



COUNCIL OF MILITARY VETERANS' ORGANISATIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA

RAAD VAN MILITÊRE VETERANEORGANISASIES VAN SUID-AFRIKA

POLICY & GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES ON THE CONDUCTING OF MILITARY VETERANS' FUNERALS

Reference A: Ceremonial Guidelines Handbook of the SANDF

Reference B: Funerals Guidelines for all Military Veterans Funerals without Military Assistance

Appendix A: Procedures by Pallbearers

SITUATION

1. An integral part of the responsibilities of veterans' organisations is to conduct a funeral in a sensitive but militarily correct way. These services should support and comfort the relatives and friends of those who have passed away whilst taking military customs and practices into consideration.
2. It is recognised that the wishes of the family should always be taken into account when veterans' organisations are asked to organise funerals. The family should however be guided on what is militarily correct.
3. It is also recognised that certain member organisations such as the Memorable Order of the Tin Hats have prescribed procedures for military funerals. It is also recognised that the customs will differ between religious denominations.
4. The aim of this guideline is to provide guidance on the procedures to be followed before, during and after veteran funerals (or where appropriate, a memorial service for the deceased), under the following headings:
 - a. Guiding Principles.
 - b. Communication with the family.
 - c. Notification of the funeral.
 - d. Dress regulations for veterans' funerals.
 - e. Procedures at the service.
 - f. Procedures at the graveside.
 - g. Wreaths.
 - h. Hindu and Muslim funerals.
 - i. Follow up.



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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

5. In order to streamline the memorial -/funeral service the following guiding principles should at all times be taken into consideration:
- a. The military/veteran may not combine family or political programmes within the military/veterans part of the memorial/funeral service.
 - b. There should be at all times a clear handover between the family/political parts and the military/veterans responsibilities.
 - c. The number of speeches at memorial and funeral services to be limited to three.
 - d. Military/veterans protocol should be followed with regard to speeches by the military and therefore only the highest military veterans' person present should talk on behalf of the veterans.
 - e. No political speeches may be made at a military memorial or full military funeral service. In a semi-military funeral, where the family determines the church service and the military the graveside/cemetery part, we cannot prescribe to the family who they have as part of their speakers.
6. Further details, if required, can be obtained from the Ceremonial Guidelines of the SANDF (Reference A) and the Funeral Guidelines for all Military Veterans Funerals without Military Assistance of the DMV.

COMMUNICATON WITH THE FAMILY

7. Veteran funerals may either be requested by the family or offered to the family. In such cases, the families should be offered as much support as possible.
8. The family should be advised on the procedure to be followed and be made aware of the fact that the coffin may be draped with the organisations flag and the deceased's medals may be placed on the coffin.
9. The degree of involvement of the veterans' organisation vis-a-vis the family should be sensitively but fully discussed. This includes whether the pallbearers will be veterans or family members or a combination of both.
10. A person from the applicable veterans organisation to be appointed to negotiate with and assist the family with the arrangements



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NOTIFICATION OF THE FUNERAL

11. Where the deceased is to be awarded a veterans' funeral, the members of the organisations and where appropriate other organisations should be informed. The notification should provide:

- a. The time of the funeral and when guests should be seated.
- b. Location of the funeral (with GPS co-ordinates, if possible).
- c. Dress code (especially with regard to wearing medals and arm bands – see below).
- d. The arrangements for wreaths/flowers.
- e. Whether or not the funeral will be followed by a ceremony at a cemetery.
- f. Any events after the funeral (e.g. tea or a wake).

DRESS REGULATIONS FOR VETERANS AT FUNERALS

12. Each veteran's organisation should have its own dress regulations for funerals, taking into consideration these guidelines).

13. Notifications of funerals should stipulate the dress code.

14. In the absence of any modifications flowing from 12 and 13 above, the dress to be worn by military veterans at funerals is as follows:

- a. SANMVA uniform, if available and appropriate.
- b. Association jacket and tie (or business suit for males).
- c. Association headdress outside the church (where applicable).
- d. Pall bearers are to wear a mourning band, 90mm wide, around the left arm, midway between the shoulder and elbow.
- e. Medals on the left chest.
- f. Non-military medals and those of parents may be worn on the right chest.
- g. Own association pendants/metal badges on the left lapel.



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- h. Pennants/metal badges of the CMVO and other veterans' organisations on the right lapel.
- i. The Poppy's should be worn on the right lapel in November each year.

15. If the National flag is draped over the Military Veteran's coffin, the pallbearers will only be bona fide Military Veterans and only the official Military Veterans affiliation dress will be worn by the pallbearers (Green Jacket, Tie and Cap).

