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### VA seeks buglers to play 'Taps' at national cemeteries

by Gerry J. Gilmore  
American Forces Press Service

3/6/2007 - **WASHINGTON (AFNEWS)** -- Hundreds of volunteer buglers and trumpeters are being sought to participate in Armed Forces Day observances held at veterans' cemeteries nationwide and overseas, a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs official said.

The event, called "Echo Taps Worldwide," will be held May 19 and is co-sponsored by the VA's National Cemetery Administration and "Bugles Across America," a volunteer group, said Michael Nacincik, the cemetery administration's chief of communications and outreach support.

"Echo Taps" will take place at VA-operated national cemeteries, U.S. Department of the Interior/National Park Service national cemeteries and American Battle Monuments Commission cemeteries located overseas, Nacincik said.

"It is an extremely important event for a number of reasons," Nacincik said. "It honors the service of veterans to our country."

The initiative also encourages musicians to perform as buglers at veterans' funeral ceremonies year round, Nacincik said. In 2006, 688,000 veterans died in the United States, he noted, with most belonging to the World War II generation.

"There is overwhelming popular support to have 'Taps' played at veterans' funerals," Nacincik said. "And, obviously, with that many burials taking place, there are not enough buglers to provide a live bugler at every burial."

Nevertheless, Bugles Across America has done "a very good job" of obtaining volunteers to play "Taps" at military funerals, Nacincik said.

"It is important that our nation preserves the tradition of a live bugler to play final military honors," Leslie Hampton, a Navy veteran and Bugles Across America volunteer, said in a recent VA news release.

"Hopefully, 'Echo Taps' will go even further and help to identify people who know how to play 'Taps' or are willing to learn how to play 'Taps' and motivate them to want to provide the service when they're available at veterans' funerals in the future," Nacincik said.

Volunteer buglers and trumpeters must register through the VA's website, which is attached to the "Echo Taps" site at [www.echotaps.org](http://www.echotaps.org), Nacincik said.

The VA operates 124 veterans' cemeteries across the United States, Nacincik said. Generally, persons who've received other than dishonorable discharges after completion of military service are eligible for burial at a VA-operated national cemetery, he noted.

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