

## RP0306 – Support Memorial Ceremonies

### TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Given references, materials, equipment, and the requirement to temporarily inter a casualty as well as command and mortuary affairs authority to do so, support mortuary affairs ensuring dignified burial in accordance with the faith of the deceased, the commander's requirements and, as appropriate, local procedures. (RP00.03.09)

### ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Without the aid of references, given a list, identify the scope of responsibility for mortuary affairs, per the student handout. (RP00.03.09a)
2. Without the aid of references, given a list, identify location for temporary interment, per the student handout. (RP00.03.09b)
3. Without the aid of references, given a list, assist in preparing the interment site, per the student handout. (RP00.03.09c)
4. Without the aid of references, given a list, assist with planning for the memorial ceremony, per the student handout. (RP00.03.09d)
5. Without the aid of references, given a list, rig and unrig for a memorial ceremony, per the student handout. (RP00.03.09e)
6. Without the aid of references, given a list, set security for a memorial ceremony, per the student handout. (RP00.03.09f)
7. Without the aid of references, given a list, set security for a memorial ceremony, per the student handout. (RP00.03.09f)
8. Without the aid of references, given a list, document a memorial ceremony in a RMT logbook, per the student handout. (RP00.03.09g)



While we may not be comfortable talking about death, especially the death of fellow Marines and Sailors, the religious ministry team is a “key player” for the command to meet the needs of honoring fallen comrades and comforting the bereaved.

## Scope of Responsibility

It is important for the RMT to have a general understanding of the process of mortuary affairs. We do not need to become experts but, as we minister to Marines and Sailors who've lost a buddy to death in combat, it helps to have a general understanding of the scope of responsibility for mortuary affairs.

The expedient and respectful repatriation of deceased personnel to their person authorized to

direct disposition (PADD) is the top priority of the joint mortuary affairs program.

Mortuary affairs consists of three different programs: current death program, concurrent return program, and graves registration program. Each program occurs at distinct stages.

1. The **current death program** is in effect during peacetime and during hostilities of short duration when few casualties are expected. Remains are moved from a unit's area of operation to a collection point, then to a mortuary either within or outside the continental United States, and finally to the person authorized to direct disposition of remains.

2. The **concurrent return program** is in effect during wartime. Under this program, remains move from the unit area of operation to a collection point, then to a Theater Mortuary Evacuation Point (TMEP), next to a mortuary located in the continental United States, and finally to the person authorized to direct disposition of remains.

3. The **graves registration program** is used only as a last resort and only upon order of the geographic combatant commander. This program is only enacted when an overwhelming number of remains prevents normal mortuary affairs operations from occurring or when contaminated remains cannot be decontaminated. Graves registration program objectives include the following:

- Sustained troop morale.
- Search for and attempted recovery of remains.
- Prompt, accurate identification of remains.
- Evacuation of remains.
- Prompt recovery, inventory, and shipment of personal effects.
- Prompt, accurate, and complete

administrative recording and reporting.

- Prompt, adequate care for deceased allies and enemy personnel.

The Army is the executive agent of mortuary affairs for all Services. However, each Service plays a major role in the handling of its deceased.



In the Marine Corps, mortuary affairs responsibilities reside in the Reserves, whose primary focus is graves registration. The reserve unit is the Graves Registration Platoon, H&S Company, H&S Battalion, 4th FSSG. The graves registration platoon's T/O consists of 1 Marine officer, 42 Marines, and 3 enlisted Navy embalmers. The platoon conducts tactical search and recovery operations in hostile, benign, and/or contaminated environments; recovers personal effects and records personal information; conducts temporary interment/disinterment; and conducts temporary burials, if necessary, of human remains. The platoon must also be prepared to establish and operate casualty collection points, supervise theater evacuation point operations, and coordinate the transfer of remains and personal effects of deceased servicemembers.

In an operational setting, a Mortuary Affairs Collection Point (MACP) is a designated site where specially-trained personnel provide technical assistance for the acceptance and disposition of remains. This includes interment, interment records, and temporary interment site maintenance until other provisions are made for subsequent custody/disposition. The MACP is an intermediate or transit point for remains. The MAGTF commander chooses the site of the MACP. This MAGTF Chaplain will assign RMTs to provide ministry at the MACP.

# Temporary Interment

With modern transportation, it is rare that the RMT would be called upon to assist with a temporary interment, but the RMT should be prepared to assist if that's necessary.

You may be called upon to assist in identifying a location for temporary interment.

