

**BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY  
OF THE AIR FORCE**

**AIR FORCE PAMPHLET 34-504**

**9 MAY 2019**

*Services*



**ESCORTING DECEASED AIR FORCE  
MILITARY PERSONNEL**

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This pamphlet provides instruction and guidance for military escorts of deceased active duty Air Force personnel. This publication applies to military members of the Regular Air Force, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves. In collaboration with the Chief of Air Force Reserve and the Director of the Air National Guard, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services (AF/A1) develops personnel policy for this program. Refer recommended changes to the Office of Primary Responsibility using Air Force Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; route AF Form 847s from the field through the appropriate functional chain of command. Ensure all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with Air Force Manual 33-363, Management of Records, and disposed of in accordance with the Air Force Records Disposition Schedule located in the Air Force Records Information Management System.

**SUMMARY OF CHANGES**

This document has been updated with no significant changes.

**1. Pamphlet Objective.** This pamphlet provides essential information and basic instruction and guidelines to help military personnel and other Air Force representatives perform required escort duties. Review the pamphlet thoroughly and keep it readily available for easy reference while performing escort duties. Air Force mortuary policy is contained in AFI 34-501, *Mortuary Affairs Program*.

**2. Essential Information**

**Figure 1. Essential Information.**

Decedent's Name and Rank: _____ Contact information for Mortuary Affairs.	
<b>Primary Mortuary Officer</b>	
Name:	
Office/Cell Phone:	Comm (    )
Government Email:	
<b>Alternate Mortuary Officer</b>	
Name:	
Office/Cell Phone:	Comm (    )
Government Email:	
<b>Mortuary Technician</b>	
Name:	
Office/Cell Phone:	Comm (    )
Government Email:	
<b>Installation Command Post</b>	
24-hr Phone*	Comm (    )
* Contact if you cannot reach the mortuary personnel. Ask to be connected to the Force Support Squadron Commander.	

2.1. Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations and the installation Mortuary Affairs Officer have additional contact and essential information for the specific case they will provide including specific contact information as required.

### **3. Escort Roles and Responsibilities.**

3.1. As a military escort, you are an official representative of the United States Air Force under circumstances that demand consistently respectful behavior, neat appearance, and an understanding of grief responses on the part of the next of kin. You immediately assume a role in one of the most psychologically sensitive human conditions known. Your awareness of and ability to successfully cope with these emotional interactions will be of long-term benefit to the families served.

3.2. Your conduct should always reflect credit upon the Air Force. The functions of administering funeral service and religious counseling are the professional responsibilities of the funeral director and clergy, respectively. Further, it is not your responsibility to offer or volunteer information relating to the circumstances of the death, the recovery and/or identification of the remains, antemortem or postmortem diagnostic findings, or the professional preparations of the remains for viewing and/or burial.

3.2.1. As an Air Force representative, DO NOT inconvenience the family. You will arrange for all your personal needs (such as meals, lodging and transportation). Do not solicit and avoid accepting invitations, gratuities and gifts, or favors from the family and friends of the deceased, merchants in the area or local officials. Invitations to related events (memorial service in addition to the funeral service, or funeral service reception) can be accepted on a case-by-case basis. Free food and beverage integral to the event offered to all attendees may be accepted.

3.2.2. Refrain from discussing the nature of your assignment with anyone while en route to or from your destination or during your stay at the destination other than necessary communication with the airline representatives, the family, and the family's funeral director relating to your assigned escort duties.

3.2.3. Less than acceptable conduct, the use of inaccurate information, and the lack of compassionate understanding may cause both harm and embarrassment to the family of the deceased and to the Air Force. It is extremely important that you be alert to your responsibilities at all times.

3.3. Escort uniform is the service dress. This uniform will be worn in accordance with AFI 36-2903, Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel, at all times during the escort assignment. NOTE: Mourning bands are not worn by escorts.

### **4. Prescribed Duties.**

4.1. Transportation of Remains Over Land.

4.1.1. Before departure to destination, secure travel orders and all appropriate documentation, as needed to accomplish your duties. Receive a thorough briefing from the mortuary officer or technician regarding your escort responsibilities, including a review of the essential information listed in [paragraph 2](#).

4.1.2. Accompany the remains from the contract funeral home or port mortuary facility in the hearse, with the funeral director. It is permissible to follow behind the hearse in a government owned vehicle or rental car, to the receiving funeral home.

4.2. Transportation of Remains by Commercial Air or Military Air/Contract Military Air (for deaths occurring overseas or deaths occurring in a combat theater of operation).

