

The Beren Gulls Chronicle

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Explosion at Secure Research Facility; RV and Four College Students Missing

By Marla H. Denning, Staff Writer

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An explosion rocked a secure interdimensional research facility on the north edge of Beren Gulls late Wednesday afternoon, sending a column of violet-tinged smoke high above the coastal hills and triggering a multi-agency emergency response. In the immediate aftermath, a hover recreational vehicle traveling along the Juniper Freeway overpass adjacent to the facility vanished from radar and visual contact.

Authorities say the four occupants of the hover RV—members of a nationally ranked collegiate hoverboard team—are missing and presumed dead.

The blast occurred at approximately 4:17 p.m. at the privately operated DELTA 6 Interdimensional Research Complex, a heavily guarded installation known locally for its work on experimental energy fields and so-called “trans-spatial corridor modeling.” The facility sits below the elevated span of the Juniper Freeway, where witnesses reported seeing a flash “like sheet lightning turned inside out,” followed by a concussive shockwave.

Within seconds of the explosion, traffic cameras and patrol monitors show a silver-and-teal hover RV lifting abruptly, tilting nose-up, and then disappearing in what one highway officer described as “a shimmer in the air.”

“There was a distortion,” said Officer Raymond Quill of the Beren Gulls Transit Authority. “Like heat over asphalt, only vertical. The RV just wasn’t there anymore.”

The missing vehicle carried four students from Westbridge State College, en route to the Pacific Coast Collegiate Hoverboard Invitational in Santa Cruz. The team—widely known on the circuit as the “Screaming Gulls”—had won three regional titles this season.

The students have been identified as:

- **Jamila “Jambo” Okoye, 21**, team captain and two-time national slalom champion.
- **Patricia “Pixxi” Velasquez, 20**, freestyle specialist known for aerial corkscrew maneuvers.
- **Virginia “Gin” Holloway, 19**, defensive tactician and speed record holder.
- **Brandon “Bragg” Hargrove, 22**, power rider and mechanical designer of the team’s custom boards.

Friends describe the four as inseparable. “They weren’t just teammates,” said Coach Eleanor Kwan in a brief statement outside the Beren Gulls University athletics complex. “They were innovators. They were brilliant kids. We are devastated.”

Company spokesperson Dr. Lionel Rourke declined to elaborate on the specifics of the experiment, citing federal contracts and ongoing investigations. “There is no evidence of foul play,” Dr. Rourke said. “We are cooperating fully with state and federal authorities to determine the cause of the malfunction.”

Emergency crews from Beren Gulls Fire & Rescue, the Central Highway Patrol, and the Federal Research Oversight Bureau responded within minutes. The facility has since been sealed, and a two-mile radius remains under restricted access.

Investigators are examining whether the energy surge may have interacted with the anti-grav propulsion system of the passing hover RV. Professor Harold Meinhardt, a physicist at Northern Peninsula Institute who is not affiliated with Argosy, said the possibility cannot be dismissed.

“If an unstable interdimensional field were to expand beyond its containment chamber, even momentarily, it could produce localized distortions in space-time,” Meinhardt said. “In theory, matter within that distortion might not be destroyed—but displaced.”

When asked whether that means the missing students could still be alive, Meinhardt paused.

“In theory,” he repeated carefully. “But theory is a long way from rescue.”

Family members of the four students gathered Wednesday night at Westbridge State’s student union, where candles and hoverboard decals have been placed beneath a banner reading “Fly True, Gulls.”

Jamila Okoye’s older sister, Nadine, fought back tears. “Jambo was fearless,” she said. “If there’s any chance she’s out there somewhere, she’s fighting to come home.”

Authorities recovered no debris from the hover RV. Highway cameras show no fragments, scorch marks, or impact evidence on the overpass. As of press time, no remains have been located, and search operations continue both at the facility site and in the surrounding coastal airspace.

For now, the skies above Beren Gulls are quiet, the freeway lanes empty, and four new hoverboards rest unclaimed in a college locker room—waiting for riders who may never return.