If the tactical situation requires a unit to move out of an area in an expedient manner without evacuating remains, a unit may request permission to conduct isolated interments. Permission is requested through command channels from the geographic combatant commander. Temporary interment is used only as a last resort and only upon order of the geographic combatant commander.

Temporary interment is enacted when an overwhelming number of remains prevent normal mortuary affairs operations from occurring or when contaminated remains cannot be decontaminated.

Isolated interments are shallow graves constructed to prevent unattended remains in open areas.

When death occurs aboard ship, or remains are recovered and taken aboard ship, the remains should be preserved for burial on land.

Committal at sea is permissible only when refrigerated storage facilities cannot be made available aboard ship, and transfer to shore cannot be accomplished within a reasonable time or is operationally inadvisable. The ship's commanding officer ensures that all remains are identified before they are committed at sea.

When remains are committed at sea, identification documents and personal effects are processed in accordance with established procedures; further disposition is made in accordance with current Service regulations.

You may also be required to assist in preparing the interment site.

All personal effects and other identification media are interred with the remains.

Identification tags or cards are not removed from remains under any circumstances. The interment site is marked in an easily distinguishable manner for future recovery teams.

If tactical and logistical situations make it impossible to use preferred evacuation or emergency burial methods, mass or trench burials may be used to reduce the time between recovery and burial of remains. The Joint Military Affairs Office (JMAO) in the theater, with the approval of the geographic combatant commander, gives permission for mass burials of casualties. If there are no mortuary affairs units in the area and contact with higher headquarters is lost, the senior officer in the area decides whether the remains should be buried in a mass grave or evacuated to the rear. If a mass burial is required, the burial site may consist of any number of rows. Each row holds 10 remains, head to foot. The rows are approximately 70 feet long, 3.5 feet deep, and as wide as the earthmoving equipment blade (minimum of 2.5 feet). Ideally, rows should be side by side, but terrain may dictate otherwise.

# Memorial Ceremony SOP

Whether it is a temporary interment or not, it is very likely that your RMT will be required to provide a memorial ceremony at some time.

Preparation is the key to successful planning for a memorial ceremony.

RMT's should begin their preparation by working with your unit's adjutant and executive officer to prepare standing operating procedure for memorial ceremonies for your unit.

Unit SOPs could be developed for both in garrison and in the combat zone.

The Religious Ministry Team Handbook MCRP 6-12A, appendix C, contains a sample of an SOP. It is reproduced below.

## **Command/Unit Standing Operating Procedure for Funerals and Memorial Services (Sample)**

Canc:  
BnBul 1732  
REL:  
Date

BATTALION BULLETIN 1732

From: Commanding Officer  
To: Distribution List

Subj: STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR FUNERALS AND MEMORIAL SERVICES

Ref: (a) NAVMC 2691, Marine Corps Drill and Ceremonies Manual  
(b) NAVPERS 15555C, Navy Military Funerals

Purpose. To set standard operating procedures for the conduct of funerals and memorial services at the time of death of a member of the battalion.

1. Information. Funerals and/or memorial services will be conducted for Marines and Sailors who die while members of this battalion. The battalion commander will approve funeral requests by primary next of kin (PNOK), unless prohibited by operational commitments. Memorial services will be conducted at the discretion of the battalion commander. Military funerals will be conducted at the location requested by the PNOK, when possible. While in garrison, battalion memorial services will be conducted at the camp chapel unless otherwise specified by the battalion commander. This bulletin should be considered as the commander's guidance for the responsible persons. Due to the "short fused" notice of funerals and memorial services, all action items should be completed immediately upon death notification.

2. Uniform. The uniform for funerals is Service dress Alpha unless otherwise directed. The uniform for memorial services conducted at the camp chapel is camouflage utilities unless otherwise directed.

3. Action

a. Battalion Sergeant Major

(1) Coordinate necessary arrangements with other commands for conduct of ceremonies as required in accordance with the references.

(2) Coordinate time and date of service with the commanding officer, executive officer and company commanders.

(3) Organize and supervise all military ceremonial aspects of the service in cooperation with the battalion chaplain; e.g., honor guard, color guard, firing squad, presentation of military awards, etc.

(4) Escort command and official representatives as required.

b. Battalion Adjutant

(1) Coordinate all public relations, publicity, command notifications, invitations, responses, etc. as directed by the battalion commander and executive officer.

(2) Arrange for military police traffic control as required.

(3) Assist battalion sergeant major in coordination of official parties, protocol, etc.

c. Company Commander (service member's company at time of death)

(1) Acquire and provide helmet, framed picture of service member and display items to Religious Program Specialist at chapel.

(2) Deliver naming and witness (obituary/eulogy) at the service.

