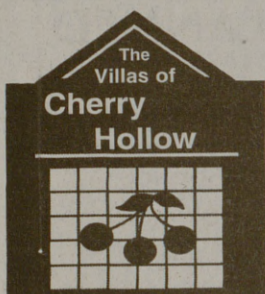


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Pentagon to control Osprey investigation

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Marine Corps ceded control of its V-22 Osprey investigation to the Pentagon's inspector general, citing the "nature and gravity" of allegations that the Osprey squadron commander asked subordinates to falsify maintenance data.

In a brief statement Wednesday, Gen. James L. Jones, commandant of the Marine Corps, said Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld approved his request that the Defense Department's top investigator take control of the inquiry.

The investigation was begun last Thursday by Brig. Gen. Timothy F. Ghormley, the Marine Corps inspector general.

He headed a team that flew to the Osprey squadron's base at New River, N.C., and began interviewing all 241 members of the squadron, including the commander, Lt. Col. Odin Fred Leberman.

Jones is one of the strongest advocates of the Osprey, an aircraft that uses unique tilt-rotor technology to take off and land like a helicopter and fly like an airplane. The Osprey is supposed to replace the Marines' aging fleet of troop transport helicopters.

"While I have complete confidence that

(Ghormley) and his staff would conduct a thorough, complete and unbiased investigation into these allegations, I am concerned that the nature and gravity of the allegations may invite unwarranted perceptions of command influence or institutional bias," Jones said.

He also noted that the \$40 billion Osprey program's future affects other military services, particularly the Air Force.

A Marine Corps spokeswoman, Col. Betsy Judge, said Jones decided on his own that the credibility of the Osprey investigation would be strengthened if it were conducted independent of the Marine Corps. In a letter released Wednesday, Sens. John Warner, R-Va., and Carl Levin, D-Mich., took the same view.

"This program will not be able to move forward unless and until the Defense Department has restored confidence in the integrity of the V-22 program and the people managing it," Warner and Levin wrote in a letter to Rumsfeld. Warner is chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee that oversees the Pentagon, and Levin is the committee's top Democrat.

The senators said the investigators should be independent of the Navy Department, of which the

Marines are a part, since the allegations bear on the "integrity of information" provided to Congress.

At the time of a December Osprey crash, the Pentagon was about to decide whether to give the go-ahead for full-scale production. That decision has been put off pending a high-level review.

Allegations against Leberman threaten to undermine congressional confidence in the Osprey program, which already is under intense scrutiny as a result of two crashes last year that killed 23 Marines.

The Marines have said they believe the alleged doctoring of maintenance records in Leberman's squadron had no bearing on either of the crashes. The first, last April in Arizona, killed 19 Marines and was blamed on pilot error. The second, last December in North Carolina, killed four and is still under investigation. Officials said last week they believe the latest crash was caused by a hydraulics failure.

In an anonymous letter to the office of the secretary of the Navy on Jan. 12, a person who said he was an Osprey mechanic wrote, "What we have been doing is reporting aircraft that are down as in they can't fly, as being up, as in full mission capable. This type of deception has been going on for over two years."

Mother arrested for child endangerment

BROWNSVILLE, Texas (AP) — The mother of five children killed in a trailer park fire was arrested Tuesday on auto theft charges as she left their burial. Hours later, police charged her with five counts of child endangerment.

Maria Dulce Martinez, 30, is accused of stealing a 1990 Suburban last Tuesday, the day before a deadly fire swept the family's tiny

trailer. Police say they feared Martinez, a Mexican national, might try to escape across the border after her children's funeral.

"We tried to keep our distance out of respect for the children," said police investigator Orlando Rodriguez. "But we were also very aware of the threat of flight."

Police later filed the five counts, of child endangerment, one for each of the children who died.

RHA

Continued from Page 1

consume alcohol on campus.

"Imposing an alcohol ban on halls would negatively affect the on-campus community," the resolution states. The majority of students over the age of 21 reported that alcohol restrictions would decrease their desire to return in the fall. The loss of older students would have a grave effect on the "diversity of campus," Bennett said.

According to the resolution, if alcohol is eliminated from campus, a new problem of alcohol-related injuries could arise as students will be forced to travel off campus to

drink and possibly drive back to campus.

The resolution also said that substance-free housing is available in several halls on campus and will expand to more halls in the future. On-campus students who prefer to live substance-free have housing options.

The resolution will be placed on Southerland's desk for consideration within the next few days, said RHA President Josh Kaylor.

"We've done our part by passing this [resolution] along," he said.

Ron Sasse, director of Residence Life, will also draft a recommendation to Southerland.

A decision from President Dr. Ray M. Bowen is expected by Feb. 1.

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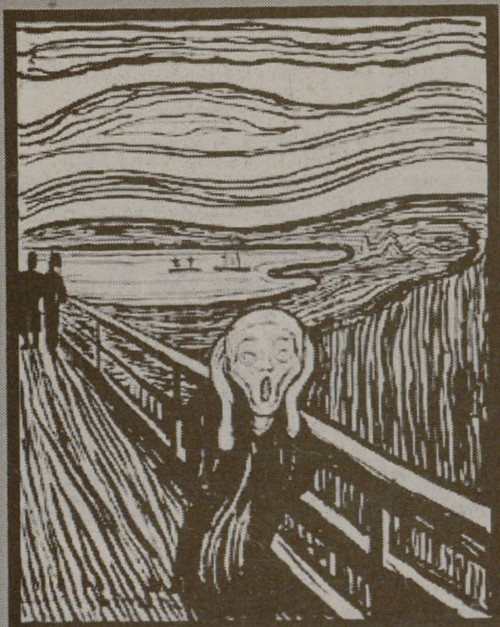
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