

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

November 5, 2013

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

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write to obtain a status update on the Department's modified master plan, including estimated cost, for the Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) project.

In a 2008 report to Congress, the Department made clear its need for a consolidated facility to improve efficiency, decrease operating costs, and provide our diplomats, agents and their families with the training necessary for being stationed in some of the most high-threat, high-risk countries around the world. A search for a dedicated site for such a facility began in 2009 and studies were conducted in 2011 and 2012. Unfortunately, currently, further progress has been delayed, and an updated plan with a current cost estimate remains forthcoming. We believe this process has already taken far too long, particularly when the need for additional training to protect diplomatic personnel serving overseas is clear.

Extensive study has proven that the FASTC should be located at Ft. Pickett, Virginia, and that other locations do not meet necessary requirements for this facility. Locating FASTC at Ft. Pickett clearly meets the requirement that the training center be located within a four hour drive, or 220 miles, from Diplomatic Security headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. The reason for this requirement is so the State Department can take advantage of regular consultations at Diplomatic Security and Main State Department that a trainee participates in prior to deploying overseas. Ft. Pickett also allows the State Department to capitalize on training synergies with interagency partners, including working with other federal agencies and units that work side-by-side State Department personnel at our Embassies and posts overseas, including Marine Security guard training at Quantico. Ft. Pickett also meets key operational requirements, including adequate training ranges.

Congress currently has under its consideration legislation providing authorization for the State Department, including provisions aimed at enhancing security at our embassies and strengthening training for State Department employees and families. It is imperative that legislation under consideration in Congress not lead to any further delay in the Department's ability to move forward on development of a FASTC, thereby forcing continued use of existing facilities that have been declared inadequate to train the men and women of the State Department.

An investigation following the horrific attacks in Benghazi declared that the State Department must be mission driven, but noted that Congress must also play its part by providing the resources necessary for officials to first be prepared for that mission.

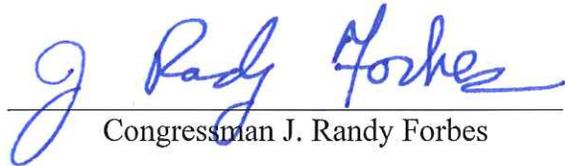
We remain steadfastly supportive of the Department's development of a Foreign Affairs Security Training Center and as such, are requesting an update on the current plans for a FASTC, as well as a date by which Congress can expect to receive the modified master plan. This information, particularly an updated cost estimate, is crucial as Congress continues its consideration of legislation regarding embassy security, particularly when possibly faced with decisions that would impede progress on a dedicated training center that is crucial for the men and women serving in our diplomatic corps.

We look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Senator Tim Kaine



Congressman J. Randy Forbes