PROCEDURES AT THE SERVICE

16. The following sequence of events at a veteran's funeral/memorial service is given as a guideline:

- a. Votum.
- b. Hymn.
- c. Prayer.
- d. Tribute by a family member.
- e. Tribute by a friend.
- f. Tribute by a fellow veteran.
- g. Hymn.
- h. Scripture reading.
- i. Sermon.
- j. Hymn.
- k. Closing prayer.
- l. Reading of the obituary.
- m. Announcing the names of pallbearers.
- n. Moving to hearse/carrier.



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17. If there is to be no procedure at a graveside the following should take place at the hearse:

- a. Final religious sending of by the chaplain/minister.
- b. Family members and friends to place flowers on the coffin.
- c. Saluting of the coffin by Military Veterans.

18. **Semi-military/veterans service.** (This is where the family would like to combine both their own religious/political service with the military veterans service. The guideline of clear handover is applied here).

- a. After the church service and family/political programme was conducted by the family and their priests, the program director will call on the officiating military/veteran chaplain to come forward.
- b. The officiating military/veterans chaplain will then act as program director and chaplain for the rest of the military/veterans proceedings:
 - i. Introduction by Chaplain.
 - ii. Tribute by most senior military member.
 - iii. Benediction or Closing Prayer.
 - iv. Reading of the Obituary (Only if not already read during family programme).
 - v. Announcement of the military bearers.
 - vi. Moving to the hearse/carrier.
- c. If it is a cremation service, the Committal words will be read at the hearse and members will be allowed to pay their last respects (petals/flowers/leaves) on coffin.
- d. Saluting of coffin by military/veterans.

19. Other guidelines for the funeral are:

- a. Ushers should be appointed to ensure that the family, veterans, pall bearers and friends are appropriately seated.



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- b. The National/Association flag should be placed on the coffin before it enters the church.
- c. There should be no political speeches.
- d. If there is to be no procedure at the graveside, the National/Organisation's flag and the deceased's medals should be removed from the coffin before it is placed in the hearse after the service.

20. The procedure should be fully discussed and agreed with the officiating chaplain/minister.

21. The procedure for the pall bearers is contained in **Appendix A**.

PROCEDURES AT THE GRAVESIDE

22. The following sequence of events is given as a guideline:

- a. Removal of the National/Organisation's flag from the coffin.
- b. Prayer.
- c. Scripture reading or a few words of comfort.
- d. Committal Formula.
- e. Closing prayer.
- f. Veterans should pass the coffin in procession and pay their compliments to the deceased before departing.
- g. Hand over to family for family/cultural rituals (if any).

Remarks. If the family wishes to do the religious part at the cemetery, the chaplain hands over proceedings to the family priest/program director after the National/Organisations flag was handed over to the family and the bearers and pall-bearers saluted the coffin and felled out.

23. This must be agreed with the officiating chaplain/minister.

23. The procedures for the pallbearers are contained in **Appendix A**.



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WREATHS

24. Wreaths, where appropriate should be delivered to the church ahead of the funeral.
25. With the consent of the family, one wreath from the veteran's organisation may accompany the coffin in the hearse.

FOLLOW UP

26. Subsequent to the funeral, contact should be maintained with the family to ensure their welfare.
27. The families should be given advice on the benefits available to them.

MILITARY VETERANS FUNERAL FOR MEMBERS OF THE HINDU AND MUSLIM FAITH

HINDU FUNERALS (ALL LINGUISTICAL GROUPS)

28. The funeral of a Hindu is always conducted from his residence. The undertaker delivers the body on the day before the funeral and before sunset or on the morning to the residence of the bereaved family. The family and friends are allowed to view the face to say their goodbyes and pay their last respects (no stipulated time). Rituals and/or a Religious service is conducted by a priest elected by the family. The rituals/service is conducted at a time determined by the family and priest and will last approximately 2 hours. This is always completed before the predetermined time that the body should leave the residence for the crematorium.
29. On completion of the rituals and or service, the funeral procession proceeds to the crematorium. Once again rituals and or a service lasting for approximately 20 minutes are conducted by the priest in a social prayer place at the crematorium. Family and friends who have not yet viewed the face of the deceased are allowed to do so at this point. Thereafter the coffin is carried to the grave of the incinerator where last prayers are dedicated to the deceased/a last prayer in tribute is paid to the deceased.
30. The following procedure is to be followed with the exception of the following:
 - a. The funeral procession departs from the residence of the deceased instead of a church.



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- b. The National/Organisation Flag is draped over the coffin on completion of the rituals and or service at the residence. If the face of the deceased is to be viewed at the crematorium the National/Organisation Flag will be ceremonially removed from the coffin and folded as for military funerals at this stage.

