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Chevy Chase Marine remembered for his 'outstanding reputation'

Officials are investigating non-hostile incident in Iraq that resulted in colonel's death

by Andrew Ujifusa | Staff Writer

A Bethesda native and decorated Marine colonel who died last week in Iraq is being remembered as an upstanding colleague.

"He had an outstanding reputation. He was very highly regarded here and continues to be," Lt. Col. Steve Stewart, the senior Marine at the U.S. Army Legal Center at the Judge Advocate General's School in Charlottesville, Va., said of Col. Michael R. Stahlman.

Stahlman, 45, died on Oct. 5 from injuries suffered from a non-hostile incident on July 31 in Anbar Province, Iraq, according to the Department of Defense. He taught at the Judge Advocate General's School earlier in his career.

Defense officials have not released details about how Stahlman was injured, but have said the incident is under investigation.

According to a report by the Associated Press, Stahlman was an investigative officer in the case of a Marine accused and later acquitted of murdering 24 Iraqi civilians in Haditha in 2005. Defense officials would not confirm that report.

Funeral arrangements for Stahlman have been made for Oct. 30 at Arlington National Cemetery, according to a blog dedicated to Stahlman called "Mike on the Mend." In a post on the blog, it was reported that in late September Stahlman developed sepsis, a condition in which an overactive immune system creates small blood clots.

In comments left on the blog in reaction to Stahlman's death, one anonymous commenter wrote: "Mike was a truly a stand out among Marines I have worked with during my career. Whenever I asked him for help or advice, he would immediately respond. It always felt as if he dropped everything else to help me. Somehow, I feel that is the case with everyone Mike met."

Stahlman was assigned to the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at 29 Palms, California, where he served as Staff Judge Advocate and director of Legal Services.

Stahlman graduated from the Marine Military School, a college preparatory school, in Harlingen, Tex., in 1981. He was a 1985 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy who majored in political science, was assigned to the 13th Company, and graduated with distinction, according to a spokeswoman at the Naval Academy in Annapolis.

He was then commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps and completed the Basic School at the Marine Corps base in Quantico, Va. He also completed Naval Flight officer training at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Fla., and F-4 specific flight training at Bergstrom Air Force Base in Austin, Tex.

He graduated from California Western School of Law in 1993 with a juris doctorate and admitted to practice law in California.

Stahlman then received a masters of law in criminal law from the Judge Advocate General's School in Charlottesville, Va. He began teaching criminal law at the Judge Advocate General's School in May 2000, and from May 2001 to May 2003 served as vice chairman of the criminal law department there.

His decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal with Gold Star in lieu of second award, the Navy Commendation Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Navy Achievement Medal with Gold Star in lieu of second award.