4.2.1. Before departure to destination, secure travel orders, air carrier tickets, and all appropriate documentation, as needed to accomplish your duties. Receive a thorough briefing from the mortuary officer or technician regarding your escort responsibilities, including a review of the essential information listed in [paragraph 2](#).

4.2.2. Accompany the remains from the funeral home or port mortuary facility, usually with the funeral director, to the air carrier. Stay with the remains until properly assigned to the carrier. Make sure the remains are safeguarded, out of public view, and under cover.

4.2.2.1. Should an unexpected scheduling change occur, telephone the primary mortuary officer, alternate mortuary officer, or mortuary technician, who will, in turn, notify the receiving funeral director and dignified arrival Honor Guard of such changes. If you cannot reach the mortuary officer, alternate mortuary officer, or mortuary technician, contact the receiving funeral home immediately to advise of schedule change.

4.2.2.2. If security measures at the air carrier terminal or scheduling changes prevent you from staying with the remains, the local agent will take responsibility for the remains. A local agent should be someone with the official capacity to account for the remains (local customs or security personnel). In this event, request access to visually verify the correct remains are loaded on the aircraft prior to boarding.

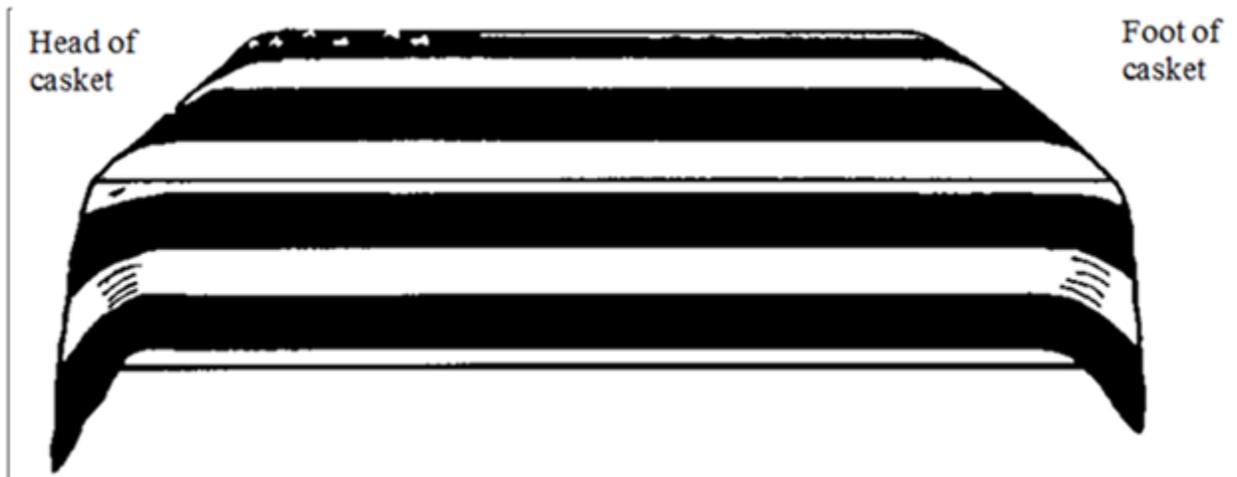
4.2.3. Upon arrival at destination airport you will be met by a seven -person Honor Guard Detail, funeral director, or his or her representative. Six personnel from the Honor Guard detail will transfer the casket from the aircraft to the next mode of transportation. During this movement, the escort and the 7th Honor Guard Member will render a salute.

4.2.3.1. Following transfer of the remains from the air carrier or terminal area to the funeral director's hearse, drape the flag over the casket once the outer shipping cover has been removed. Drape the flag lengthwise over the casket with the union at the head and over the left shoulder of the deceased (see [Figure 2](#)).

4.3. **Procedures for Displaying the Flag with the Casket.**

4.3.1. Closed Casket:

4.3.1.1. Center the flag on the casket with the blue field at the head and over the left shoulder of the deceased as shown below in [Figure 2](#).

