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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "DEPOT TARGETED FOR CLEANUP" MCRD PARRIS ISLAND SC
12/18/1994
BEAUFORT GAZETTE

Pyramid scheme probe may expand

By CHRIS DAVIS
Gazette staff writer

As S.C. Secretary of State Jim Miles prepares to take action against pyramid investors in Beaufort, signs are that the investigation may be expanding to another state agency.

Miles hopes to initiate charges in the next few weeks against people involved in the illegal get-rich-quick scheme, said his spokesman Michael Graham. Indictments and arrests may be forthcoming, he added.

"The investigation is being undertaken by this office, and it's in full bloom," Miles said Thursday. "Stay tuned."

The warning echoed an earlier message from the secretary when he predicted people involved in the "Friends Helping Friends" scheme would soon begin turning each other in to regulators.

The explosion of informants may have prompted the S.C. Department of Revenue and Taxation to begin exploring possible cases of tax evasion related to pyramid earnings.

Although no one from the revenue department has confirmed that a tax investigation is under way in Beaufort, a letter sent to the Secretary of State on Dec. 9 suggests that pyramid investors may be scrutinized for tax evasion.

"I would be interested in pursuing the income tax implications of the pyramid scheme running amuck in the Beaufort area as of late," wrote Marshall Smith, who works in the Beaufort office of the revenue department.

"If your office would consent to notify me of the identities of the pyramid scheme participants and winners, I would be happy to ensure



Jay Karr/Special to The Gazette

House decorating: Members of a Knights of Columbus-sponsored crafts group for handicapped women attended the Hyatt Regency-Hilton Head's holiday gingerbread house class Saturday to learn the fine points of gingerbread house decorating from the culinary professionals there. Here, Hyatt pastry chef Ann Mitchell, left, helps Susan Bench squeeze icing onto her house from a pastry bag.

Depot targeted for cleanup

The Marine Recruit Depot at Parris Island has been placed on a national priority list for environmental cleanup, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

The agency targeted four sites at the recruit training facility, including three landfills, which were used for nonindustrial waste such as domestic trash, ash residue, construction debris and paint products, and one pesticide disposal area.

The sites, which were closed in 1965, are now on the Federal Registry and National Priorities List and will be studied further to determine whether action is needed, according to the EPA.

But authorities say there is no threat to the community.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, the leading authority on human health risks, concurs with a site investigation by the Department of the Navy that fish or other seafood harvested

from waters surrounding the Depot are safe to eat.

Parris Island officials have already begun a remedial investigation to collect data, evaluate possible treatment methods and costs and develop cleanup goals as directed by EPA guidelines, said Staff Sgt. Bruce Katz.

The Depot is also asking local residents to get involved with the Community Advisory Board and voice their concerns about the cleanup efforts.

The facility is one of seven Marine Corps installations being targeted for cleanup, making it eligible for funds from the Defense Environment Restoration Account.

The Depot's past environmental improvements have earned it several Department of the Navy awards, including one in April, Katz said.

The Depot is only being listed now because there have been other military bases that were assigned a higher priority, he said.

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