cover honors at Arlington National Cemetery which are governed by specific legislation.

Eligible Beneficiaries for Military Funeral Honors. Active duty members, retirees, veterans (as defined by title 38, United States Code, section 101(2) including 38 Code of Federal Regulations, section 3.7), and members and former members of the Selected Reserve. Eligibility of members and former members of the Selected Reserves will be determined using the burial flag eligibility criteria in section 2301 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 517 of the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999.

Definition. The rendering of military funeral honors is the ceremonial paying of respect and the final demonstration of the country's gratitude to those who, in times of war and peace, have faithfully defended our Nation.

Policy.

(1) Upon request of the family of an eligible beneficiary, the Military Services will render at least the following mandatory minimum military funeral honors.

(2) Mandatory minimum funeral honors for all eligible veterans will consist of the ceremonial folding and presentation of the American flag and the playing of Taps. This requires a minimum of two persons who shall be uniformed military personnel or other authorized providers of funeral honors. At least one uniformed military representative of the deceased's parent Service will participate in this ceremony and will present the flag to the appropriate family member or representative. Other authorized providers may participate in meeting this minimum requirement. The Services may provide additional elements of honors and other authorized providers may augment the Service Honors Team for this purpose. In fulfilling this mission, both active and reserve forces may be used.

Procedure.

(1) **Standardization and Quality Control.** The Military Services will ensure proper decorum for funeral honors including: appropriately trained personnel and proper equipment; standardized honors procedures; and regular quality control of funeral details.

(2) **Taps.** A bugler is preferred, either military or civilian (contracted or voluntary). There will be an active search for a bugler; if none are available, a quality recording may be authorized by the individual in charge of honor guard details. Both buglers and sound systems should be out of sight of the funeral party.

(3) **Other Authorized Providers.** The Military Services, at the local level, may establish on-going liaison and formal agreements with other authorized providers to participate in the provision of funeral honors. The Military Services will make training available to authorized providers according to a set of established standards for military funeral honors protocol. In addition, upon completion of their training, the Military Services may reimburse these providers for their reasonable expenses, provide honor guard equipment, and provide access to military clothing sales stores.

(4) **Coordination of Requests.** The caller/requestor will need to make one call to request honors. The provider or coordinator who receives the request shall assume the full responsibility for coordination until the request is honored. The coordinator may partner with the other Military Services, Reserve Forces and other authorized providers to form the funeral honor guard.

(5) **Information/Communication.** The Department of Defense, through the Department of the Air Force as Executive Agent, shall establish and maintain information systems for access by funeral directors, veterans, and families for the purpose of assisting them in obtaining funeral honors and registering those groups authorized to provide honors. This will include a Web Site as well as an information kit to be distributed to all funeral directors. There shall be national and local liaison with appropriate groups and organizations to inform and update them on funeral honors policy and procedures.

(6) **Information Requirements.** The Military Services will collect standardized data on all military funeral honors rendered including those provided by authorized providers when the honors were coordinated through the Military Services. The Military Services will provide an annual impact report to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management Policy) to measure any effect on readiness.

Costs

The costs of a one-person detail (presuming supplement by an authorized provider) and two-person detail (presuming a military only team), the minimum that would be required under the DoD proposal, to conduct the military funeral honors ceremony are shown as follows. The costs are listed with total dollar costs on top and man-year requirements below them. These costs are based upon providing honors with a request rate estimated at 20% of all deaths in 2000, with 5% increases per year until 2005 (representing a 45% request rate).

- The costs for a two-person detail (1 O-3 and 1 E-4) for a six-year period are:

<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
\$75M	\$98M	\$123M	\$149M	\$177M	\$207M
1211	1537	1875	2218	2563	2908

- The costs for one member of the parent Service (1 E-7) for a six-year period are:

<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
\$39M	\$51M	\$65M	\$79M	\$95M	\$111M
606	769	938	1109	1282	1454

Recommendations for Appropriate Legislative Changes

The Department has considered two legislative initiatives that we believe will more adequately support the participation of National Guard and Reserve personnel. These initiatives would provide for: 1) performance of funeral honors and training for the performance of such honors to be considered drills or training in addition to that otherwise required, for which Reserve component personnel may receive both pay and retirement points; 2) retirement points received during such drill or training to be exempt from the 75 point annual cap; and 3) Reserve component personnel authorized to serve on active duty for more than 180 days during any fiscal year to provide military funeral honors without counting against the active duty end strength of their Service.

In addition, the Department believes that legislation is required to provide for workers compensation and liability insurance for non-DoD authorized providers of military funeral honors.

Conclusion

Based upon our extensive and collaborative examination of the veterans' funeral honors issue, the Department of Defense plan is based upon two key principles. First, the plan would clarify expectations by defining the military funeral honors benefit, improving information access and facilitating the coordination of requests. Second, the proposed plan would ensure a military presence as part of a prescribed and dignified military funeral honors ceremony. The shared goal of the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Veterans and Military Service Organizations is to appropriately honor veterans for their service to the Nation. The Department of Defense believes that the plan set out in this report accomplishes that goal.

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INTRODUCTION

“There is a dignity that . . . needs to be present for the family of the departed military member when the honors are rendered.”

Honorable Rudy de Leon
Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness)
November 17, 1998

It is our national obligation to demonstrate the country’s gratitude to those who, in times of war and peace, have faithfully defended our country. The rendering of military funeral honors for our Nation’s veterans is our final tribute to those who have made personal sacrifices in defense of our Nation.

This report is a summary of a year-long effort focused on improving and enhancing military funeral honors for veterans. As directed by section 567 of the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999 (NDAA for FY 99), this report summarizes those areas that Congress directed the Department of Defense to examine associated with the provision of military funeral honors for veterans. For the purposes of this report, the congressionally-directed conference will be referred to as the Roundtable.

This report is outlined as follows. First, the report provides background that includes the importance and history of military funeral honors, pertinent legislation, definition of the issues, and the preparations and execution of the Roundtable. Second, the report addresses those areas that the NDAA for FY99 specifically directed be considered at the Roundtable as well as proposed DoD policy changes and recommendations for legislative changes. The report is organized as follows:

- A. Background
- B. Review of current policies and practices
- C. Consideration of alternative methods for providing military funeral honors
- D. Determination of resources outside of the DoD that could be used to provide funeral honors
- E. Analysis of the costs associated with providing honors
- F. Identification of means of improving funeral honors
- G. Proposed Departmental Policy on military funeral honors
- H. Estimated Costs for Proposed Department of Defense Funeral Honors Plan
- I. Recommendations for appropriate legislative changes
- J. Conclusion

I. A. BACKGROUND

1. Importance of Military Funeral Honors

The provision of funeral honors to veterans is a long-standing tradition within the Department of Defense and Veterans Service Organizations. Department of Defense Directive 1300.15, Military Funeral Support, provides that "The Department of Defense recognizes the importance of paying final tribute on behalf of a grateful nation to honor comrades in arms." Veterans Service Organizations also have a long-standing tradition of rendering honors for fallen comrades. Public Law authorizing the Department of Defense to supply ceremonial weapons and ammunition to Veterans Service Organizations for funeral honors dates to 1920.

The sacrifices and contributions of our Nation's veterans deserve an appropriate level of recognition. For many veterans and their families, military honors at a veteran's funeral are a very important final tribute for those who have served the Nation. The presentation of the flag often provides an important sense of closure to the surviving family members. Over the past decades, the Department of Defense (DoD) and Veterans and Military Service Organizations have provided these traditional honors. The provision of funeral honors will continue to be very important to many veterans and their families. Due to the decreasing size of the military and the increase in veteran deaths as well as the accelerated tempo of military operations, the continued ability to perform these honors is a challenge facing both DoD and Veterans Service Organizations.

2. History

The American tradition of rendering military funeral honors has evolved over time by incorporating historical elements. According to historians at Arlington National Cemetery, Military District of Washington, the funeral honors protocol of today can trace its roots to ancient foreign militaries and historical American military experiences. Formal burial of the military dead goes back to the ancient Greeks. The Greek warriors who fell at Marathon in 490 BC were buried on the battlefield. The funeral oration given by Pericles at this funeral was the model that President Lincoln used for his Gettysburg Address.

Today's customary firing of three volleys over a grave of a fallen warrior originated as far back as the Roman Empire. The Roman funeral rites of casting dirt three times on the coffin constituted the "burial." It was customary among the Romans to call the dead three times by name, which ended the funeral ceremony, after which the friends and relatives of the deceased pronounced the "vale" (farewell) three times as they departed from the tomb. In more recent history, three musket volleys were fired to announce that the burying of the dead was completed and the burial party was again ready for battle.

In the early days of our own Country, Army commanders buried their dead, when possible, in cemetery plots within the confines of the post. In some instances, this meant transferring them from temporary burials on the battlefield to the post cemetery some time later. In 1861, Army General Order #75 ordered the Quartermaster General to provide a registered headboard to be secured at the head of each soldier's grave. In 1862, President Lincoln signed

the Omnibus Act that established national cemeteries for soldiers who die in the service of the country.

The music we now use for Taps dates back to General Daniel Butterfield of the Army of the Potomac who did not like the traditional French "lights out." He, together with the brigade bugler, composed the music we now know as Taps. Taps was first used in connection with military funerals during the Civil War. During the Peninsular Campaign in 1862, the A Battery of the Third Artillery was in an advanced position when it had to bury one of its soldiers. Due to the proximity of the enemy it was unsafe to fire the customary three volleys over the grave. The captain of the battery decided that the sounding of Taps would be an appropriate substitute. This custom was adopted throughout the Army of the Potomac and became integral to the military funeral ritual. In 1918, the U.S. Army began the practice of placing a flag over the coffin and, following the funeral service, presenting the flag to the next of kin.