MUSLIM FUNERALS

31. Members of the Muslim faith will not be given a Military Veterans funeral as a result of religious beliefs and customs.

32. The reasons for this are:

- a. Upon receipt of notice that a Muslim has died, a Muslim fund/organisation, next of kin or friend makes the necessary arrangement for the burial of the deceased.
- b. The deceased must be buried as soon as possible according to Muslim rites, ie before the next sunset or within 24 hours depending on the time of the death. Funerals are normally completed within eight hours.
- c. The coffin is carried by pallbearers using the shoulder. The “offering” of the shoulder has a religious significance.
- d. It is against the Muslim faith to drape the coffin with flags.
- e. Only men are permitted to attend graveside services.
- f. No music of any kind is played at the cemetery.
- g. According to customs, people leaving a Muslim cemetery do so walking backwards to the entrance, so as not to turn their backs on the deceased.

33. The adherence to the above guidelines will ensure that funerals of our veterans will be dignified and a proper way to pay our last respect.

Consequences for non-compliance of policy

34. Non-compliance by any of the Military Veteran organisations to the above procedures may cause the image of the CMVO as well as the image of the individual/particular member organisation harm. In order to ensure that no CMVO member or any member of any of our MO's are embarrassed the above procedure must be followed rigidly.



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Legal Support for this Policy

Recognised and approved military practices and SANDF doctrine.

Owner of the policy

Mil Vet Funeral Position	CMVO (All Manco Members).
	Members and officials of Member Organisations of CMVO.
	Members of CMVO affiliated organisations.
	Secretary General.

Version Control

Date	Version	Description of update	Author / Reviewer
	1.0	First draft	Marius Cornellisen
2016/08/11	2.0	1 st Updated policy document	George Dicker

APPENDIX A

PROCEDURES FOR PALLBEARERS

PROCEDURES BEFORE AND DURING THE SERVICE AT THE CHURCH

1. The following procedure is followed:
 - a. Prior to the commencement of the service, the undertaker will take the coffin to the church.



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- b. The pallbearers, led by the person in charge, will carry the coffin to a place previously indicated by the officiating chaplain/minister in accordance with the regulations of the local clerical authority. (Usually in front of the pulpit or in the vestibule).
- c. They then assume their position to the right of the pulpit as seen from the pulpit, in the front row on reserved seats. Positions will be taken up in the order in which they will carry the coffin, thus enabling them to move directly into the correct positions at the coffin when their names are read out at the conclusion of the service.
- d. The pallbearers will be seated on their reserved seats, in the church, before the service commences, in the sequence in which they will take up their positions in front of the pulpit, at the conclusion of the service.

PROCEDURE OF THE CONCLUSION OF THE SERVICE INSIDE THE CHURCH

2. The following procedures to be followed:
 - a. At the conclusion of the service, the names of the pallbearers will be read out by the officiating chaplain or minister.
 - b. The pallbearers should remain seated while their names are being read.
 - c. When the name of the last member is read, the pallbearers will take up their positions in front of the pulpit.
 - d. When the members are in position the officiating chaplain or minister will leave the pulpit and will move down the aisle towards the vestibule, if the coffin has been placed there, followed by the pallbearers. If the coffin has been placed in front of the pulpit, the pallbearers will take up their positions around the coffin. The pallbearers will lift the coffin by the handles. The coffin will be carried out of the church building, foot end foremost, by the pallbearers with the family behind the coffin in slow time with the officiating chaplain or minister leading. The coffin may also be placed on the trolley and pushed to the vestibule.
 - e. The pallbearers replace their caps on the command of the Military veterans in charge once they have placed the coffin in the hearse.

PROCEDURE AT THE GRAVESIDE

3. The following procedures to be followed:



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- a. As soon as the pallbearers reach the grave, they pass the grave on both sides and halt on the order.

“PALLBEARERS – HALT”

When the coffin is over the grave, the Military Veteran in charge of the pallbearers orders

“PALLBEARERS, INWARDS – TURN”

The pallbearers will now place the coffin on the straps over the grave. The Military Veteran in charge then orders:

“ON CAPS”

- b. The pallbearer on the right side at the head of the coffin will remove the folded National/Association flag and hand it to the Military Veteran in charge.
- c. Thereafter the order will be given:

“PALLBEARERS – SALUTE”

and on conclusion of the salute

“LEFT AND RIGHT –TURN”

“QUICK – MARCH”

The pallbearers will turn to the foot of the grave.

The pallbearers will withdraw and fall out. They will not pay their last respects individually again when the other Military Veteran mourners pay their last respects.

Note: If practical, the pallbearers should be rehearsed before the commencement of the funeral.