

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 17, 2014

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to express our concerns regarding the Department's plan to move forward with construction of the new Foreign Affairs Security Training Center ("FAST-C") at Fort Pickett in Blackstone, Virginia. Our Committees have asked the Government Accountability Office ("GAO") to review the proposals put forward by the Department of Homeland Security ("DHS") and the Department of State ("State") to determine which proposal meets the State's security training requirements in the most effective, efficient, and timely manner. Our Committees request that State not move forward and expend any funding for development at the Fort Pickett site until the GAO review is complete.

Embassy security and the safety of U.S. personnel abroad are areas of great concern to us. Over the past two years, our Committees have conducted oversight through full Committee hearings and staff briefings, and we assess that the State Department's existing Diplomatic Security ("DS") training facilities may be insufficient to meet recommendations put forward by the Accountability Review Board (ARB) that was convened following the 2012 terrorist attacks in Benghazi. Specifically, we are concerned about the implementation of the ARB's recommendations that State develop courses for DS agents and other State personnel integrating high-threat training and risk-management decision processes and provide Foreign Affairs Counter Threat (FACT) training for all personnel assigned to high-risk, high-threat posts.

We understand that State, in an effort to comply with these ARB recommendations, has proposed that the General Services Administration (GSA) construct a new FASTC at Fort Pickett, an Army National Guard facility in Blackstone, VA. This proposal aims to consolidate State's eleven security training facilities, improve instructional efficiency, and provide training to an estimated 9,000-10,000 DS and other State personnel. The initial cost for this project was over \$950 million, but a reduction in scope lowered that estimate to approximately \$907 million and then to \$460 million, including a commensurate reduction in projected capabilities. We understand from State that the cost could change further.

We are mindful, however, that DHS already operates FLETC, which provides security training for DHS and 91 law enforcement and military partner agencies and organizations including DS. FLETC currently possesses extensive existing infrastructure that could be expanded and upgraded – including construction of new buildings, weapon ranges, and driving tracks – to meet the requirements in State's original plan at a cost of \$272 million. By leveraging existing

facilities to meet State's training needs, FLETC estimates its proposal could save the U.S. government almost \$1 billion over 10 years. With such a substantial amount of projected cost savings, we believe it is critical that FLETC's estimate receive thorough consideration and a full, independent analysis.

We are further concerned by the widely differing cost estimates provided by State and DHS to satisfy State's security training needs. Our Committees have received varying information about which requirements are critical to improving the safety of personnel and facilities overseas and how each proposal would satisfy those requirements. It is critical that an independent and unbiased analysis be conducted to determine which agency's proposal offers the required training at the best value to the American taxpayer.

Last year, in the annual State Reauthorization legislation (H.R. 2848) the House conveyed its bipartisan desire to see an independent analysis precede any expenditure of funding. It is our understanding that the Office of Management and Budget ("OMB") has reviewed both State and DHS proposals and our Committees have repeatedly requested access to any documentation related to the OMB review. Unfortunately, the Administration has not responded to those requests. Instead, the Government Services Administration (GSA) recently posted a notice for a supplemental environmental impact statement to be conducted on State's Fort Pickett site. This indicates State's intent to expend existing funds to move forward with FASTC without additional analysis of alternative sites, including FLETC, which the GAO study would provide.

We look forward to seeing the results of the GAO review and trust that the Department will not embark on such an expensive undertaking without allowing for the completion of a thorough, transparent, and unbiased review process.

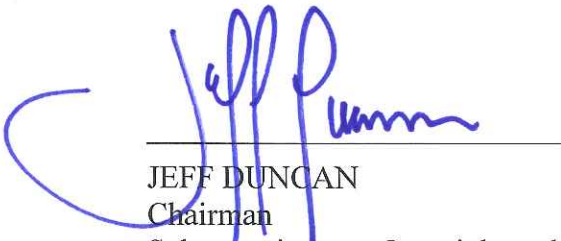
Sincerely,



EDWARD R. ROYCE
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Affairs



MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



JEFF DUNCAN
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency
Committee on Homeland Security

cc: The Honorable Jeh Johnson, Secretary, Department of Homeland Security