3. Legislation

a. Public Law Prior to the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999 (NDAA for FY 99) - Public Law prior to the FY99 NDAA contains the authority to provide certain components of military funeral honors. Section 1482 of title 10 authorizes the Secretaries of the Military Services to "pay for the necessary expenses of. . . Presentation of a flag of the United States to the person designated to direct disposition of remains. . ." of active duty members and eligible reservists.

Section 2301 of title 38 requires that "The Secretary [of Veteran Affairs] shall furnish a flag to drape the casket of each deceased veteran. . ." (includes retirees). "After the burial. . . the flag. . . shall be given to the veteran's next of kin . . . The Secretary shall furnish a flag to the next of kin (of those who were on active duty) after May 27, 1941."

Section 114 of title 32 provides that "Performance of honor guard functions by the members of the National Guard at funerals for veterans. . . may be treated. . . as a Federal function for which appropriated funds may be used. . . May not be considered to be a period of drill or training otherwise required. . . Any expense. . . shall be paid from appropriations otherwise available for the National Guard."

Prior to the NDAA for FY 99, the Federal statutes authorized the furnishing and presentation of a flag to families of deceased members and former members. Congress recognized the contribution of the National Guard in providing funeral honors support by the enactment of section 114 of title 32, United States Code, which authorized members of the National Guard to perform funeral honors as a Federal function. However, that legislation did not appropriate funds for this mission. Prior to the passage of the NDAA for FY 99, the law did not contain a requirement that military funeral honors be rendered.

b. Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999 - Section 567 of the NDAA for FY 99 directed the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to perform specific actions related to military funeral honors. Key provisions of section 567 are as follows:

- By December 31, 1998, the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs shall hold a conference to determine means of improving and increasing availability of military funeral honors for veterans. Veterans Service Organizations will participate.
- The conference shall: review current policies and practices; consider alternative methods of providing military funeral honors; determine what resources that may be available outside of DoD for this function; analyze costs for personnel and other resource requirements associated with providing military funeral honors for veterans; assess trends in the rate of death of veterans; and propose, consider and determine means of improving and increasing the availability of military funeral honors for veterans.
- The Secretary of Defense shall provide a report on the conference to Congress not later than March 31, 1999. The report shall set forth any modifications to DoD policy adopted as a result of the conference and shall include recommended changes in legislation.
- DoD shall, upon request, provide an honor guard detail for the funeral of any veteran that occurs after December 31, 1999. The detail shall consist of not less than three persons and, if a bugler is not one of the three in the detail, include the capability to play a recorded version of Taps. The composition of the detail does not have to be military personnel. The detail may consist of members of Veterans Service Organizations or other organizations approved by the Secretary of Defense. Authority is granted to provide certain support for those non-DoD personnel who provide military funeral honors. DoD shall provide annual reports to Congress from 2001 to 2005 on the experience of the Department with regard to this legislation, to include specific information about resources and costs.
- DoD shall develop policy regarding selection of units to provide military funeral honors. The Service in which a veteran served shall not be a factor when selecting the unit or organization.
- The performance of military funeral honors by Reservists may not be counted as a period of drill or training otherwise required.
- Restrictions on use of appropriations for the National Guard to perform honor guard functions are removed.

Language at page 666 of the Conference Report accompanying H. R. 3616 (the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999) provides that the intent of the legislation is to require a three-person detail, upon request, for funerals occurring after December 31, 1999, only if the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs do not recommend an acceptable alternative proposal.

4. Defining the Issue

Those who have faithfully defended the Nation deserve appropriate recognition. Historically, the tradition of rendering military funeral honors at a veteran's burial has been the principal way to demonstrate to the veterans' families the appreciation of a grateful Nation.

The annual number of veterans' deaths is increasing and will continue to increase until 2008. Many of the millions of veterans who served during World War II and the Korean War are in their final years. On average, approximately 1500 veterans die each day. This is expected to reach 1700 in 2008 when the veteran death rate is projected to peak. At the same time, over the last ten years, the Department of Defense has made significant reductions in its military personnel end-strength. The inverse convergence of the increase in veterans' deaths and the downsizing of the force, combined with higher operational tempo (OPTEMPO), have made it difficult for DoD to respond to the demand for military funeral honors.

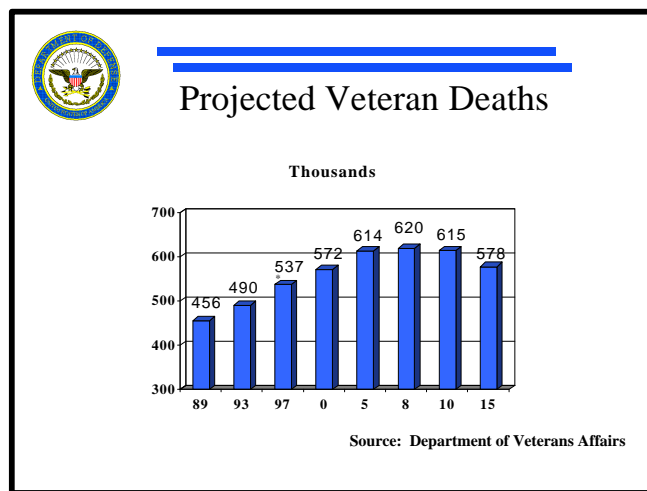
Departmental policy issued in 1985 directs the Military Services to provide military funeral honors "if resources are available." In many instances, the resources were not available to accommodate all requests. Many veterans' families and Veterans Service Organizations had come to expect this tradition at the time of a veteran's death. A growing perception that the demand for funeral honors is not being met under current Departmental policy prompted the Department to comprehensively examine the issue and search for alternatives to expand the availability of military funeral honors for veterans. The Military Funeral Honors Executive Roundtable was an important milestone in this policy examination.

5. Trends in the Death of Veterans

The annual number of deaths of veterans is increasing. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, in 1989 there were approximately 456,000 veteran deaths. By 1997, the number rose to 537,000, an 18% increase.

The veteran population is aging. One quarter of the total veteran population of almost 26 million is over 65 years of age. The annual number of deaths is expected to continue to rise through 2008 when the number is projected to be 620,000. This will be a 36% increase from 1989 to 2008, or 164,000 more deaths per year. The graph to the right illustrates projected deaths through the year 2015.

Providing military funeral honors for veterans poses challenges since the military has downsized its force over the last decade. Since 1989, the active duty military force has decreased 33% from 2.1 million to 1.4 million. In addition, during this same time frame, the Reserve forces have decreased 25% from

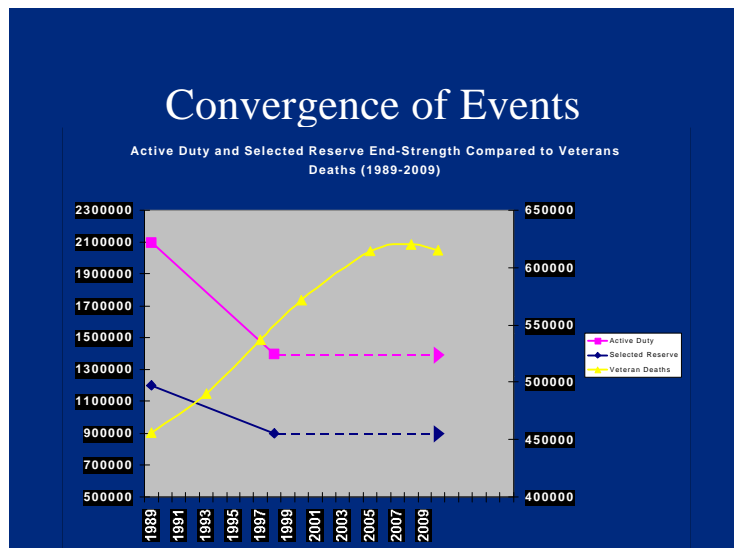


1.2 million to 900,000. The graph below illustrates Active Duty and Selected Reserve end-strength compared to Veteran and Retiree Deaths.

Of the 1.4 million active duty personnel:

- More than 300,000 are stationed or deployed outside the United States at any given time.
- Over 200,000 are not available for regular duty due to such circumstances as participation in formal training, travel to new duty locations, and hospitalization.

This means that over 500,000 active duty members are not available to be called upon for military funeral honors support.



6. Military Funeral Honors Executive Roundtable

a. Pre-Roundtable Preparations

The Department of Defense (DoD), in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Veteran and Military Service Organizations launched an intensive process, which entailed working groups, meetings with stakeholders, cross-country travel to Veterans Service Organization (VSO) conventions, polling of VSO membership and internal DoD funeral honor data collection. The National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) assisted in the effort to identify actual and proposed demand of those veterans and families who would desire funeral honors. This data point was critical for DoD to develop a logical and fiscally sound plan to address the increasing demand for military funeral honors.

(1) Joint DoD/VA Working Group - DoD formed a joint Military Service and VA funeral honors working group in 1997. This group was tasked with evaluating the military funeral honors situation. DoD initiated an effort in 1998 to collect pertinent information from the Military Services. Until this time, the Military Services did not have a standard or uniform data collection process to capture the number of funeral honors provided or any other funeral honors-related information.

(2) DoD/VA/VSO Meetings - On May 18, 1998, the VA, in conjunction with DoD, hosted a briefing with officials from nineteen Veterans and Military Services Organizations to

discuss this issue. At the meeting, a common commitment emerged to the development of the information required to effect sound solutions to the problem. A day-long working session was held on September 18, 1998, with the organizations to discuss a wide range of funeral honors issues. The participants were invited to submit information and issue papers for inclusion into the Executive Roundtable issue books.

