

Memo

To: The Honorable, The City Council
From: Councillor Henrietta Davis
Date: September 22, 1997
Re: Enclosed letter

I am respectfully transmitting for your information a copy of a letter sent to City Manager Robert W. Healy regarding an incident of military helicopters landing on Magazine Beach on Sunday, September 21st.



CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

CITY HALL, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

(617) 349-4280

FAX (617) 349-4287

TTY/TDD (617) 349-4242

Henrietta Davis
City Councillor

September 22, 1997

Mr. Robert W. Healy
City Manager
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Mr. Healy:

I am extremely alarmed and disturbed by a report that four military helicopters landed on the playing field at Magazine Beach at approximately 4:30 on Sunday afternoon. Magazine Beach, as you are no doubt aware, is a public recreation area which is especially busy on Sunday afternoons. The park is adjacent to Memorial Drive which was jammed with traffic this Sunday. To say nothing of the nearby shopping area and the residential neighborhood of Cambridgeport, also teeming with people.

In a week when the Secretary of Defense suspended military flights because there were so many crashes...

On the Charles River where about two years ago a state police helicopter crashed with several resulting fatalities...

What in the name of reason were four military helicopters doing landing in a public park, while a soccer game was in progress, children were playing baseball and sundry others were walking dogs and riding bicycles?

I've heard that this was a BU ROTC training mission, but before I level any allegations, I want to learn the facts of this matter. I respectfully request an immediate answer to the following questions:

1. Who landed helicopters at Magazine Beach on Sunday afternoon? What military units were involved?
2. Who authorized the landing of these helicopters? What was the involvement of BU? the MDC? the state police? the city of Cambridge?

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3. What safety precautions were taken to protect the people on the ground? Were they ordered off the field?
4. What instructions were given to the pilots about landing in an active public park?
5. What was the purpose of this mission? Was it an emergency?
6. Will there be a repetition of this incident?

In addition to the alarm for public safety felt by residents who observed this landing, they also report deafening noise for a period of ten minutes or more as the helicopters made their landing and subsequent departure.

I will defer my full reaction to this incident until I have the facts of the matter, but I believe this is extremely serious and posed significant risk for people on the ground. The decision to land in a public park shows a reckless disregard for the public in so many ways. I expect that the parties involved with Magazine Beach and possibly this incident will be kind enough to answer this inquiry within 24 hours. I would be happy to hear from you by telephone at 547-0877 or by fax at 354-0079.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Henrietta Davis".

Henrietta Davis
City Councillor

HD/mh

cc: President Jon Westling, Boston University
Commissioner David Balfour, M.D.C.
Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy, III

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Communicatins and Reports From City
Officers #2

5-594

A communication was received from Councillor
Henrietta Davis, transmitting a letter
regarding four helicopters landing on
Magazine Beach on Sunday, September 21,
1997.

In City Council September 22, 1997

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