(3) Provide escorts as required.

(4) Provide two scripture readers for the service.

(5) Provide ushers as required.

(6) Provide memorial flowers. (Optional.)

d. Battalion Chaplain

(1) Coordinate arrangement for the conduct of the ceremony.

(2) Arrange order of service, readings, and pastoral meditation.

(3) Provide pastoral care to the family.

(4) Coordinate additional chaplain or clergy participation in accordance with the wishes of the PNOK.

e. Battalion Religious Program Specialist

(1) Prepare chapel for service and provide additional logistic support as required.

(2) Contact division band or other bugler as directed by chaplain or sergeant major for playing of taps for the service.

(3) Type, print, and prepare service bulletins for distribution at the service.

(4) As directed by the sergeant major, reserve seating for family members, official guests, etc.

(5) Arrange for organist or other musicians as requested by the commander or PNOK.

Commanding Officer

DISTRIBUTION:

## Religious Considerations in Mortuary Affairs

If your unit sustains fatal casualties in the combat zone, the RMT may be asked to advise the command regarding the burial considerations for different religions. These are some of the considerations for the major faith groups. Further research may be needed.

### Baha'i

Burial should take place as soon as possible after legal formalities and funeral arrangements can be put in place. The body should be transported no more than one hour's journey from the place where the person died, so funerals take place relatively close to the place of death. Baha'is have no specific period of mourning.

### Buddhism

Funerals usually focus on a reflection on the transitions of life. Bodies can be either buried or cremated.

### Christianity

Funerals normally take place within a week or two of death. Christians may be either buried or cremated.

### Hinduism

The majority of adult Hindus are cremated. This takes place within 24 hours of death. Eldest sons may also shave their heads as a sign of grief. Several ceremonies take place before cremations and traditionally elder sons light funeral pyres. Prayers are conducted by Hindu priests in homes and at crematoriums. Sometime after cremations ashes are collected and scattered in sacred rivers. The family stays indoors for 10-13

days of mourning.

## Islam

Burial must take place as soon as possible after death. Cremation is strictly forbidden. Prayers and ritual washing and shrouding of bodies are carried out at Mosques. Mourning periods of up to 3 days follows this.

## Judaism

A dying Jew should not be alone; wherever possible, a Rabbi or any practicing Jewish leader should be asked to attend, so that the dying person may recite the appropriate prayers. Jews are buried as soon as possible after death in a simple ceremony. Reform Judaism does not object to cremation. Following a death, there is often a week of private mourning (Shiva). Following the death of a parent, an observant Jewish man may wish to go to the Synagogue to pray morning, afternoon and evening for 11 months of the Jewish calendar.

## Memorial Ceremony

A suggested format for a memorial ceremony conducted by a chaplain is found on page 643 in the Book of Worship for United States Forces. It is also included below.

- Prelude
- Opening Sentences
- Hymn
- Invocation
- Responsive Reading
- Special Music
- Scripture Lesson
- Address
- Moment of Silence
- Taps
- Hymn
- Benediction
- Postlude

With consideration for the chaplain's faith tradition, the RMT will need to work together with the command and the family to modify the ceremony as appropriate. Additional possible elements could include: church call, commanding officer's address, or eulogies by friends.

# MEMORIAL CEREMONY FOR NON-CLERGY USE

In the combat zone, there may be occasions for memorial ceremonies but no chaplains are available. The RP may be asked to advise the command regarding an appropriate ceremony. It is appropriate for the commanding officer or his/her representative to conduct the ceremony. The following ceremony is recommended in Joint Pub 4-6.

## MEMORIAL CEREMONY FOR NON-CLERGY USE IN TEMPORARY INTERMENT SITUATIONS

**OPENING SENTENCE:** God is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? God is the stronghold of my life, of whom should I be afraid?

**PRAYER:** Almighty God, we commemorate these, your servants, remembering with gratitude their courage and strength. We hold before you those who mourn them. Look upon your bereaved servants with mercy. As this day brings memories of those they have lost, may it also bring your consolation, and the assurance of your eternal care.

AMEN.

**WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE:** We gather to pay tribute to the memory of these dead who have paid the ultimate price for the defense of our nation. We are honored to have served with them. They were our friends and our compatriots, and we shall sorely miss them.

What grief we feel amid the shock of battle. We are people who know fear and death, yet we follow duty's call despite the uncertainty of the hours and days ahead.

We ask the blessing of God upon our nation, those who serve, and for the dead who no longer stand in our ranks.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Let us pay tribute in a moment of silence.