Information generated from the September 18, 1998 working session was summarized and incorporated into the issue papers and points of discussion for the November 17, 1998 Executive Roundtable. A final pre-Roundtable meeting was held on October 29, 1998, with the Veterans and Military Service Organizations in order to review the issues, clarify any outstanding issues, and provide an opportunity for any further veteran input prior to the Roundtable.

(3) Veterans Service Organizations Conventions - During the summer and fall of 1998, DoD and VA representatives visited five VSO conventions at their request to discuss funeral honors support and receive feedback from their members and leadership. These organizations were: 1. The American Legion, 2. Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), 3. American Veterans of WWII, Korea, and Vietnam (AMVETS), 4. The American Ex-POW Association, and 5. the National Order of Battlefield Commissions. DoD representatives also visited the State VA Directors convention and the Air Force Retiree Council to discuss this issue and gain feedback. At these meetings, DoD and the VA representatives briefed the VSO members, held focus groups, and gathered information on the preferences of the veterans.

(4) Veterans Service Organizations Membership Polling – Concomitant with the visits to the conventions, DoD provided the organizations a list of suggested questions for membership feedback on the issue. The purpose of this was to identify the views of veterans from around the country. Six organizations provided feedback via this mechanism. The results of this input were incorporated into the issue papers and discussion at the November 17th Roundtable.

(5) DoD Data Collection - DoD initiated extensive data collection from the Military Services on June 1, 1998. This data gathering consisted of a questionnaire about specific details of every funeral request and responsive actions taken. Information from over 9800 funerals was collected.

b. Military Funeral Honors Executive Roundtable

The Executive Roundtable was held on November 17, 1998, at the National Guard Association Building on Massachusetts Avenue in Washington, DC from 8:00 a.m. until noon. There were over 100 attendees at the Roundtable including senior officials from the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, eighteen senior officials from Veterans and Military Service Organizations and the leadership of two national funeral directors associations. The following is a list of the veterans, military and funeral directors associations which participated in the Roundtable:

- American Ex-Prisoners of War
- American Legion

- American Veterans (AMVETS)
- Blinded Veterans Association
- Fleet Reserve Association
- Gold Star Wives
- Korean War Veterans
- National Funeral Directors Association
- National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association
- Marine Corps League
- Military Chaplains Association
- National Order of Battlefield Commissions
- Non Commissioned Officers Association
- Paralyzed Veterans of American
- U.S. Army Warrant Officers Association
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- The Retired Enlisted Association
- The Retired Officers Association

Also in attendance were congressional staff, media and staff of the principal Roundtable participants.

B. REVIEW OF CURRENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The following is a summary of DoD and Military Service funeral honor policies.

1. Current DoD Policy

Current DoD policy (set forth in DoD Directive 1300.15) was established in 1985. DoD Directive 1300.15 recognizes the importance of paying final tribute on behalf of a grateful Nation. It directs the Military Departments to provide appropriate tribute within constraints of available resources. If resources are available, funeral honors, at a minimum, will consist of the following:

- Active duty, member of Reserve component on active duty, Medal of Honor recipient - traditional honors, consisting of pall bearers, firing party, bugler and chaplain;
- Retirees - traditional honors or a single military representative to attend the funeral and present the U.S. Flag;
- Veterans and National Guard/Reservists not on Active Duty - a single military representative to attend the funeral and present the U.S. Flag.

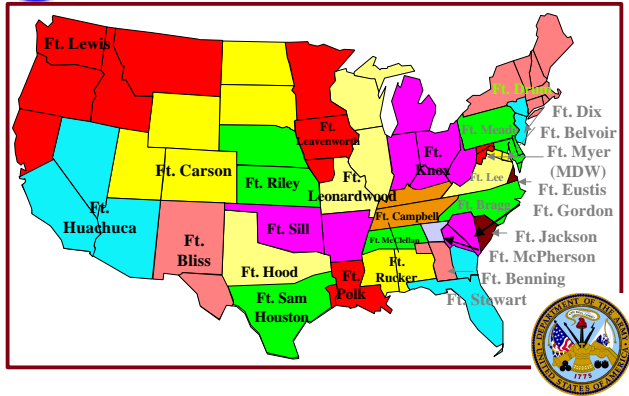
Commanders often exceed the minimum requirement for funeral honors. In other instances, commanders may be unable to provide honors because of the lack of available resources.

NOTE: Arlington National Cemetery is the Nation's principal memorial honoring men and women who have served in the military. Because of its unique position as the nation's memorial and strict eligibility requirements, honors are provided for all those who are eligible for honors when interred in Arlington. Honors provided at Arlington National Cemetery should not be considered to be the norm for funeral honors across the country.

2. Army



CONUS Casualty Area Commands



Prior to the 1998 decision by the Acting Secretary of the Army to standardize honors details by function as opposed to numbers, the Army had three types of honors details: full and partial honors, and a Service Representative. As a result, there was confusion regarding the composition and function of the honors team. The Army has now standardized the composition of a burial honors team by function instead of numbers in order to increase the availability of honors as resources permit. Full military honors now consist of casket bearers (six), firing

party (casket bearers also provide the volley salute), officer or non-commissioned officer in charge, chaplain and bugler, if available. The definition of a Service Representative has changed from one soldier to present the interment flag to the designated recipient, to a two-soldier detail. The detail will conduct a modified flag folding ceremony and make the flag presentation. All mileage limitations within an Army Casualty Area Command have been eliminated. Individual Commanders are to evaluate their capability to provide honors on a case-by-case basis rather than according to arbitrary distances.

Since the new Army policy was implemented in 1998, it does not appear that the provision of military funeral honors by function rather than the composition of the honors team has had an adverse impact on the dignity of the interment service. The removal of geographic limitations on casualty area commands has provided more equitable service to the families of deceased veterans.

3. Navy

Navy funeral honors are coordinated regionally through Casualty Assistance Calls/Funeral Honors Support (CAC/FHS) Program Coordinators. The Program Coordinators receive the requests and task the nearest Navy unit to provide military funeral honors, contingent upon resources available.

The Navy has seven regional Casualty Assistance Calls/Funeral Honors Support (CAC/FHS) Program Coordinators. Funeral directors and/or family members are directed to these regional coordinators when requesting military funeral honors. Regional coordination by CAC/FHS Program Coordinators provides an efficient way of tasking units in their area of responsibility, tracking calls and requests, and maintaining data concerning the request.

Sometimes funeral directors and/or family members contact the nearest military facility instead of the CAC/FHS Program Coordinator to request military funeral honors. If the nearest

military facility is not a Navy facility and is not aware of the existence of CAC/FHS Coordinators and cannot accommodate the request, it may send only one representative. The CAC/FHS Program Coordinator may have tasked a larger unit and been able to provide a greater level of honors support.

While regional coordination works for the Navy, the Navy is severely limited in its ability to provide traditional honors in rural areas where resources are limited. Many of the Naval Reserve Centers have only a few (five or six) active duty members.

4. Air Force

Honor guard duty is viewed as a highly visible unit. Commanders providing honor guard members have historically accepted the man-hour loss to their work centers (currently no full-time manpower authorizations for funeral honor details). Fewer installations and force reductions have enlarged honor guard responsibilities and areas. This has resulted in an increased requirement for honor guard support.

- Example: Edwards AFB, CA area of responsibility has grown from approximately ten-thousand square miles, prior to the closure of George, Norton, and March AFB, to over eighty-thousand square miles. Edwards AFB funeral details now average three funerals per day.

- Unit Commanders have expressed concern over mission degradation resulting from the loss of man-hours due to increased requirements for honor guard members coupled with a shrinking force structure.

The Air Force policy is to provide, as resources permit, the following funeral honors:

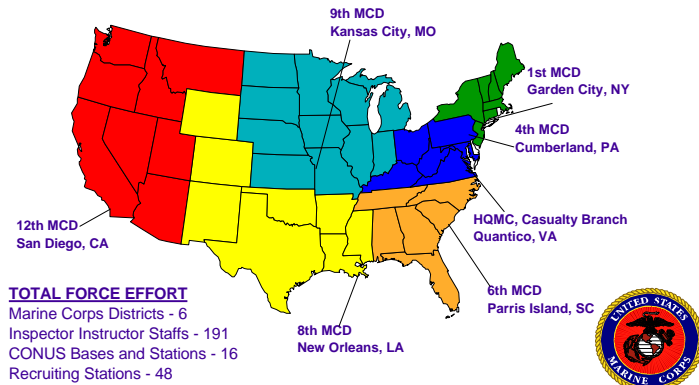
- Active duty members and Medal of Honor recipients will have a party of 19 - (6 pallbearers, 7 firing party, 1 bugler, 4 color guard, 1 OIC/NCOIC).
- Retired members will have a party of 9 - (7 pallbearers / firing party [dual function], 1 bugler, 1 OIC/NCOIC).
- Veterans: 1 Air Force member to attend funeral and present the flag if requested by the next-of-kin.

5. Marine Corps

Marine Corps policy is to provide full military honors support upon request to all Active, Reserve, Retired and former Marines, contingent upon availability of personnel and assets.



MARINE CORPS PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION



Honors are provided by field commands with or without coordination with Headquarters Marine Corps. Primary funeral support taskings come from the Commanding Officers of the six Marine Corps Districts to the closest Marine Corps unit within their District boundaries. Funeral support is provided on weekends and holidays. Additionally, the Marine Corps supports funeral requests for members of other Services.

