



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

FEB 27 2015

Dear Senator Capito:

Thank you for your letter of January 28 regarding the Department of State's plans for a Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) at Fort Pickett, Virginia. We agree we must do what is the best value for the American tax payer. We have conducted our due diligence, including an evaluation of Summit Point Raceway Associates/BSR in Summit Point, West Virginia. We have concluded, and the Administration has re-affirmed, that Fort Pickett, an under-utilized military base, is the most effective and efficient proposal for a consolidated hard-skills training facility.

For more than five years, the Department has been working to consolidate security training functions at one site. To do so, the Department and General Services Administration have invested considerable time and effort in reviewing over 70 properties – including BSR in Summit Point, West Virginia – before identifying and selecting 1,500 acres of land on and adjacent to Fort Pickett, located in Blackstone, Virginia. In 2011, we selected Fort Pickett as the preferred site for FASTC. Given the current fiscal constraints with the federal budget, the Department reviewed the project scope and determined it would be fiscally prudent to modify our original proposal from complete consolidation of hard and soft-skills to consolidation of 11 disparate hard-skills training facilities into one location. By consolidating existing hard-skills operations into a single, purpose built, FASTC facility, the Department can reduce total annual operating expenses by approximately \$11 million, while nearly doubling training capacity from 5,000 to 9,200. Not only does consolidation reduce per-student operating costs by over \$7,500 per student, it also allows the Department to provide critical security training to a larger, at-risk population. Cost estimates to construct and make FASTC fully operational at Fort Pickett were \$461 million, which have been further reduced by the Department's due diligence to \$413 million.

The Honorable
Shelley Moore Capito,
United States Senate.

Hard skills training, such as the Foreign Affairs Counter Threat Course and High Threat Tactical Operation Course, would relocate to Fort Pickett. These hard-skills training courses have proven successful and saved lives abroad. The Foreign Affairs Counter Threat Course is part of the Department's commitment to giving the foreign affairs community the training, resources, and support needed to keep them safe as they protect America's national security, promote our economic prosperity, and advance America's global leadership. Training for our Diplomatic Security (DS) agents, including the High Threat Operation Course, provides them with the ability to defeat complex attacks, such as that against our consulate in Herat, Afghanistan, as well as protect over 275 missions world-wide, day in and day out. Their skills can be attributed to the hours of hard-skills training that they have received and the training partnerships forged with the military.

In addition to the Department's own determination of the requirement for FASTC, this need was validated by the independent Benghazi Accountability Review Board, which recommended training a broader range of foreign affairs personnel; and the independent Management Review Panel and the Best Practices Panel, which examined how best to operate in high-threat, high-risk environments. Both panels recommended a consolidated training center, located within close proximity to the State Department's Washington, D.C. headquarters location. Such a facility will ensure the foreign affairs community, DS employees, and interagency security professionals are properly prepared when serving not only at high-threat posts, but also within the evolving overseas environment.

For over 30 years, DS and BSR have enjoyed a productive and collaborative relationship that has prepared countless Department employees for the tremendous challenges we face representing our nation across the globe. That said, the capabilities planned for FASTC at Fort Pickett, Virginia – a purpose-built, integrated facility to meet unique foreign affairs security needs – are essential to meet our increased training requirements for the number of students and the types of courses offered. As Secretary Kerry testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in April 2014, "The Department is 100 percent determined that Fort Pickett is the best site. It's the site that we want to work with you to go forward on. There's no question of that. And we want to try to do that as fast as we can. There is coordination with the Defense Department and the Intelligence community...Fort Pickett is the site."

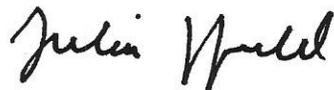
Regarding the language in the Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2015 (Div. J, P.L. 113-235), all funds currently being expended towards

FASTC, including the Supplemental Environmental Impact statement were obligated for the FASTC project in prior fiscal years, in accordance with applicable congressional notification requirements. Expenditures of funds previously obligated for FASTC are not subject to further notification. Future obligations for FASTC will be in accordance with applicable congressional notification requirements.

The Department remains committed to an open and transparent process with the FASTC project. We are providing regular updates to our Committees with project milestones and projected timelines.

We hope this information addresses your concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact us again if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julia Frifield". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Julia Frifield
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs