

QUESTIONS ABOUT A STATE FUNERAL

Q1. What is a state funeral?

A1. A state funeral is a category used by the Department of Defense to describe the type of funeral conducted to honor our president, a former president, a president-elect, or any other person specifically designated by the president. A state funeral is a time-honored tradition and a symbol of respect.

The primary Department of Defense reference is a joint publication entitled "State, Official and Special Military Funerals," which is available online at http://www.usapa.army.mil/pdffiles/p1_1.pdf.

Q2. What does a state funeral consist of?

A2. State funeral ceremonies normally consist of three stages.

Stage I includes ceremonies within the state in which the president, former president, or president-elect was in residence. These ceremonies generally consist of an arrival ceremony at a church, presidential library, or museum where the remains of the former president will lie in repose; a departure ceremony from the church/library/museum and a departure ceremony from a military or civilian airfield.

Stage II includes several ceremonial elements within the national capital region. These elements generally include an arrival ceremony at Andrews Air Force Base; an arrival ceremony, repose and departure ceremony at Bethlehem Chapel; the main funeral procession on Constitution Avenue with representation from each of the military services and a U.S. Air Force 21-ship flyover (weather permitting); an arrival ceremony, service, lying in state and a departure ceremony at the U.S. Capitol; an arrival ceremony, funeral service and departure ceremony at Washington National Cathedral (or other desired location); and a departure ceremony from Andrews Air Force Base.

Stage III may include an arrival ceremony at a military or civilian airfield, church service, repose and interment.

As family desires are paramount, this general sequence can be adjusted in accordance with family guidance.

The ceremonies occurring in the national capital region may involve Armed Forces honor guards, elite military bands, and other service units to include federal service academies, National Guard and U.S. Armed Forces Reserve units. The ceremonies occurring outside the national capital region may include Washington-based honor guards and local service units to include active duty, National Guard and Reserve for logistical, military band or salute guns support.

Q3. What federal law or executive order authorizes state funerals for U.S. presidents?

A3. A presidential proclamation, which officially announces the death of an authorized individual, directs the Department of Defense to conduct a state funeral on the Nation's

behalf. Authorized personnel include the president, a former president, the president-elect or any other person specifically designated by the president of the United States.

Q4. Who was the first president to receive a state funeral?

A4. The first general mourning proclaimed in America was for Benjamin Franklin. He died in 1791 followed by President George Washington in 1799. Abraham Lincoln was the first president to receive a truly national funeral, with large scale observances in a number of cities as his funeral train proceeded from the Nation's Capital to Springfield, Ill. All presidents have received funerals with military honors. The exact date when services were termed a "state funeral" is unknown.

Q5. When was the last state funeral?

A5. The last state funeral was held for President Gerald R. Ford in January 2007. Within the last fifty years, there have been seven state funerals for former presidents of the United States. In addition, President Reagan directed a state funeral for the Vietnam Unknown Soldier on Memorial Day, May 28, 1984.

Q6. What is involved in the planning process for a state funeral?

A6.

- Determining the family's wishes.
- Developing plans which incorporate family desires, tradition and military regulation, all balanced against security concerns and availability of resources.
- Developing and maintaining interagency relationships.
- Conducting ongoing coordination.
- Conducting ceremonial training.

Q7. What are the greatest challenges involved in planning a state funeral?

A7. Finding the right balance of security, public participation, and family privacy during an event conducted on the world stage.

Q8. What is the procedure for announcing a former president's death?

A8. Historically, the family has chosen to release a brief statement announcing the death to the wire services, usually through the office of the former president or his designated spokesperson. Shortly thereafter, the incumbent president will issue a formal proclamation announcing the death to the American people, directing the Department of Defense to conduct a State Funeral on behalf of the Nation, directing the half-staffing of the National flag for 30 days from the day of death, and designating the National Day of Mourning. Subsequently, Joint Task Force National Capital Region is established as the DoD operational command directed to lead the conduct of the State Funeral.

Q9. When is the National Day of Mourning generally held?

A9. Since President Roosevelt's death, the National Day of Mourning has been designated the day of the national funeral service in Washington D.C. If a service was not held in Washington D.C., the National Day of Mourning was observed during the day of interment.

Q10. When were the days of mourning for past presidents?

A10. <http://www.usstatefuneral.mdw.army.mil/past-state-funerals>

Q11. Are first ladies eligible for a state funeral?

A11. In the history of the United States, no First Lady or former First Lady has ever been authorized a State Funeral. By custom, they are afforded the same courtesies customarily extended to a military family member in Arlington National Cemetery, specifically the services of military body bearers and a military chaplain, if desired by the family.