- There are no Marines assigned to funeral support duties full time.
- Some installations have specified units that are responsible for funeral honors support.
- All Marines are eligible to perform this function as an additional duty in conjunction with their primary occupational specialty.
- There is no primary occupational specialty for funeral honors support personnel.
- Training on funeral honors is conducted by local commanders based on the specific guidance contained in MCO P3040.4D.
- Numbers of personnel assigned to support a funeral request are determined by two specific factors; type of honors or elements of funeral honors requested by the family, and the availability of personnel and assets.
- Additional personnel support is sometimes requested from the other Services.
- Bugler support is sometimes requested from local VSOs, ROTC units, etc. or even from high school bands. Otherwise, recorded music is played.
- The optimum number of personnel to support a funeral is 17: 8 firing detail, 6 pallbearers, 1 OIC/SNCOIC, 1 bugler and a chaplain. Funeral honors can be

conducted by fewer personnel when assigned personnel perform more than one function, e.g., pall bearers also perform the rifle detail.

The Marine Corps states that it will continue to try to satisfy all family member requests. No request will be turned down. If a unit cannot provide personnel, it will find another unit that can.

6. Department of Veterans Affairs

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the National Cemetery Administration do not provide military funeral honors. The honors are provided by local military personnel, Veterans Service Organizations or private groups who provide military honors upon request. If military funeral honors are desired at national cemeteries, the family or its funeral director arranges for them, prior to the committal service, by calling the closest military installation or service organization to determine if military honors can be provided. The national cemetery director can provide telephone numbers and locations of organizations that may be able to provide military funeral honors. If a bugler is not available, the cemetery staff may be able to play a recorded version of Taps, if desired by the family. At cemeteries where no military or VSO honor guards are available, an employee of the national cemetery or the funeral home representative will present the folded flag.

Some national cemeteries, in coordination with Veterans Service Organizations and military units, provide monthly honors. These are services in memory of all veterans interred at the cemetery during the previous month. This is a formal service that may include elements of traditional honors such as playing of Taps and a rifle volley. Other elements may include special readings or musical selections. Families of the veterans honored are invited and the names of the veterans are read as a roll at all national cemeteries. Flags are flown at half-staff during the interment services to honor the burial and to ensure dignity.

In fiscal year 1997, there were 51,000 veteran burials in national cemeteries. Honors were provided at 43 percent of these interments. Of these 22,000 funeral services, military personnel supported 52 percent, with the remaining 48 percent supported by Veterans Service Organizations. The Veterans Service Organization honor squads that provide honors at the national cemeteries usually consist of seven or eight members. They serve as an honor guard for the casket and as the rifle squad. A member of the squad will present the flag and occasionally a bugler is available. These units are available upon request by the family or the funeral home.

The Department of Veterans Affairs also provides an American flag to drape the casket of a veteran and of reservists entitled to retired military pay. The flag may be presented to the next of kin or a close associate. The VA will also provide a flag on behalf of a servicemember who is missing in action and presumed dead.

C. ALTERNATIVE METHODS FOR PROVIDING MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS FOR VETERANS AND NEW STRATEGIES FOR PROVIDING THOSE HONORS

1. Alternative Methods/Strategies - Components of Veterans Funeral Details

As a framework for a full discussion of alternative methods in the provision of military funeral honors, it is important to examine data and feedback on what veterans and their families desire relative to funeral honors. Their views on the most important components of funeral honors and the role of the parent Service are essential in exploring alternative methods.

a. Most Important Components of Traditional Funeral Honors

DoD collected data from June 1 to September 30, 1998, to determine which components of a military funeral honors detail families requested and what was provided. Data was also obtained through the September 18, 1998 working meeting with the Veterans Service Organizations (VSO), six visits to VSO conventions and one visit to the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs Convention during the summer and fall of 1998.

Components of a funeral honors detail addressed in DoD policy include: the folding and presentation of the US flag; a firing party to present a gun salute; a bugler or other method of playing Taps; pall bearers; and a chaplain.

DoD data included information from 9,819 funerals where families requested military funeral honors. The most requested components were the following:

Folding and presentation of the flag	93.6%
Firing party	63.6%
Bugler/Taps	55.0%
Pall bearers	44.9%
Chaplain	7.8%

Information received from the VSOs largely supports the DoD data. The data developed at the VSO conventions, the September 18, 1998 working session, and written comments from VSO membership shows the following components were ranked as follows (most to least requested):

Folding and presenting the flag
Bugler/Taps
Firing party
Pall bearers
Chaplain

From this data, it is apparent that the most important funeral honors component is the folding and presenting of the flag. The second most important, based on VSO feedback, was the playing of Taps. (While the playing of Taps came in third in the DoD data, the VSO feedback was quite compelling in terms of Taps being the second most important.) The two least requested components are pall bearers and a chaplain.

b. Role of the Veteran's Parent Service

Historically, the parent Service of the deceased provides funeral honors. Occasionally, another Service will provide honors. DoD has collected data on every funeral honors request from June 1, 1998 through September 30, 1998. In 89.6% of the cases the parent Service provided the requested honors.

Veterans and Military Service Organizations generally indicate that having the parent service provide funeral honors is preferable, but not essential. Specific data generated from VSO surveys reveal that 70% of a small sample indicated that having the parent Service provide funeral honors was not important. However, Veterans and Military Service Organizations expressed a preference for having the parent Service present the flag. The VSOs also indicate a strong preference for a uniformed presence. The Marine Corps League stated that it is "critical" that all funeral detail members be from the parent Service (Marine Corps). DoD data indicate that the Services perform the vast majority of funeral honors for veterans of their own branch.

2. Alternative Methods/Strategies – Expanded Participation of the Reserve Forces

a. Current Situation

The Reserve Force provides a pool of manpower, which may assist in the Total Force mission of providing military funeral honors. National Guard and Reserve units are located throughout the U.S. The units are geographically dispersed in areas where there is sometimes limited or no Active duty representation.

National Guard and Reserve personnel currently perform funeral honors as resources and time allow. The National Guard Bureau reported that the National Guard supported over 6500 funeral honors in 1998. Reserve Force funeral support is provided primarily in a volunteer status. In the National Guard, funeral detail duty may be performed in a state Active duty status. State statutes vary with regard to compensation for such duty. Under title 32, U.S. Code current law, such duty cannot constitute a required period of drill or annual training and there are no funds specifically appropriated to pay members when they perform this function. Both National Guard and Reserve members may receive retirement points when they perform this duty. National Guard members may receive retirement points if this duty is performed in federal duty status, as opposed to state active duty.

Increased demand for the Reserve forces to support operational missions has resulted in increased difficulty in recruiting volunteers for funeral honors support missions. This increased operational tempo requirement has far exceeded the traditional one-drill weekend-per-month and 2-weeks of annual training.

b. Expanded Participation of the Reserve Component

The Reserve Force supports the need for military funeral honors. Geographic dispersion of reserve component units could complement the more limited geographic coverage of active duty units. Current funding and legislation prevent a more robust capability. Support for


numerous operational missions has added extra work requirements for these units, which in turn limits the ability to increase the number of volunteers available for funeral honors duty

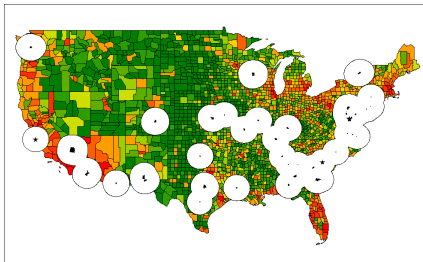
National Guard and Reserve forces are available to support the Total Force effort to provide military funeral honors. Funding and other incentives must be made available to permit Reserve forces to provide greater support than is currently provided, primarily through volunteer efforts.


3. Alternative Methods/Strategies – Joint and Combined Honor Guards

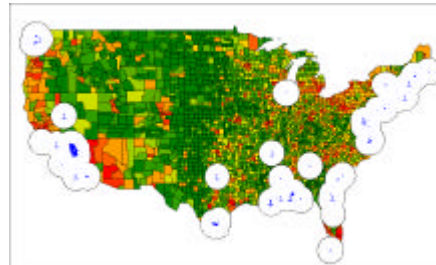
a. Current Situation

As stated above, each Service generally provides funeral honors for deceased members of its own Service. Geography and personnel availability sometimes limit the ability of an installation to provide honors on this basis. Combining the abilities and resources of all of the Military Services (i.e., a joint honor guard team) and other organizations such as the VSOs (i.e., combined honors team) in the local area increases the ability to provide honors. The next four maps illustrate the geographic coverage affected if each of the Military Services acts independently within the Continental United States.

