

Lawyer: Airport to blame in N.C. stowaway's death

By O'RYAN JOHNSON

The family of a 16-year-old, who authorities said likely stowed away on an airplane and was crushed by landing gear before he plummeted to a Milton lawn, has hired a lawyer who said the teen should never have been able to slip into the airport undetected.

"It is now time this story be told and all facets of it explored, including the considerable ominous implications to our national security at large," said lawyer Christopher Chestnut, who represents the family of Delvonte Tisdale. "Most importantly, we intend to seek justice for a child who ... should never have successfully gained access to that airplane. Had airport security been up to par, he would be alive and well with his family today."

Meanwhile, freshman U.S.

Rep. William R. Keating, (D-Quincy), called for a hearing into Tisdale's death and other breaches of airport security in a letter to the Committee on Homeland Security.

"This incident brought up security concerns that an airport's tarmac could be breached so easily," Keating wrote. "We must ensure that our airport security is strengthened beyond its current state, not simply to protect against stowaways, but potential terrorists as well."

Tisdale, a high school junior and member of the Junior ROTC, ran away from his family's Charlotte home on Nov. 15 and managed to skirt security at Charlotte Douglas International Airport, where he stowed away in the wheel well of a U.S. Airways flight bound for Boston, authorities said.

As that plane was approaching Logan International Airport, the pilot

lowered the wheels and Tisdale's mangled body plummeted into a posh Milton neighborhood where he was found dead, authorities said.

For days, investigators searched for cars spotted leaving the area at the time the body was discovered and tried to discover his identity. Once Tisdale was named, through a handwritten hall pass in his pocket, sleuths next tried to figure how a boy with no known links to the Hub ended up so badly beaten.

Eventually the investigation turned skyward and cops determined that a flight path lies directly over the spot where Tisdale's body was found.

The case remains under investigation by Norfolk District Attorney Michael Morrissey, who took office earlier this month had no comment.

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