

Confederate Flag Taken from S.C. Statehouse

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(CN) - After a week of reflection and filibustering, the Confederate flag was removed Friday morning from the grounds of the South Carolina statehouse.

The flag was officially lowered (<http://www.sctv.org/television/streaming/scgov.cfm>) by an honor guard of seven state highway patrol officers at 10:09 a.m., as thousands of spectators broke into applause and cheers.

The troopers then folded the four-foot flag, and walked to the north steps of the capitol, where Allen Roberson, director of the Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, waited to receive it.

The flag, which is a replica of the banner flown by Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia -- a flag that never actually flew in battle over South Carolina during the Civil War -- was then driven, with a police escort, to the museum.

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley watched the ceremony from the Capitol steps with two of her predecessors, former Govs. David Beasley and Jim Hodges, Charleston Mayor Joe Riley and Rev. Norvel Goff, the new pastor of Charleston's Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, where nine people were slain by an alleged white supremacist three weeks ago.

It was those murders, during a Bible study class at the church, that served as the catalyst for the removal of the flag, which had been displayed atop of adjacent to the statehouse for more than 50 years.

Among the slain the church's pastor, Rev. Clementa Pinckney, who was also a long-serving state senator.

The highway patrolmen who took down the flag were the same officers who escorted the Pinckney's casket of when he lay in state under the capitol dome last month.

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