 **Concentration of Veterans Within
100 Miles Radius of Army Installations**



 **Concentration of Veterans Within
100 Miles Radius of Navy Installations**

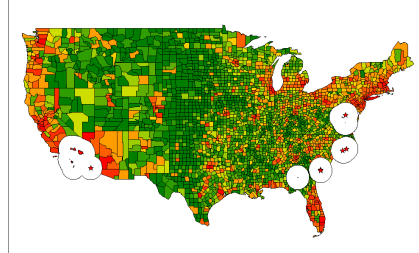




Concentration of Veterans Within 100 Miles Radius of Air Force Installations



Concentration of Veterans Within 100 Miles Radius of Marine Installations



DoD collected data from June 1, 1998 through September 30, 1998 to capture the status of military funeral honors throughout the Department of Defense. The DoD data indicate that in cases where the active duty component of the Service received a request for funeral honors and was unable to provide all requested components, the following organizations assisted in providing funeral honors:

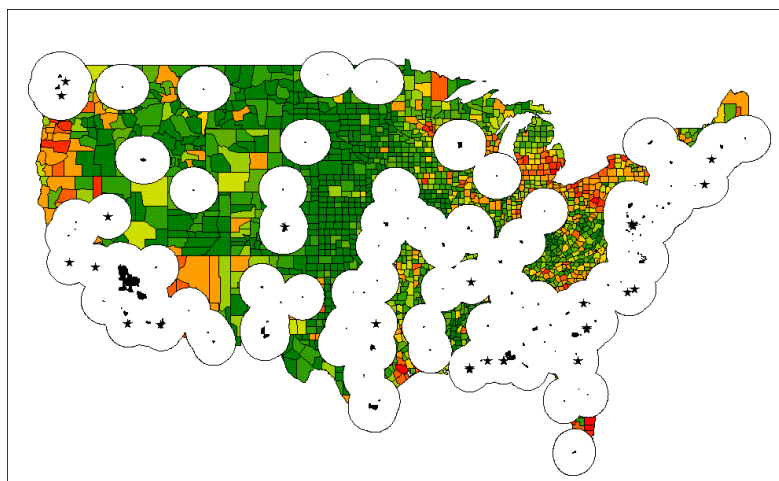
Unknown	61%
Other Military Service	25%
Reserve	5%
Veterans Service Organization	5%
National Guard	2%
Other	1%
Service Organization	1%

b. Joint and Combined Honor Guards

A joint honors team, comprised of military members from other Services is acceptable to the Veterans and Military Service Organizations. Such an arrangement is compelling in areas of the Continental United States where there are few, if any, members of the parent Service of the deceased veteran. The map at the right illustrates the geographic coverage affected if the Military Services combine their resources.



Concentration of Veterans Within 100 Miles Radius of All Installations



Veterans organizations did indicate concern about using combined honor guard teams comprised of military personnel and VSO members. Their concerns were largely related to training and the feasibility of combined funeral honor details. In addition, the VSOs that provide honor guard details have developed their own protocol for the rendering of honors. Combined honor guards would require uniform protocol standards for all combined details. This would require periodic training to ensure professional decorum and synchronization of movement.

4. Alternative Methods/Strategies – ROTC Participation

a. Current Situation

Less than half of the ROTC cadets/midshipmen are under contract with the military; those under contract are members of the Reserves. The remaining students are participating in ROTC classes as they would any other college course, but have no formal military affiliation or status. Both groups of students -- contracted or not -- undertake external activities (e.g., community service) on a voluntary basis. However, even as DoD might "encourage" voluntary support for military funeral honors, educators or parents might be concerned about time routinely taken away from academic pursuits and the perception of assigning military funeral honor *duties* to college students. Owing to such considerations, discussions with ROTC representatives suggest that a moderate-sized ROTC unit (approximately 80 members) could perhaps support up to one funeral detail per month during the school year. Since cadets are not allowed to drive GSA vehicles, a member of the ROTC staff would be required to participate in each funeral detail as well; this could affect class schedules.

Section 567 of the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for FY 99 authorizes the Secretaries of the Military Departments to provide "...*transportation. . . and expenses for a person who participates in an honor guard detail...who is not a member of the armed forces.*" However, two problems emerge: (1) nearly half of the ROTC students (those under contract) are members of the Reserve, potentially disqualifying them for such payments; and (2) reimbursement simply for costs incurred, as opposed to reimbursement plus a modest stipend for funeral detail participants, might operate against volunteerism.

In addition, ROTC units are not evenly distributed geographically. Even when students are available, cadre support occasionally will be inadequate when the ROTC cadre is short on manning. Finally, not all ROTC units have a government vehicle and most units operate very close to the funding margin. Additional resourcing of ROTC units for support of military funeral honors will have to be balanced against the anticipated benefits.

b. Use of ROTC

The Veterans and Military Service Organizations do not object to the use of the ROTC for veterans' funerals. In some states, ROTC units are used for this purpose. There were some concerns expressed on the part of the VSOs about the use of the high school Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC), mainly pertaining to the age of the JROTC members. In terms of regular use of the ROTC, there are concerns about ROTC participation. Nonetheless, after recognizing the acute problem DoD faces, ROTC cadets and midshipmen might be able to participate in funeral detail support on an ad hoc basis. However, for the reasons noted above, the ROTC program should not be considered a main source of manpower for funeral details.

D. RESOURCES OUTSIDE DoD THAT COULD BE USED TO PROVIDE MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS FOR VETERANS

1. Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs)

Historically, the VSOs have voluntarily assisted in providing military funeral honors. Since 1920, there has been statutory authority for the Department of the Army to supply ceremonial weapons and ammunition specifically for the VSO's support of military funeral honors.

Three reporting VSOs indicate that they support a combined total of 6,800 military funerals annually. The American Legion reports that it has 4,000 color guards and 3,500 rifle squads. Three VSOs (not including the American Legion) reported that they provided approximately 6,600 funeral honor details in 1997.

Performance of military funeral honors for veterans by VSO honors units is currently a widespread practice. In general, service organization units are coordinated at the local level. In some areas, several VSOs have formed joint teams to conduct funeral honors. They have developed a variety of "dress" standards using civilian organizational apparel. With easier access to military clothing stores, VSOs could equip their funeral details with the proper military uniforms and accoutrements.

The VSOs provide valuable support in providing military funeral honors for veterans. VSO honor details face some of the same challenges as do DoD honor details -- limited manpower, insufficient notification time, multiple requests at the same time, and travel distances to funerals. The younger members work during the day and are often not available for funerals.

2. VSO Volunteers – Riverside Memorial Honor Detail - an Example

The concept of rendering military funeral honors for veterans by VSOs is typified at the Riverside National Cemetery in California. Since the opening of this cemetery, the volume of veteran burials has exceeded the capacity of local details (both military and volunteer) to provide honors. In response, local veteran and retired military volunteers established the Memorial Honor Detail. In May 1996, this detail rendered honors for the first time with only four teams. There are now 18 teams volunteering anywhere from one to twelve days a month. They provide honors individually for those veterans who are buried the day(s) that each unit is at the cemetery. Together they provide honors to approximately 100 deceased veterans per month and average about 1300 man-hours monthly. The combined teams travel approximately 3,000 miles per month. Counties represented by the veterans organizations and volunteers include Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, San Bernardino and Riverside. Volunteers bear the cost of their uniforms and travel. The Memorial Honor Detail also accepts donations to defray expenses.

3. Supporting Mechanisms

a. Reimbursement

While the Military Services have the primary responsibility for coordinating and providing military funeral honors, a number of VSOs also conduct funeral honors. This is particularly true in areas where there are no nearby military installations and when the deceased veteran is a member of the VSO. The funeral honor guard volunteers' expenses are either absorbed personally or are subsidized by the VSO. VSO focus group feedback has indicated that some VSO members feel that reimbursement is appropriate, and others have indicated that they would be offended by being reimbursed for something that they consider to be their duty.

Section 567 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 99 provides that the "Secretary of a military department may provide transportation, or reimbursement for transportation, and expenses for a person who participates in an honor guard detail under this section and is not a member of the armed forces or an employee of the United States." Possible ways to implement a reimbursement include:

- 1) a specified stipend for transportation and/or gas for each honor detail or reimbursement on a mileage basis (at the government rate of 32.5 cents/mile);
- 2) a one-time uniform allowance and/or stipend to buy and clean uniforms;
- 3) a regular stipend to VSO posts that perform honor details on a quarterly, bi-annual or annual basis;
- 4) the establishment of a per diem program (similar to that for Federal employees).

Below are estimated costs based on a VSO detail providing 3 to 4 funeral honors a week, traveling an average of 300 miles roundtrip (at 32.5 cents a mile), plus the cost of cleaning the uniforms at \$15 per person per week. Based on these estimates, a weekly cost for a 2, 3, 5 and 9-person detail follows:

	<u>2-Person Detail</u>	<u>3-Person Detail</u>	<u>5-Person Detail</u>	<u>9-Person Detail</u>
Transportation	\$97.50 (1 Car)	\$97.50 (1 Car)	\$195.00 (2 Cars)	\$195.00 (2 Cars)
<u>Uniform Cleaning</u>	<u>\$30.00</u>	<u>\$45.00</u>	<u>\$ 75.00</u>	<u>\$135.00</u>
Total	\$127.50	\$142.50	\$270.00	\$330.00

Currently, it is unclear how many VSO units would desire reimbursement for funeral honor expenses. Nonetheless, the Department of Defense now has the authority to reimburse those VSO units that desire such reimbursement.

b. Training

A number of Veterans and Military Service Organizations provide funeral honors. These organizations train for this mission using the resources available to them. During the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Convention, it was recommended that a training video be produced and be made available to Veterans and Military Service Organizations for training purposes. The VFW

had obtained a copy of the Army funeral honors training video and sent it to all VFW posts. The members pointed out that the Army video was for a full honors funeral. Often, the Veterans and Military Service Organizations do not have a complement of 16 people necessary to render such honors. The VFW members suggested that a training video of a smaller funeral detail be produced to effect a more useful training tool for their membership. DoD can produce this video for distribution to the appropriate organizations.

Veterans Service Organization funeral honor teams may receive training in rendering funeral honors. Reimbursement could be contingent upon training with the Military Services. A training video, using either military or VSOs or a combination of both, would have a positive impact on Veterans and Military Service Organizations units providing honors. The training video could demonstrate how funeral honors can be conducted using various numbers in the detail. This would assist those Veterans and Military Service Organizations units who have either a small or large funeral detail. Additionally, a training video could be used as a method to ensure professional standardization of minimum requirements for each component of funeral honors for providers sponsored by DoD.

c. Access to Military Clothing Stores

Veterans Service Organizations provide funeral honors support through the use of volunteers. Some of VSO funeral honors teams have their own organizational uniforms; others have uniforms consisting of only black slacks and white shirts. Indications from the VSOs are that the presence of a military uniform is significant to the families during the rendering of funeral honors.

