

The Fox News story came from Republican Rep. Cory Mills, a freshman congressman from Florida, who claimed Gee's next of kin were strapped with the \$60,000 charge after a meeting with the families of Abbey Gate bombing victims, a suicide attack where 13 service members were killed outside of the Kabul airport in 2021.

Gee's family never paid a dollar to transport her remains, and the Marine Corps let Fox News know -- in no uncertain terms -- that the July 25 story was false in a series of emails over the following days.

"This headline correction is still misleading and your story is still false," Maj. James Stenger, the lead spokesperson for the Marine Corps, wrote to Fox News in an email after the publication changed the headline and body of the story in an attempt to soften the accusation.

"Using the grief of a family member of a fallen Marine to score cheap clickbait points is disgusting," Stenger wrote. The spokesman was one of several military officials frustrated with the story, according to the documents.

The email from the Marine Corps came a day after the service requested a full retraction of the story, an apology to the family from Fox News, and a public explanation for any corrections, according to the emails provided by the service through the FOIA process.

[Jay Wallace](#), president and executive editor of Fox News Media, at least one other executive and other Fox News staff members were included in the emails.

Fox News spokesperson Ali Coscia declined to answer Military.com's questions sent Monday to staff. The network also did not answer inquiries last month when the story was taken down.

The article appeared to have been wiped from the Fox News website. According to Gee's family, the outlet never contacted them with an explanation or apology after quietly deleting the piece.

Military.com reached out to Mills' office Tuesday about the story. A spokesperson from Mills' office said that neither the Marine Corps nor the Pentagon contacted the Republican's office "with any request" about the piece.

Mills also removed the story from his official website after the Fox News link became inactive, according to the spokesperson.

The email exchanges between the Marine Corps and Fox News suggest the service felt the false story crossed a sensitive line -- propagating a narrative that accused the service of not taking care of its fallen.

The original headline of the Fox News piece was: "Family forced to pay to ship body of Marine killed after Pentagon policy change: 'Egregious injustice.'"

As the week dragged on and the story spread, the Fox News article was changed. The word "forced" was removed from the headline and lead paragraph. Parts of the story body were changed, too, and reflected information added after publication. The new headline indicated that the family "shouldered" the burden to transport Gee's remains -- also not true -- and attribution to Mills became more prominent. Before publishing Mills' account of the meeting, Fox News did not obtain comment from Gee's family or the Marine Corps, though a statement was added after publication. The end of the original piece said that Fox contacted the Pentagon, which did not "immediately" comment.

"To be clear: It's not enough that you went back and added our statement after the original story was on your website for several hours," Stenger wrote to Fox News. "The story should be removed entirely and a new story should replace it."

Mills also appeared to walk back his original claim, saying instead that the family was "in their time of grief, confused" about the military transportation policy. Mills' spokesperson said the congressman stands by that statement and "looks forward to working with his colleagues in Congress to ensure this is never a concern for a Gold Star family."

Comments from Gee's family, the Pentagon and the nonprofit that actually stepped in to pay for the flight before the Defense Department became involved, worked their way into the piece before it was taken down.

None of the changes were marked with an update or correction, a common media practice that offers transparency when outlets make a mistake or change a story. By the following Friday, the article was removed completely without explanation by Fox News, even as outrage over the alleged injustice continued to spread online. Mills' post on X -- the site formerly known as Twitter -- sharing the false story with a now-defunct Fox News web link, as well as posts by other conservative lawmakers similarly spreading the narrative, were still available at the time of this reporting.

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Meanwhile, the original claims in the story -- though incorrect -- included a kernel of truth.

The policy at the center of the story launched in the summer of 2021 and requires family members of fallen service members to front money for funeral transportation to a second location. Under the policy, they would then be reimbursed by the Pentagon later.

However, the nonprofit Honoring Our Fallen, through an anonymous donation from a veteran, paid to fly Gee's remains on private transportation to Arlington National Cemetery, according to the Marine Corps. No money was required from the family

and the nonprofit stepped in before any reimbursement process was even started, let alone one with a \$60,000 price tag.

Military.com cannot confirm how much was paid by the nonprofit to secure a private flight.

Christy Shamblin, Gee's mother-in-law, told Military.com Tuesday that she only wanted to bring attention to a frustrating 47-page policy when she spoke to Mills' staff during the meeting with Abbey Gate victims, and to make it easier for other Gold Star families to navigate the bureaucratic and tragic process of transporting remains.

Now, she wants to help clear any "muddy" waters in the wake of the story.

Shamblin blames herself for the tumult it caused, and has been mostly alone in publicly taking responsibility.

When told about the Marine Corps' efforts behind the scenes to correct the record -- something Shamblin said she tried to do herself by contacting Fox News -- she said that "it falls in line" with her beliefs about the service.

"They are truthful, they're honest and they're dependable," Shamblin said.