



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT: Lt. Col. Darrin Haas**

**OFFICE: 615.313.0662**

darrin.w.haas.mil@army.mil

## **Tennessee National Guard hosts Funeral Honors Certification Course**

**SMYRNA, Tenn.** – Respectfully honoring and paying tribute to our deceased service members is an essential way for our country to demonstrate its gratitude for their service and sacrifice. Ensuring that our heroes, who have faithfully defended our nation, are properly honored is a time-honored tradition demanding the utmost precision and diligence.

Thanks to the efforts of the Army National Guard Funeral Honors Program and the Tennessee National Guard, our service members are able to receive the honors they deserve.

From Jan. 24 to Feb. 4, the Tennessee National Guard hosted the Army National Guard Level II Funeral Honors Instructor Certification Course at Smyrna’s Volunteer Training Site. Ten Soldiers, from various states, traveled to Tennessee to become qualified funeral honors instructors able to teach skills to their fellow Soldiers at home.

The certification is a demanding two-week long program that instructs Soldiers how to teach the level I course to members in their own funeral honors teams.

“The Guardsmen attending this course are the best in their state,” said Kevin Palladino, an Army National Guard Funeral Honors trainer. “They are all volunteers and already graduates of the level I course that certifies them to perform funeral honors. What these Soldiers are learning here goes beyond customs and courtesies. It ensures that they can perform these ceremonies as well as mentor and teach others at their state to do them properly.”

Guardsmen learn to conduct and demonstrate a 21-gun salute, perform as a pall-bearers, fold and present the U.S. flag at funerals, and countless other tasks guaranteeing professional honors are rendered to our fallen service members and families burying their loved ones.

“The course is incredibly detail oriented,” said Palladino. “For example, we ensure that our students know the exact placement of their elbow when standing at attention or that their fingers are perfectly placed on their rifle during movements. There has to be a seamless standard performed throughout all 54 states and territories; everyone has to be uniform.”

Palladino is one of two instructors who teach this course. He, and his fellow instructor, Bryan Hise, from Georgia, pack 160 hours of classes into a two-week period.

“The Army National Guard conducts over 85% of the Army Military Funeral Honors, an average of over 115,000 honors per year, throughout the United States for our veterans, retirees, and



service members,” said Hise. “It is our responsibility to ensure that we provide every one of them the opportunity to receive the honor and tribute they deserve. To do this, the trainees are putting in 12 to 15 hour days to learn and be ready. That’s what it takes to be the best of the best, and we need to make sure these Soldiers are the very best.”

Spc. Collin Carrier, a member of the Tennessee National Guard’s 777th Maintenance Support Company in Smyrna, completed the course and is a member of Tennessee’s Funeral Honors Program.

“I try to do my best every time,” said Carrier. “Families are grieving a loved one, and when we present them with that flag you can see it in their eyes, it gives them a huge sense of pride, and it’s a big honor to be able to provide that for them.”

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Members of the Army National Guard practice funeral procedures, Feb. 3, during the Military Funeral Honors Level II Certification Course, at Smyrna's Volunteer Training Site from Jan. 24 – Feb. 4. The two-week course trains current active Military Funeral Honors personnel how to teach the Level I course for new members entering their programs in their respective states. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Cordeiro)



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Ten members of the Army National Guard pose for a photo, Feb. 3, during the Military Funeral Honors Level II Certification Course, at Smyrna's Volunteer Training Site from Jan. 24 – Feb. 4. The two-week course trains current active Military Funeral Honors personnel how to teach the Level I course for new members entering their programs in their respective states. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Cordeiro)

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