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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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The Honorable David N. Henderson
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Henderson:

In your March 16, 1976, letter, you requested that we review the need for 250 additional family housing units at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. You were particularly concerned with whether the intent of the Congress was being carried out in view of the change in the housing project from replacement units to add-on units.

In view of additional factors Department of Defense officials cited as justification for the project and their intention to reconsider whether 250 inadequate units should be removed from the housing inventory, you requested that we discontinue our review. This letter briefly summarizes our findings at Camp Lejeune.

Also, as discussed with you, we are currently conducting a servicewide review of the military family housing program. Our review evaluates housing surveys, including the Camp Lejeune surveys, which are used to justify the construction of military housing units and other elements of the military family housing program. The results of our review, if significant, will be reported to the Congress.

We reviewed the documentation used to support the proposed housing project and discussed the project with officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Camp Lejeune, Marine Corps Headquarters; the Department of the Navy; and the community surrounding Camp Lejeune.

The Department of Defense justified the proposed construction to the Congress on the basis of replacing 250 inadequate family housing units for enlisted personnel. Instead of proceeding with the project as justified, the Marine Corps decided to build the 250 family housing units without demolishing the 250 inadequate units. Family housing surveys conducted during 1975 and 1976 at Camp Lejeune were used as the basis for changing the project

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from a replacement program of three- and four-bedroom units to an add-on program of all four-bedroom units.

Our review showed that the 1975 and 1976 family housing surveys conducted at Camp Lejeune were invalid and could not be used to justify the housing units because (1) improper sampling procedures used in the 1976 survey biased the survey results, (2) inconsistent survey input data was used for the two surveys, and (3) available community housing was understated.

On April 27, 1976, we met with officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense to discuss the Camp Lejeune project and to obtain their comments on our observations concerning the adequacy of the 1975 and 1976 housing surveys. After explaining our observations in detail, the Defense officials agreed that the survey results were invalid and, therefore, could not be used to justify the project. However, they said that they planned to continue with the project because the additional four-bedroom units would result in a better mix of on-base housing and would provide the base commander more flexibility in housing enlisted personnel. On that same date, we briefed you on the results of our review and informed you of the Department of Defense comments.

On June 2, 1976, a second meeting was held with you and representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Marine Corps. We again noted that the 1975 and 1976 housing surveys were invalid and, therefore, could not be used to justify the 250 family housing units at Camp Lejeune. Department of Defense officials again agreed that the surveys were invalid but announced plans to proceed with construction citing the following reasons as justification for the project.

- An impending Department of Defense assignment policy change which would permit families of personnel assigned overseas on short tours to remain in quarters at the home station.
- The fact that only 5.9 percent of the Camp Lejeune inventory is comprised of four-bedroom enlisted units while the worldwide figure is about 12.8 percent.
- The desire to balance the composition of Camp Lejeune inventory in light of average servicewide requirements for unit size.

The Department of Defense, in announcing its decision to continue with the Camp Lejeune housing, stated that

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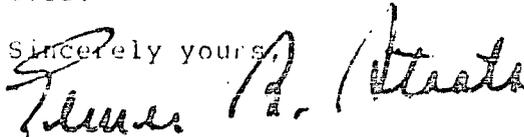
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"Upon reaching beneficial occupancy of the subject project, occupancy of 250 inadequate units by eligible families, in the area known as Tarawa Terrace, will be discontinued. At that time, a decision will be made whether or not to remove the housing from the government inventory. The decision will be based upon the situation at the time, to include a further review of community housing conditions relative to the military strength of the installation and any changes to policies or new directives which might ensue (sic) from Congress with regard to housing for military personnel. In any event, should a decision be made to retain the Tarawa Terrace units at a later date, the Department of Defense will declare this intent to the Armed Services Committees and respect their wishes on the matter."

In view of the above, you requested that we discontinue our review.

While reviewing the Camp Lejeune project, we noted that Camp Lejeune did not make the community aware of its housing needs. Department of Defense policy requires that family housing needs be met by the local community to the fullest extent possible. The local community cannot be expected to supply the Marine Corps' housing needs unless it is aware of the need. We brought this issue to the attention of the Commanding General at Camp Lejeune and he indicated that communications would be improved.

Sincerely yours,



Comptroller General
of the United States

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