

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 10, 2015

The Honorable Hal Rogers  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
2406 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Chairwoman  
State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee  
1026 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Chairwoman Granger:

We are writing to express our deep concern over proposed language in the FY 2016 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill that would prohibit funding for a Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) until such a Center is specifically authorized by an Act of Congress. Further, the language states that if FASTC is not authorized before September 30, 2016, funds currently available to support its construction may be used at other existing training facilities.

It is time for the debate on FASTC to end. The world is getting more dangerous, not less, for U.S. personnel abroad. As you both know, the search for a dedicated location to train our personnel assigned to high-threat posts has gone on for over six years – since 2009. In this time, the State Department conducted a thorough and transparent process, considering more than 70 sites to find the ideal location for FASTC. This included working under strict requirements to find a site located in close proximity to the other federal agencies and units that work side-by-side with State Department personnel at our Embassies and posts overseas. The most critical of these is the Marine Corps Embassy Security Group in Quantico, Virginia. Fort Pickett was ultimately selected in the highly competitive process that also included review of the FLETC facilities in Glynco, Georgia as a potential option.

Continued attempts by some members of Congress to allege malfeasance with the selection of Fort Pickett only serves to further delay this project and inserts a level of risk to our State Department personnel that is unacceptable. We are extremely troubled that these efforts continue—even in the wake of an Office of Management and Budget due diligence review in 2014 that concluded Fort Pickett was the best venue for State to satisfy its training mandate in the most effective manner possible.

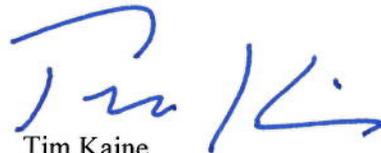
When it comes to protecting the men and women serving our country abroad, it is imperative that we make a holistic assessment of U.S. national security and mission needs. In addition to cost, several factors must be weighed and balanced. For FASTC, these include distance, organizational synergies, capacity, agency partnership, and operational capacity. These factors are what led the Administration to repeatedly reaffirm that Fort Pickett is best suited to fulfill all of these requirements. For example, other sites fall short of the hard-skills training needed to equip our diplomatic security agents to withstand another Benghazi styled attack. These deficiencies include the inability to facilitate high-speed driving training for heavy, armored vehicles, advanced explosives/IED countermeasure training, and joint-training exercises with Department of Defense elements. As such, the President's FY 2016 budget request of \$99 million for FASTC was requested specifically for Fort Pickett.

The tragedy of this entire situation is that, since the requirement for this facility was identified over six years ago, four Americans serving in Benghazi were killed. And despite the 2012 Accountability Review Board recommendation to improve and consolidate high-threat training programs and facilities in the wake of the Benghazi attack, U.S. facilities have been attacked in Tunisia, Turkey, and Afghanistan and we have evacuated our Embassy personnel in Libya and Yemen. Yet, instead of accelerating the construction of a facility at Fort Pickett that, according to Assistant Secretary of State Gregory Starr is “the most effective solution” to better protect our foreign affairs personnel, we are wasting more time and putting Americans in danger.

We strongly encourage you to oppose language in the House State and Foreign Operations Appropriation bill that would prevent us from moving as quickly as possible to ensure that these brave Americans serving our country receive the training they need.



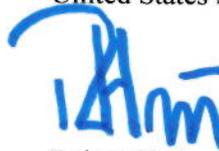
Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



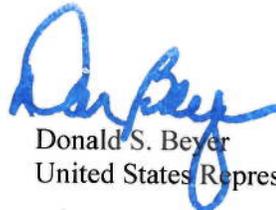
J. Randy Forbes  
United States Representative



Robert Hurt  
United States Representative



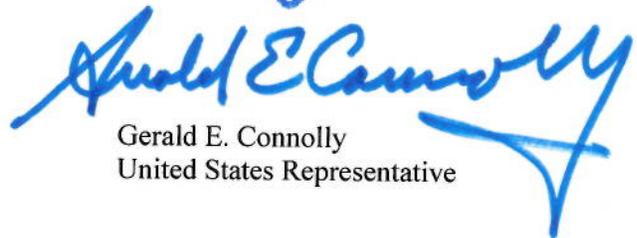
Robert J. Wittman  
United States Representative



Donald S. Beyer  
United States Representative



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
United States Representative



Gerald E. Connolly  
United States Representative



Dave Brat  
United States Representative