**Figure 2. Closed Casket.**

#### 4.3.2. Open Half Couch Casket:

4.3.2.1. Fold the flag in a simple “S” fold, as shown in [Figure 3](#), and place it on the lower panel of the casket as shown in [Figure 4](#)

4.3.2.2. Simple “S” Fold Instructions (see [Figure 3](#)):

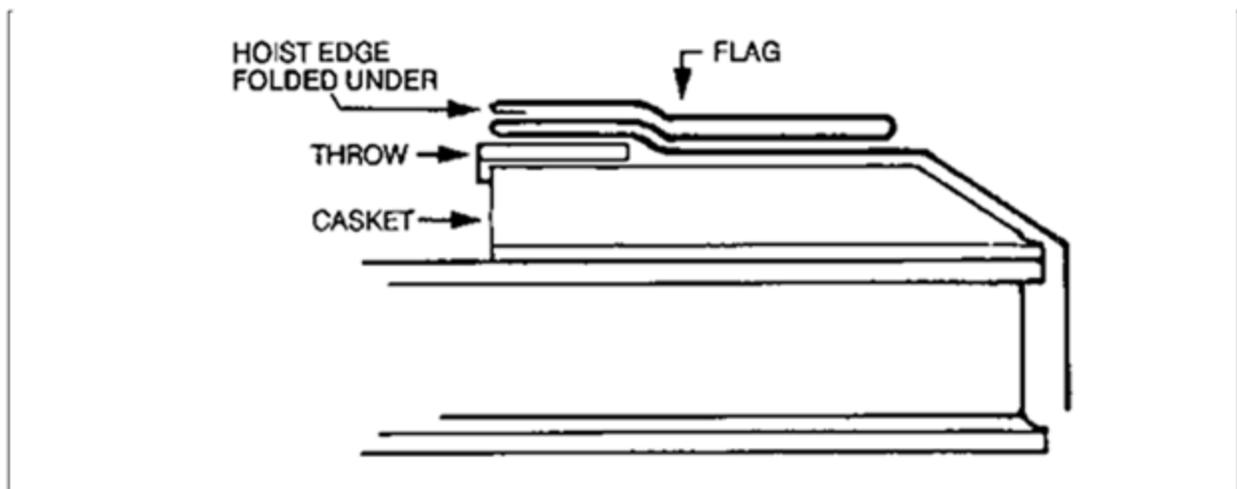
4.3.2.2.1. Position casket throw on lower panel of casket.

4.3.2.2.2. Fold flag toward foot of casket to a point just past the slit that separates the head and foot panels.

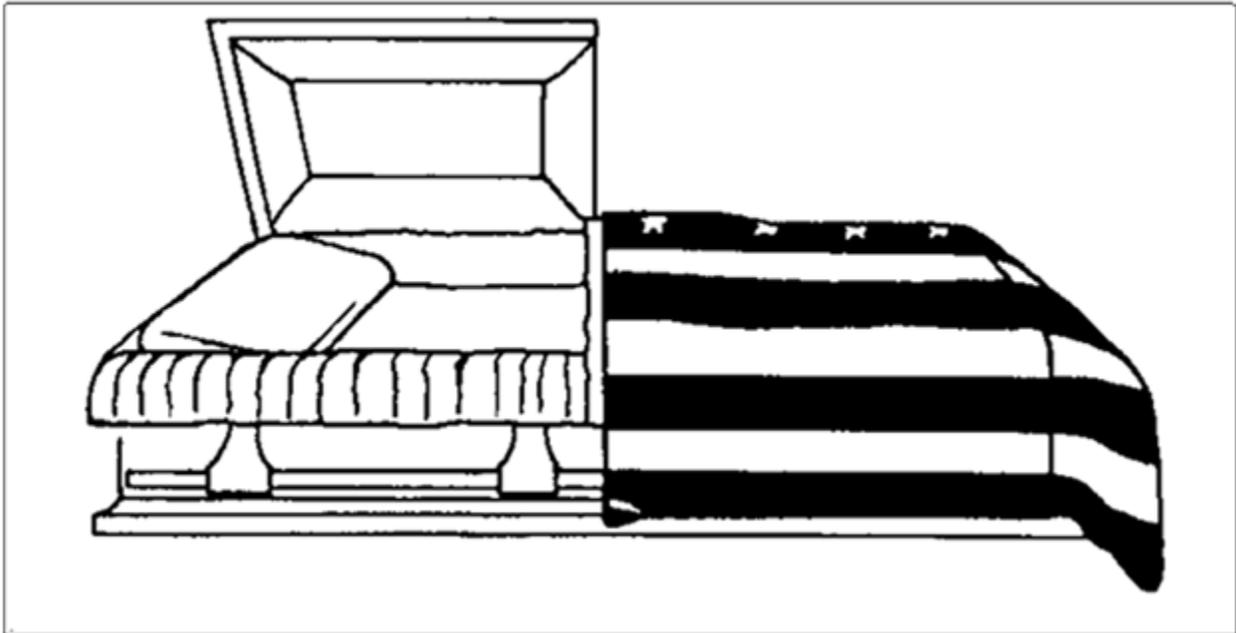
4.3.2.2.3. Fold flag toward head of casket to a point even with the first fold at the slit between panels.