Veterans have limited access to the military clothing and sales stores. In the Army, Navy and Marine Corps exchanges, veterans are allowed patronage for insignia, medals and ribbons, and Class A service uniforms. They must show their DD 214 for purposes of obtaining medals and Class A service uniforms. Separated Air Force veterans require permission from the installation and proof of an honorable discharge to exercise their limited patronage for service and mess dress uniforms. Other non-Air Force veterans, like the other Military Services, have limited patronage for insignia, medals and ribbons for display.

Feedback from some of the VSOs that use combat boots as part of their funeral honors uniform indicate that access to the military clothing stores for the purchase of combat boots would be helpful. This can be accomplished through an internal DoD policy change.

d. Certificates

During a discussion between staff from DoD, DVA and veterans at the annual VFW Convention, one of the VFW members suggested that DoD develop a certificate of appreciation (or a pin) that recognizes the effort of the Veterans Service Organization volunteers who perform military funeral honors. Volunteers use their time, personal funds and private vehicles to train and equip teams to provide honors at veterans' funerals. Formal recognition of their volunteer work is appropriate. Additionally, it would demonstrate to the veteran community that their efforts are appreciated at the highest levels of the Department of Defense. Within the Veterans

and Military Service Organizations, a great deal of pride and respect are accorded to members and posts that are active in the community. Establishing various levels and methods of recognizing the efforts of veterans to provide military funeral honors may help to increase the number of veterans volunteering to perform military funeral honors.

The Department of Defense will consider the development of certificates of appreciation (or pins) to officially recognize the contribution of Veterans and Military Service Organizations funeral honors details.

4. Civilian Buglers

While it is always preferable to have a bugler at military funerals for the playing of Taps, often military and veterans units do not have this kind of in-house capability. During several meetings with the VSOs, the suggestion was made to look to local communities for buglers who may want to volunteer to play Taps at veterans funerals. Some of the sources recommended included buglers from high school or community bands, boy scouts and others in the community who have bugler skills and would be willing to volunteer for this effort. With Section 567 of the NDAA for FY 99 authorizing the Department of Defense to reimburse funeral honors volunteers, these volunteer buglers could be reimbursed for their expenses.

E. ANALYSIS OF THE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH PROVIDING MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS

1. Military Funeral Honors Requests

In order to estimate costs associated with the delivery of military funeral honors, it is necessary first to look at the extent such honors are currently provided. Prior to June 1998, the Services did not collect extensive information about military funeral honors. In order to assess the Department's funeral honors program, DoD asked for estimates from the Services for 1997. While these numbers were estimated, they were not collected in any standard form. As a result, DoD commenced a standard data collection on specific information from the Services from June 1 to September 30, 1998. In addition, DoD collected information from Veterans Service Organizations. The following summarizes the information garnered from these sources:

During 1997, the Services reported providing a total of 30,638 military funeral honors. The following are the totals by Service:

Army	15,222
Navy	6,910
Air Force	5,533
Marine Corps	<u>2,973</u>
Total	30,638

Following the Executive Roundtable, the National Guard Bureau conducted a survey to determine how many funeral honors the National Guard supported during 1998. The majority of these funeral honors were not included in the DoD data system. The figures include those from the 50 states, Guam, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Washington, DC.

Army National Guard	3,533
<u>Air National Guard</u>	<u>2,993</u>
Total	6,526

Based on the number of funeral honors requests received between June 1, 1998 and September 30, 1998, and data on monthly death rates provided by the Centers for Disease Control, the estimated annual number of requests for military funeral honors collected in the DoD database is 31,140. Adding the National Guard figures to those collected in the DoD database, the following are the estimates for each Service:

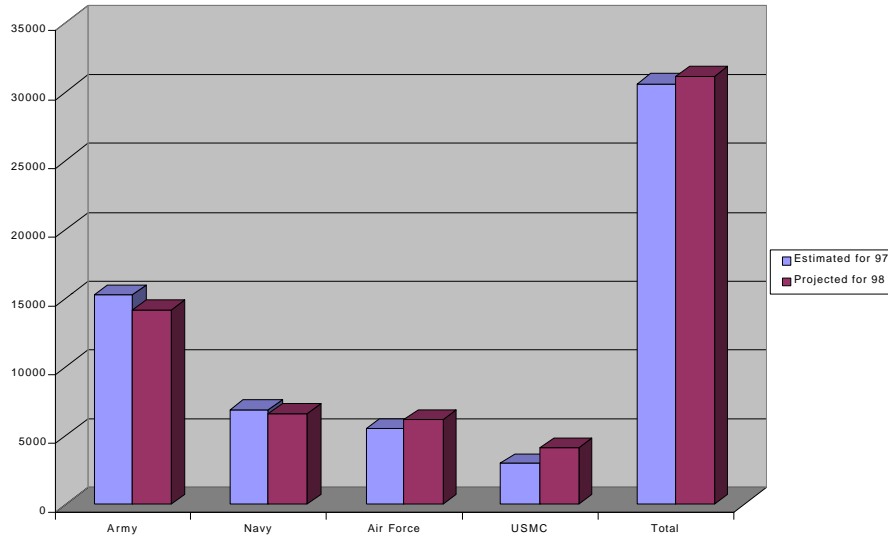
Army	17,706
Navy	6,650
Air Force	9,158
Marine Corps	<u>4,152</u>
Total	37,666

The Chart below shows the estimates of DoD Military Funeral Honors Support in the DoD database for 1997 and 1998.



Honors Provided By Service

Numbers of Honor Provided 1997-98



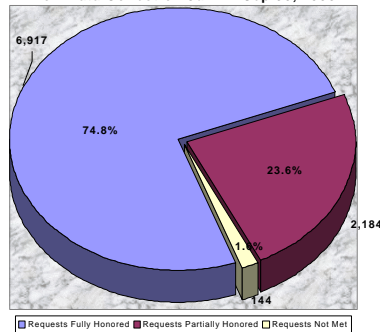
There were 9,819 requests for funeral honors received between June 1 and September 30,

1998. Of these requests, only 75 percent were fully honored (all requested components were provided). For a variety of reasons (e.g., non-availability of trained manpower, geographic distance, insufficient notification time, multiple funerals at the same time), the remaining requests were either partially honored (funeral detail provided did not include all requested components) or the requests were not met (no funeral detail provided). The requests for military funeral honors were



Numbers of Honors Requested and Met

Number of Honors Provided or Denied
DoD Data Collection Jun 1 - Sep 30, 1998



honored as follows:

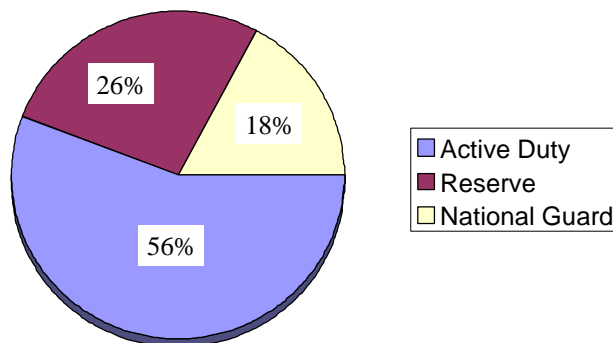
Requests Fully Honored	74.8%
Requests Partially Honored	23.6%
Requests Not Met	1.6%

The National Guard data combined with the DoD data demonstrates that the Reserve Forces could have provided up to 44% of all honors rendered (excluding those provided by Veterans and Military Service Organizations) in 1998.



Data Collection

Military Funeral Honors



The majority of National Guard participation was rendered in a voluntary, non-federal pay status. Some states do provide state pay for this duty. The National Guard figures reported above include participation at 1767 military funeral honors by the Connecticut National Guard. Connecticut State law directs the National Guard to provide these honors in a State status, including State pay. This requirement has been in effect for several years. Two additional states (Maryland and Missouri) have recently enacted similar legislation.

2. Estimate of Demand for Military Funeral Honors.

Accurately anticipating the demand for military funeral honors is critical to being able to develop options to improve funeral honors support. However, the estimated demand is difficult to determine. Factors affecting this information include families not being aware that they could request honors or not knowing who to call; funeral directors not being aware of the availability of funeral honors or advising the family of limitations on their availability, so a request is never submitted; and limited information from Service and VSO records.

Data described above indicate that the Services (including the National Guard) receive requests for between 37,100 and 37,600 funeral honors per year. In addition, limited information from three VSOs indicates that they provided 6,800 honors. This VSO information is a fraction of the probable number of funeral honors provided. For example, the American Legion reports having approximately 4,000 honors teams. The number of funeral honors provided by the American Legion is not included in the 6,800 figure. It is reasonable to assume that the total funerals provided by the military, VSOs and others exceeds 48,400 in FY1997 and also in FY 1998. This represents approximately 8.8% of veteran's deaths during these years.

The Department of Veterans Affairs provided approximately 270,000 grave markers for veterans in FY 1997 (this figure does not include markers for spouses and replacements). This represents about 50% of all veterans who died in 1997. If requests for a headstone are an indication of those who would want honors, then it can be estimated that 50% (270,000) would have desired honors in 1998.

In FY 1997, approximately 51,000 veterans were interred in national cemeteries. Funeral honors were provided at 43% of those interments. If the percentage of veterans who received honors at national cemeteries is indicative of all veterans, then it can be estimated that 43% (231,000) of all veterans would have desired honors in 1998.

The National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) polled its membership of about 22,000. It received responses from approximately 10% of its total membership. Based on these responses, the NFDA estimated that 45% (241,600) of all veterans would have desired military funeral honors in 1998.

