

Upside-Down American Flag Flies Over Somali Celebration in Minnesota

An American flag flew upside down over a Somali Independence Day celebration at a city park in St. Cloud, Minnesota, on July 3, the day before the nation's 250th birthday. The incident, confirmed by local police and city officials, has ignited outrage in the community and sparked questions about how the desecration went unnoticed for so long.

St. Cloud Police confirmed to Fox News Digital that at 5:29 p.m. on July 3, the department received a call reporting the U.S. flag was flying upside down from a city flagpole at Lake George Park Pavilion during the event. Roughly 500 people attended at peak times. An officer arrived and corrected the flag.

St. Cloud City Councilman Scott Brodeen raised the issue at a Monday City Council meeting after a Facebook friend alerted him the evening of July 3.

"I was disgusted by it and then disgusted that it wasn't seen, wasn't caught," Brodeen told Fox News Digital. "If it was accidental, how could it not have been caught by organizers or politicians that were down there campaigning?"

Brodeen said local politicians and organizations – including the AFL-CIO and the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party – had booths at the event. None raised an alarm.

St. Cloud Mayor Jake Anderson issued a statement Thursday acknowledging the flag display and said the event organizer has "apologized for the mistake." The city said it has worked with the organizing nonprofit, Internal Housing Assistant, for over 11 years without a prior incident.

Omar Podi, executive director of the nonprofit, told Fox News Digital the upside-down display was accidental. He said he understood why people are “frustrated” given what he called the “fraud issue and everything” – a reference to the massive, ongoing fraud scandal in Minnesota that has implicated large portions of the state’s Somali community.



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Not everyone is accepting that explanation.

Kathy Neumeister, a Sauk Rapids resident whose husband served 36 years in the military, drove to the park when she saw the videos online. She told Fox News Digital the flag was still upside down when she arrived and that other attendees told her they had not noticed.

“I said, I’m sorry, who do you have on your staff that doesn’t know how an American flag is supposed to fly?” Neumeister said. “I really don’t buy that.”

St. Cloud is home to one of the largest Somali communities in the United States. Minnesota has more Somali immigrants than any other state.

The event permit was issued to Internal Housing Assistant, a local nonprofit supporting immigrant families seeking housing.

Video of the flag, posted to the Facebook page Rocks and Cows of Minnesota, went viral and drew sharp criticism directed at event sponsors, including US Bank.

An upside-down American flag is the universal signal of distress. It is also widely recognized as a form of protest against the government of the United States.

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