4.3.2.2.4. Fold hoist edge under; fold should only equal width of hoist edge. Hoist edge should not show.

4.3.2.2.5. Align stripes of all folds and make sure flag is centered on casket.

**Figure 3. Simple “S” Fold Instructions.**

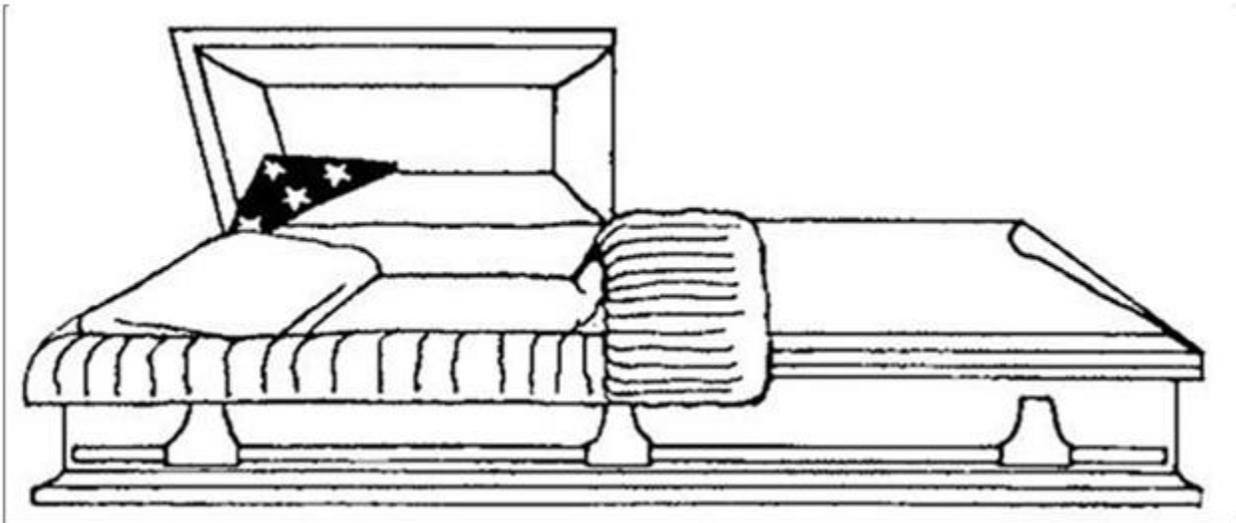
**Figure 4. Open Half Couch Casket.**



4.3.3. “Cocked Hat” Flag Display:

4.3.3.1. When floral arrangement or other object is placed on the lower panel of casket, display the flag in the cocked hat design and place it in the head panel as shown in [Figure 5](#)

**Figure 5. “Cocked Hat” Flag Display.**



4.4. Deliver all appropriate documents to the funeral director or government cemetery representative.

4.5. Determine through the mortuary officer or technician whether or not the family wishes you to be present for the funeral service. At the request of the family, a stopover period of 72 hours is authorized. You may be requested by the funeral director or government cemetery representative to participate in some part of the graveside service. If so, find out exactly what is expected and seek out appropriate instructions from the Honor Guard NCOIC or the funeral director.

4.6. If circumstances of an emergency or unusual nature (i.e., delay or cancellation in any flight, damaged casket or soiled casket interior) arise, you should immediately notify the primary mortuary officer, alternate mortuary officer, or mortuary technician, as listed in [figure 1](#).

4.7. Viewing the remains is the prerogative of the survivors. Opening the casket and making such viewing possible is the funeral director's responsibility. Should the funeral director identify any concerns, ensure the funeral director makes immediate contact with the mortuary officer, alternate mortuary officer, or mortuary technician for corrective measures. Every attempt shall be made to mitigate unexpected circumstances without family involvement.

4.8. On return to home or duty station, complete AF Form 1947, *Escort Report* and deliver to the mortuary officer or technician. Include any observations or difficulties encountered and the Air Force function in connection with transportation, funeral, military honors, or any other matter directly or indirectly related to Air Force Mortuary Affairs responsibilities.

## **5. The Family of the Deceased Member.**

5.1. Possible Grief Responses of Family Members. The attitude of the family toward the loss of a loved one varies. Full and complete recognition and acceptance of the death is seldom immediate. During the period following death, the military escort may witness several different emotional responses.

5.1.1. As the escort, you need to realize that grief responses expressed by the bereaved, such as withdrawal, rejection, anger, or hostility are normal reactions to death and are not being directed toward specific individuals.