These data points are significant because one represents the actual number of funeral honors provided which is a floor for the demand. The NFDA estimate of 45% is also significant since the vast majority of funeral honors requests (76.7% according to the June-September 1998 DoD data collection) come from funeral directors. The VA information about grave markers is significant because it represents demand for a known entitlement that is clear and straightforward, and which is well known to veterans and funeral directors; unlike what we believe is the case with military funeral honors.

The potential demand for funeral honors also depends on several unquantifiable factors including:

- Communication – Do veterans' families know they may be able to receive honors and, if so, how to request honors?
- Expectations of veterans' families – If a legislative entitlement is in place, or if improvements in communicating that funeral honors are available occur, it is reasonable to assume that the demand for funeral honors will increase.

Estimating the demand for funeral honors is difficult. Based on the above, we believe at least 45 percent of veterans' families will request funeral honors. However, future initiatives to communicate better the availability of military funeral honors or enactment of a formal entitlement could significantly increase the demand.

G. Funeral Honors Cost Models for DoD

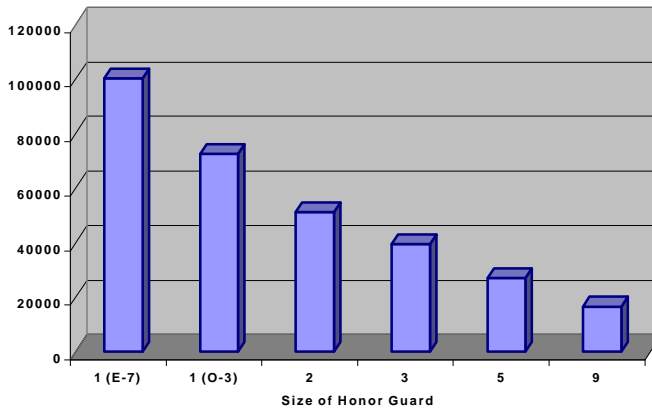
In addressing costs for funeral honors, the most significant cost drivers are: the number of funeral honors that must be provided; which components of funeral honors must be provided; distance from the military installation; and the number of personnel required for the detail. Both the level of manpower provided and the funding are costs that must be considered.

In assessing costs for military funeral honors, two cost models were used. The first takes the estimated costs for FY 1998 and projects the number of details of various sizes that could be



Number of Funeral Details for 18.5 M

Number of Details Available Based on 1998 Projected Manpower Costs (\$18.5M)



obtained with this funding. The results show a range of capability from about 100,000 funerals if only one senior NCO travels to present the flag, to fewer than 17,000 funerals that could be accommodated if a nine-person team were used. The current NDAA for FY 99 requirement of sending three people would result in a capability of fewer than 40,000 funerals if all three persons were military. Comparing this capability with several

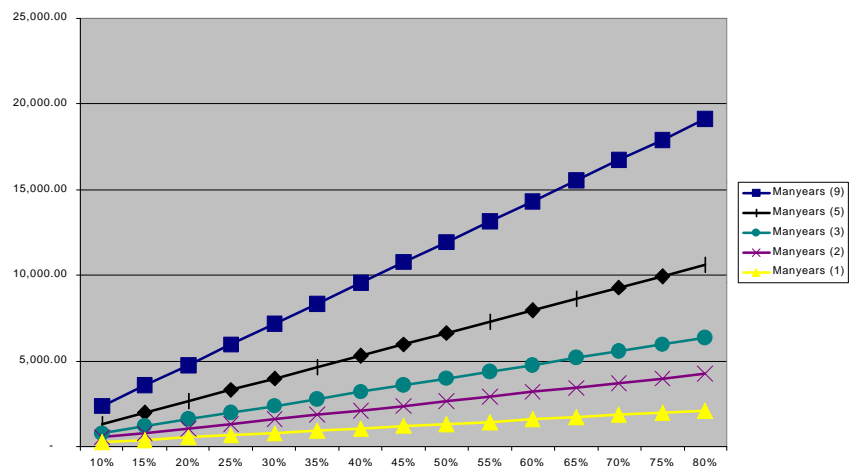
estimates (shown above in part 2) of possible requirements to support several hundred thousand funerals annually (and the number rising significantly over the next nine years), the significant increase in manpower needed to support these funerals is evident.

The second model uses both the demand for funeral honors and the size of the detail as variables to compute costs and manpower requirements for FY2000. These calculations make a number of important assumptions. First, DoD data indicate that it costs the installation approximately 6 man-hours to conduct a funeral detail. This figure is rounded up to 8 hours, or one day. Data collected did not consider preparation time before leaving for the funeral or action taken after return. In addition, travel up to 100 miles one way is assumed to be a one-day trip. Beyond 100 miles is assumed to be a two-day trip. Using data that 23.5% of veterans live outside of a 100 mile area from the military installation, the model



Man-Years as Determined by Various Size Detail (1999)

Manyear Requirement for Various Demands and Honor Guard Sizes



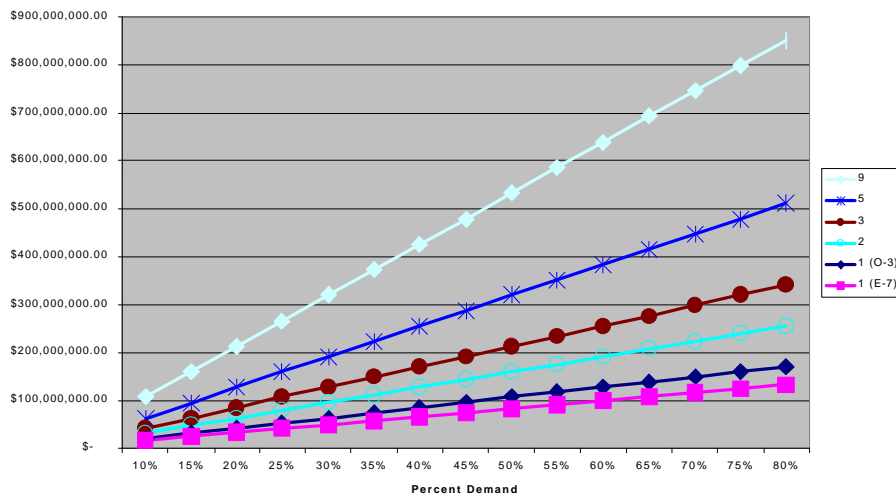
calculates overnight travel costs for 23.5% of the funerals. (This assumes also that the funeral is in close proximity to where the veteran lives.) Approximately 2.1% of veterans live outside of a 200-mile radius from the nearest military installation. In these cases, airfare for travel is computed in addition to an overnight stay. The resulting calculations display a variety of possible costs depending on the selected percentage of veterans' families that would request honors and the number of people in each detail. As an example of the calculation, the manpower requirement is 3,588 man-years for a three-person detail if 45% of the families request. Costs for manpower and travel to support this demand using three persons is \$191.8M. None of the costs in these models include training or overall team management and administration.

All costs in these models use DoD Comptroller manpower, travel and per diem figures. Unless otherwise indicated on the cost charts, the enlisted grade used for cost calculation is an E-4, and for officers it is an O-3. One officer is assumed to be on teams with 2 or more members.



Costs As Determined by Various Size Detail (1999)

**Costs for Various Demand and Honor Guard Sizes - 23.5%
Travel Assumption**



H. IDENTIFICATION OF MEANS OF IMPROVING FUNERAL HONORS

2. Toll-Free Number

During a number of discussions with VSO membership and the funeral directors associations, it became apparent that often families and funeral directors are not clear on how to request funeral honors for deceased veterans. The suggestion was made to establish a toll-free telephone number where families and funeral directors could access information on how to obtain funeral honors in their community.

2. Funeral Honors Website

After discussion of the importance of accessible and accurate information on funeral honors at the Military Funeral Honors Executive Roundtable, a suggestion was made to establish a military funeral honors website. Since a growing number of individuals are relying on the Internet for up-to-date information, a website could serve families, veterans, veterans organizations and funeral directors desiring information on funeral honors.

3. Funeral Directors Information Kits

There are approximately 22,200 funeral homes throughout the United States. Funeral Directors are often the first line of information for families arranging the funerals of deceased veterans. Some funeral directors may not be aware of the appropriate contacts to obtain funeral honors. At the VSO conventions and Executive Roundtable, there was discussion that funeral directors often are not aware of the military funeral honor protocol and associated funeral benefits for veterans. The suggestion was made that a Funeral Directors Military Funeral Honors Information Kit could be a valuable tool for assisting the funeral directors with providing appropriate honors.

The information kit would include:

- Educational material for funeral directors to explain to veterans' families the funeral honor elements for which the veteran is eligible.
- Information on ceremony details, flag protocol, resources to call upon and other important information essential for funeral directors arranging for or providing funeral honors.
- Information on how to obtain the American flag.
- Information for the funeral director on how to request a Presidential Memorial Certificate.
- Information on the Veteran Headstone and Marker and the National Cemetery System.

A Funeral Directors Military Funeral Honors Information Kit would be a useful and beneficial asset in expanding the capability to provide military funeral honors for veterans. It would provide the funeral director with a basic understanding of the funeral honor protocol and veterans burial benefits, and list contacts for further assistance.

G. PROPOSED DEPARTMENTAL POLICY ON MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS

1. Background

Following the Military Funeral Honors Executive Roundtable, the Department of Defense consolidated the information gained from the year-long examination of the issue including research, meetings with the veterans and funeral directors organizations, veterans' feedback, and the Roundtable discussion. In addition, there were a number of high-level meetings held within the Department in order to develop a policy that was acceptable to the veterans and supportable by the Department. Consensus within DoD was that even though the section 567 of the NDAA for FY 99 does not require a uniformed presence to provide funeral honors or a representative of the deceased's parent Service to be present, these elements should be a part of the military funeral honors ceremony.

