

Presidents' portraits concern McKissick Museum

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McKissick Museum's exhibition displaying portraits of past USC presidents' recently raised concern among the museum's director and curators, along with the university's Board of Trustees, because of the condition of the exhibit's paintings.

According to Lynn Robertson, the museum's executive director, the portraits have fallen into disrepair, which previously went un-

noticed because prior to the current exhibit, the portraits had never been showcased together in a single location.

"The exhibition of presidents opened in December, and it offered the first opportunity to bring the portraits all together from all over campus," Robertson said. "It was also the first chance to see the shape they were in as a whole."

The Board of Trustees' secretary Thomas Stepp said both the museum's curatorial staff and the Board of Trustees are already ini-

tiating the repair process for the portraits because they would like to see the restoration occur as soon as possible.

Stepp and the Board of Trustees chairman, Mack Whittle Jr. are working to form a Fine Arts and Heritage Committee of the Board of Trustees, which would deal with restoration and other issues relating to the university's fine arts and heritage.

The curatorial staff is consulting outside resources to assess the portraits' damages.

According to Robertson, a professional conservator must first inspect the portraits and determine how much work each painting requires and estimate the cost of repairs.

"Each portrait has its own treatment proposal, because each painting has different damage," Robertson said.

"The conservator will look at each one separately and decide the amount of work and cost."

Following the initial treatment proposals, different conservators

who specialize in specific areas will perform the actual restoration.

According to Stepp, the Board of Trustees is interested in finding funding for the restoration but is not entirely certain where the money will come from. He said the board will probably solicit private donations when the restoration's estimated cost is determined.

Both the Board of Trustees and McKissick Museum staff said the restoration is an effort to help prolong the life of the paintings and

preserve the history represented by the portraits.

"It's very important that every aspect of university heritage be preserved, and the portraits reflect a great deal of university history," Stepp said.

Robertson agrees. "The portraits are a visible record of the lives of the university presidents, and they are real treasures to help us remember the past," she said.

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecocknews@gwm.sc.edu

Gov. Sanford honors USC trustee with S.C.'s highest civilian award

BY KEVIN FELLNER
THE GAMECOCK

One of the most influential members of USC's Board of Trustees received the state's highest civilian honor last month at the board's final meeting of the year.

Thomas Stepp received the Order of the Palmetto from Gov. Mark Sanford in a surprise visit that Stepp's family and fellow board members had kept a secret from him. Stepp serves as both the board's secretary and university

treasurer.

"If Strom's career has been marked by longevity in the Senate, Tommy's career has been marked by longevity here in South Carolina," Sanford said in his presentation speech.

After noting some of Stepp's contributions to the university and to the state, Sanford addressed him directly. "In essence, what you have done has made for a better life for the people of South Carolina, which is what the Order of the Palmetto is all about." The honor is given sole-

ly at the discretion of the governor.

Stepp said everyone involved succeeded in keeping the presentation a secret. "The biggest part of the day for many members of the Board of Trustees was that they were able to keep the news a secret," he said. "I can assure you it was a complete surprise." He added that he knew something important was about to happen when the governor entered the room and that it involved him when Sarah his wife entered shortly thereafter.

"I was very touched by what the governor said. It was very kind. It was also overly generous," Stepp said.

USC President Andrew Sorensen echoed Sanford's comments about Stepp's service as a member of the board since 1987 and as treasurer since 2000. "I am extremely pleased that he was awarded the Order of the Palmetto for his achievements," he said.

Sorensen also said Stepp has been an integral part of the university and mentioned his key role in the planning and construction

of the Koger Center and work with South Carolina Educational Television Network for more than 25 years in various production capacities as commendable achievements.

"I was delighted that we were able to surprise him. That was a real coup, and I did play a part in that," said Sorensen, who added that Stepp typically prepares materials and agendas for board meetings and would normally know the meeting's every event in advance.

Stepp said he hopes the award

doesn't remove any emphasis on the importance of the university as a whole.

"We've got a lot of things to do at this university. So this honor doesn't change my goal of making Carolina great," Stepp said.

Stepp is a native of Hendersonville, N.C. and earned a degree in economics from USC in 1964. He still works closely with the Koger Center Support Foundation.

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecocknews@gwm.sc.edu

Turkey allows U.S. to use southern air base in massive Iraq troop rotation

BY JAMES C. HELICKE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ISTANBUL, TURKEY — The American military has begun using an air base in southern Turkey for a massive rotation of troops in and out of Iraq, a U.S. official told The Associated Press on Sunday in a sign of improved U.S.-Turkish relations.

Turkey's granting permission to use its Incirlik air base marks a sharp contrast to last year, when the country — opposed to the invasion to oust Saddam Hussein — refused to allow U.S. troops on its territory for the war against its

southern neighbor.

It also comes as NATO-ally Turkey is increasingly eager to win favor with the United States amid concerns over Iraqi Kurdish demands for greater autonomy in oil-rich northern Iraq. Turkey, and neighbors Syria and Iran, fear Iraqi Kurds might eventually push for independence and bring instability to their borders.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is expected to raise Turkey's concerns about Iraq during talks with President Bush in Washington later this month.

The use of Incirlik helps the

United States as it deals with the largest movement of troops in decades. The military is preparing to send some 130,000 U.S. troops in Iraq home over the coming months, replacing them with a more mobile, less heavily armed force of about 110,000.

With Incirlik only an hour's flight from Iraq, the U.S. military has maintained a presence there since the 1950s, making it an ideal location to support the rotations.

There were doubts about the future of the U.S. presence at Incirlik after Turkey's parliament declined last year to let American forces

use it or any Turkish territory for the Iraq invasion. The decision, which drove a deep wedge between Turkey and the United States, proved an obstacle for U.S. war planners and disrupted plans for a ground movement from the north.

In a sign of Incirlik's continued significance, the U.S. military recently started using the base to transport soldiers out of Iraq and "a large number" of troops were expected to pass through the base in the coming months, the U.S. official said Sunday, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Camps in Kuwait and air bases in Germany are also expected to be used in the rotation. Points in Bahrain, Qatar, and Spain could also be used.

Turkish officials could not be reached Sunday. Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul said Friday there was "nothing new" at the base but said Incirlik "has been used and will be used, because the transportation of certain soldiers is more secure through Incirlik."

A U.S. spokesman at Incirlik refused to comment about the rotations Sunday, citing security concerns.

Incirlik has long played a key role for the United States in the region. The United States based some 50 warplanes there after the 1991 Gulf War to patrol a no-fly zone over northern Iraq. It withdrew them, however, last year amid the tension between the two countries.

After the war, Turkey agreed to open Incirlik and other sites to the U.S.-led coalition for logistical support as part of efforts to improve ties with Washington.

Turkey even offered to send peacekeepers to Iraq, but that offer was shelved amid strong Iraqi opposition.

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