**TAPS:** (If bugler or tape and player is available).

**CLOSING PRAYER:** God, as we honor these here fallen, protect those who carry on. Comfort, O God, both the living and the dead. Keep us safe from evil. Let us live with honor. Grant us courage. Be our guide, in your holy name.

AMEN.

## Bulletin

If a bulletin is required for the ceremony, the RP will often be the one to design and produce the bulletin. A sample bulletin is included in your student materials to give you an idea of how they typically look.


 Service in Memory of  
 Lance Corporal Robert E. Eaton V  
 October 27, 1981 - November 3, 2003
 

Prelude. Mrs. Todd  
 Church Call  
 \*Posting the Colors.  
 \*Invocation Chaplain M.A. Bigelow  
 \*Opening Hymn "Amazing Grace" #202 (vs. 1 & 4)  
 \*Responsive Reading "22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm"  
 Chaplain: The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.  
*All: He makes me to lie down in the green pastures.*  
 Chaplain: He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul.  
*All: He leads me in the path of righteousness for His name's sake.*  
 Chaplain: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
*All: I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*  
 Chaplain: You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies.  
*All: You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows.*  
 Chaplain: Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.  
*All: And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

Remarks by Commanding Officer Lt.Col. M.A. Micucci  
 Scripture Reading Psalm 103: 1,2, 8-18 Cpl. H.A. Rosales  
 Meditation Chaplain M. A. Bigelow  
 \*Closing Hymn "Eternal Father"  
 Roll Call  
 \*TAPS 2D Marine Division Band  
 \*Benediction Chaplain M.A. Bigelow  
 \*Retire the Colors  
 \*Postlude

\* Congregation Stands

*Eternal Father, Strong To Save*

*Eternal Father, strong to save  
 Whose arms hath bound the restless wave,  
 Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep  
 Its own appointed limits keep,  
 O, hear us when we cry to Thee  
 For those in peril on the sea.*

*Eternal Father, grant, we pray,  
 To all Marines, both night and day,  
 The courage, honor, strength, and skill  
 Their land to serve, Thy law fulfill;  
 Be Thou the shield forevermore  
 From every peril to the Corps.*

*Our deepest sympathy is expressed to  
 Lance Corporal Robert Eaton's family and friends.*

Figure 1: Interior of Memorial Bulletin

*Marines Prayer*

*Almighty Father whose command is over all and whose love never fails, make me aware of Thy presence and obedient to Thy will. Keep me true to my best self, guarding me against dishonesty in purpose and deed and helping me to live so that I can face my fellow Marines, my loved ones and Thee without shame or fear. Protect my family. Give me the will to do the work of a Marine and to accept my share of responsibilities with and vigor and enthusiasm. Grant me the courage to be proficient in my daily performance. Keep me loyal and faithful to my superiors and to the duties my country and The Marine Corps have entrusted to me. Make me considerate of those committed to my leadership. Help me to wear my uniform with dignity, and let it remind me daily of the traditions which I must uphold.*

*If I am inclined to doubt, steady my faith; if I am tempted, make me strong to resist, if I should miss the mark, give me the courage to try again.*

*Guide me with the light of truth and grant me wisdom by which I may understand the answer to my prayer.*

*Amen*

Service in Memory of  
 Lance Corporal Robert E. Eaton V  
 Support Company, 2d Combat Engineer Battalion  
 Second Marine Division


  
 2D COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION

Protestant Chapel  
 Camp Lejeune, North Carolina  
 14 November, 2003  
 1300

Figure 2: Exterior of Memorial Bulletin

# Rigging



Rigging for memorial ceremonies varies from command to command. For memorial ceremonies conducted for those fallen in combat, a standard memorial display includes the inverted rifle, boots, helmet, and dog tags. Other items can be added depending on local preference.

# Security

Security for memorial ceremonies is a constant concern while in the combat zone. Even ceremonies conducted within an established base need to be concerned with security. Insurgents, posing as civilian workers, could infiltrate and attack the ceremony. The RP should work with the unit's S-3 and Force Protection Officer, to provide security for the memorial ceremony.

# RMT Logbook

Finally, the RP will need to document memorial ceremonies in the RMT logbook.

Documentation should include the following:

- Name of deceased.
- Name of chaplain performing ceremony.
- Time and date of ceremony.
- Location of ceremony.
- As specifically as possible, location of temporary interment.
- Number of attendees.
- A copy of the memorial bulletin.

While it is difficult to consider the death of fellow Marines and Sailors, the ministry of honoring our comrades and comforting the grieving through a memorial ceremony cannot be understated. The RMT needs to approach this ministry with planning and professionalism to provide Divine presence in this difficult time.