Adhering to the collaborative process established over the past year, the Department of Defense met with the Department of Veterans Affairs and a number of veterans, military service and funeral directors organizations that have been involved in the funeral honors process during February and March of 1999 to discuss and review the proposed plans for funeral honors. These consultations included key staff from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the following organizations:

- American Ex-Prisoners of War
- American Legion
- American Veterans (AMVETS)
- Blinded Veterans Association
- Disabled American Veterans
- Fleet Reserve Association
- Gold Star Wives
- Korean War Veterans
- National Association of State Directors for Veterans Affairs
- National Funeral Directors Association
- National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association
- Marine Corps League
- Military Chaplains Association
- National Order of Battlefield Commissions
- Non Commissioned Officers Association
- Paralyzed Veterans of American
- US Army Warrant Officers Association
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Vietnam Veterans of America
- The Retired Enlisted Association
- The Retired Officers Association

Based upon these consultations, the Department of Defense proposes that mandatory minimums for funeral honors should include: the ceremonial folding and presentation of the flag, the playing of Taps, and the presence of at least one military member from the deceased's parent Service to present the flag to the family.

2. DoD Policy

The following is a description of the policy changes and modifications the Department of Defense plans to make regarding military funeral honors for veterans.

a. Applicability and Scope

(1) The Department of Defense policy would apply to the Military Departments, to include the Reserve components, with respect to the provision of funeral honors for veterans. The policy would not cover honors at Arlington National Cemetery which is governed by specific legislative statute.

(2) **Eligible beneficiaries of military funeral honors.** Active duty, retirees, veterans (as defined by Title 38, United States Code, section 101(2) including 38 Code of Federal Regulations, section 3.7, and deceased members and former members of the Selected Reserve. Eligibility of deceased members and former members of the Selected Reserves will be determined using the burial flag eligibility criteria in section 2301 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 517 of the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization act for Fiscal Year 1999 (P.L. 105-261).

(3) **Definition.** The rendering of military funeral honors is the ceremonial paying of respect and the final demonstration of the country's gratitude to those who, in times of war and peace, have faithfully defended our Nation.

b. Policy

(1) Upon request of the family or other representative, the Military Services will provide at least the minimum mandatory funeral honors to an eligible beneficiary.

(2) Minimum mandatory funeral honors for veterans will consist of the ceremonial folding and presentation of the American flag and the playing of Taps. This requires a minimum of two persons, who shall be uniformed military personnel or other authorized providers of funeral honors. At least one uniformed military representative of the parent Service of the deceased veteran will participate at this ceremony and will present the flag to the family or other appropriate individual. The Military Services may provide additional elements of honors and other authorized providers may augment the Service Honors Team for this purpose.

(3) The provision of military funeral honors is designated a total force mission. In fulfilling this mission, both active and reserve forces may be used.

c. Responsibilities

(1) The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) will establish policy and, through the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), will collect data on the provision of military funeral honors.

(2) The Military Departments will ensure that Service policy and guidance are consistent with policy established by OSD. The Services will establish appropriate procedures for the rendering of military funeral honors, ensure that a sufficient number of trained members are available for this mission, and provide quality control for military funeral honors ceremonies. The Services will continue to collect and provide specified data to the DMDC on military funeral honors and data collection will be expanded to include the Reserve Forces.

d. Procedures

(1) Standardization and Quality Control. The Secretaries of the Military Departments will ensure proper decorum for funeral honors including: trained personnel and proper equipment; standardized honors procedures including standard verbiage for the presentation of the flag to the family; dignified, respectful honor guard details; professional dress and appearance; synchronization of movement; and regular quality control of funeral details.

(2) Taps. A bugler is preferred, either military or civilian. Bugler support may be contracted or voluntary. The military component will designate an individual at the local level to ensure there is an active search for a bugler. If none is available, the designated person responsible for the bugler search may authorize instead the playing of a recording of Taps and shall ensure that a quality recording is available. In general, buglers and sound systems should be out of sight of the funeral party.

(3) Other Authorized Providers. The Military Services, at the local level, may establish on-going liaison and formal agreements with other authorized providers to participate in the provision of funeral honors. Other authorized providers include the Veterans Service Organizations, the Reserve Officer Training Corps, and other appropriate individuals and organizations which support the rendering of military funeral honors.

In order to assist non-military providers in the funeral honors mission, the Military Services will make training available to authorized providers according to a set of established standards for military funeral honors protocol. In addition, upon completion of training, the Military Services may reimburse these providers for their reasonable expenses related to the delivery of funeral honors and provide honor guard equipment and access to military clothing sales stores for appropriate uniforms, decorations and insignia in accordance with legislative and other authority.

(4) Coordination of Requests.

(a) Requests for military funeral honors will be received through a toll-free telephone number currently under development. This number will connect the caller/requester with the appropriate funeral honors provider or coordinator (as determined by the Service for that region).

(b) The caller/requester will need to make one call to request military funeral honors. The provider/coordinator that receives the request shall assume the full responsibility for coordination until the request is honored. This implies coordination with the other Military Services, Reserve Forces and other authorized providers. Requests requiring additional coordination will be accomplished through an established inter-Service protocol.

(5) Information/Communication. The Department of Defense, through the Department of the Air Force as Executive Agent, shall establish and maintain information systems for access by veterans, families and funeral directors for the purpose of assisting them in obtaining military funeral honors, and registering those groups authorized to provide honors. This will include a Web Site as well as an information kit to be distributed to all funeral directors. There shall be national and local liaison with appropriate groups and organizations to inform and update them on funeral honors policy and procedures.

(6) Information Requirements. The Military Services will collect standardized data on all military funeral honors rendered including those provided by authorized providers when the honors were coordinated through the Military Services. The Military Services will provide an annual impact report to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management Policy) to measure any effect on readiness.

H. ESTIMATED COSTS FOR PROPOSED DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FUNERAL HONORS PLAN

The following illustrates the manpower costs for a 2-person DoD detail (using an average cost of one 1 O-3 and 1 E-4). The numbers are based on estimated deaths for each year, including deceased members and former members of the Selected Reserves eligible for a burial flag under section 2301 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 517 of the NDAA for FY99. Estimated costs assume a 20 percent request rate for 2000 and a 5 percent graduated increase in requests each subsequent year to a 45 percent request rate in 2005. Annual inflation and travel costs are factored in as well.

2-DoD (1 O-3 & 1 E-4)		
Year	Man Years	Costs
2000	1211	74.9 m
2001	1537	97.8 M
2002	1875	122.6 M
2003	2218	149.1 M
2004	2563	177.2 M
2005	2908	206.6 M

The chart below assumes a one-person DoD detail (using 1 E-7). Since a flag folding requires at least two people, this cost estimate assumes a volunteer from an authorized provider to assist in that function of the funeral. This cost estimate does not include reimbursement costs for the volunteer(s) but indicates the costs for uniformed personnel only. All other variables remain the same as in the one-person detail. The two-person costs estimate is applicable to those situations where the Military Service assumes the full responsibility for funeral honors.

1-DoD (1 E-7)		
Year	Man Years	costs
2000	606	39.0 M
2001	769	51.2 M
2002	938	64.6 M
2003	1109	79.1 M
2004	1282	94.6 M
2005	1454	111.1 M

I. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROPRIATE LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

1. Reserve Incentives

In order for the Department of Defense to be able to meet the increased demand for veterans funeral honors, Reserve Component participation is critical. The Department is considering two legislative proposals which would enhance participation by the Reserve Component. The first would allow the Reserve Forces to receive both pay for performance of honors and receive retirement points above the annual 75-point cap. The second proposal allows Reserve Force personnel to remain on active duty beyond 180 days to perform funeral honors without counting against the active duty end-strength.

2. Authorized Providers

Since an integral part of the proposed plans and policy for veterans funeral honors includes the participation of other authorized providers (e.g., volunteers from Veterans Service Organizations), there may be a need to legislatively address the status of these individuals relative to: compensation for work-related injuries; claims for damages or loss. This coverage has precedence in section 1588 of title 10 which relates to volunteers working in Department of Defense health-related services, a military museum, a natural resources program and for programs which support members of the armed forces and their families.

J. CONCLUSION

The Strom Thurmond National Defense Act for Fiscal Year 1999 directed the Department of Defense to improve the availability and delivery of military funeral honors for veterans. In this effort, the Department of Defense, in concert with the Department of Veteran Affairs, was to work closely with the Veterans Service Organizations. The Department of Defense has thoroughly examined this issue, and in the process, come to understand more clearly the expectations of veterans and their family members, the potential demand for military funeral honors in the coming decade, and the limitations on the resources available to fulfill this time-honored tradition. It is with these considerations that the Department of Defense proposes the plan for military funeral honors provided in this report.

The proposed plan is based on fulfilling two key principles, critical to successfully implementing military funeral honors. First, the proposed plan helps clarify expectations by defining the military funeral honors benefit clearly, improving access to information and facilitating the coordination of requests. Second, the proposed plan ensures a military presence as part of the prescribed ceremony—a feature not required in the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999, but essential to fulfilling the expectations of the constituents and also helping to ensure consistent delivery of the ceremony. By fulfilling these principals, the proposed plan answers the concerns expressed by the Veterans Service Organizations and also those expressed by the Military Services tasked as the guarantors of the plan.

Working in partnership with the Veterans and Military Service Organizations, we considered in a very deliberate and compassionate way the important issue of how we can best use the Department's resources to provide military honors for our veterans. Our shared goal was to honor appropriately and consistently those veterans who have faithfully defended all Americans and our national interests. We believe that the proposed plan described in this report accomplishes that goal.