5.1.2. As an Air Force representative, you may symbolize associated circumstances relating to the loss. Therefore, you may become a temporary object of one or more grief emotions. You are expected and required to act in the best interest of the family and of the Air Force at all times. In your special role, this may be best affected by being a patient and understanding listener, rather than a poorly qualified counselor.

5.1.3. Do not impose on the privacy of the family's grief, but maintain a state of convenient availability should your presence be required or requested.

5.2. Communicating with Family Members.

5.2.1. Do not attempt to answer specific questions on subjects such as insurance, allowances and expenses, awards and decorations, or the status of personal effects and property. If asked, advise the next of kin that you will provide their questions to their Family Assistance Representative (FAR), who will contact them.

## 6. Interment Flag.

### 6.1. Display of Interment Flag.

6.1.1. Position the flag so the union (blue/star field) is at the head and over left shoulder of the deceased (see [Figure 5](#)).

6.1.2. Transportation Over Land. The flag will be draped over the casket and displayed throughout the movement from the contract funeral home or port mortuary facility to the receiving funeral home or national cemetery.

6.1.3. Transportation by Commercial Air or Military Air/Contract Military Air (for deaths occurring in a combat theater of operation). On arrival at the air terminal at final destination, drape the flag over the closed casket.

6.2. The flag may drape a closed casket or half-opened casket. See [Figure 2](#) and [4](#) for proper display procedures.

6.3. Flag Procedure at the Graveside. NOTE: For your information only.

6.3.1. When the casket has been carried to the grave and positioned on the lowering device, the Honor Guard noncommissioned officer in charge brings the bugler and firing party to Order Arms. The Honor Guard elements of firing party, bugler, and color guard are brought to Parade Rest. The pallbearers then lift the interment flag from the casket and hold it tautly, waist high, over the grave.

6.3.2. At the conclusion of Taps, the pallbearers fold the flag in the prescribed manner. The pallbearer at the head of the casket, on the side where the family is seated, is the last pallbearer to have possession of the newly folded flag. After ensuring the flag fold is tight and smooth, the pallbearer hands the flag to the designated person who is to present the flag to the next of kin. The flag may be presented by you, the chaplain or clergy, the funeral ceremonial team officer in charge, or the noncommissioned officer in charge.

6.3.2.1. If you are designated to present an interment flag. While you are presenting the flag to the recipient, you will state ***“On behalf of the President of the United States, the United States Air Force, and a grateful nation, please accept this flag as a symbol of our appreciation for your loved one’s honorable and faithful service.”***

6.3.2.1.1. For presentations of multiple interment flags, per the authorized recipients listed in [paragraph 6.3.3](#), you will state the verbiage listed in [paragraph 6.3.2.1](#) for each family member flag presentation.

6.3.3. The designated person will present the flag(s) to the following authorized recipients:

6.3.3.1. Spouse (if not legally separated or divorced).

6.3.3.2. Children (both adult and minor).

6.3.3.3. Parents of the fallen Airman. If married, the parents will receive one flag together. If divorced or legally separated, each parent will receive a flag.

6.3.3.4. Person Authorized to Direct Disposition, if not in a category covered in **paragraph 6.3.3.1 – 6.3.3.3** *NOTE*: The mortuary officer where the death occurred will provide the flag to drape the casket. The installation providing Military Funeral Honors will furnish the additional required number of flags. When there are multiple flag recipients, there should be a chair or small table near the head of the grave to accommodate the additional, pre- folded flags. The flag draping the casket during the service is the first to be presented, and is presented to the Primary Next of Kin, unless otherwise requested. The additional flags are presented to the other authorized recipient(s).

Shon J. Manasco  
Assistant Secretary of the Air Force  
Manpower and Reserve Affairs

**Attachment 1****GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION*****References***

AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*, 18 July 2011

***Adopted Forms***

AF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*

AF Form 1947, *Escort Report*

***Terms***

**Family Assistance Representative**—a military member, appointed by the unit commander of the deceased to serve as an Air Force liaison to the family to meet their needs including transportation support, lodging, and any other assistance necessary prior to and after the funeral.

**Person Authorized to Direct Disposition**—In accordance with Federal law the Person Authorized to Direct Disposition is the person authorized to direct disposition of the remains.

**Person Authorized to Receive Effects**—A designated person authorized to receive the decedent's personal property and effects.

**Primary Next-of-Kin**—The person most closely related to the deceased individual, per the member's DD Form 93, *Record of Emergency Contact*, and applicable state law.