

TESTIMONY OF

Gregory Starr
Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security
U.S. Department of State

BEFORE

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Governmental Affairs

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Good morning Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, and other distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Department's plan for a Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) in Nottoway County, Virginia. Keeping U.S. personnel overseas safe is a dynamic, evolving process, and we work constantly to improve our security training practices to protect our people across the globe.

Improved training was a key finding of the Benghazi Accountability Review Board (ARB). Two subsequent panels formed after the ARB, the Management Review Panel and Best Practices Panel, further recommended that the Department establish a consolidated training facility within a reasonable distance to Washington, D.C. to fulfill this mission. In the intervening years since Benghazi, major attacks on State Department facilities and personnel in Herat, Afghanistan, and Erbil, Iraq, plus the need for evacuations from Tripoli, Libya, and Sanaa, Yemen, have only highlighted the danger our employees face while fulfilling our diplomatic responsibilities abroad. Officers and family members continue to work and reside in Cairo, Egypt; Amman, Jordan; Nairobi, Kenya; Khartoum, Sudan, and many other cities with significant security concerns. Unaccompanied officers continue to work at posts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tunisia, South Sudan, Burundi, and the Central African Republic. All deserve enhanced pre-deployment security training to be prepared to work and live in these various challenging environments.

The Department had initiated efforts to combine multiple hard skills security training venues into one consolidated site even prior to the Benghazi-related recommendations. In 2009-2010, the Department and the General Services Administration (GSA) invested significant time and effort to review over 70 properties, before selecting Nottoway County as the preferred site for FASTC. While originally envisioned as a hard skills training venue only, the 2011 master plan looked at a design and construction effort to collocate all security training – hard and soft skills – at one site. However when the costs for that proposal were estimated at over \$900 million, we determined that the collocation of soft skills security training was fiscally unsupportable and in early 2013 directed that the proposal be altered to fulfill our most vital need – a consolidated facility for hard-skills security training only. This reduced the costs to \$461 million which were further refined to \$413 million after consultations with GSA.

The hard skills security training we provide is for the entire U.S. government civilian community serving overseas. The current iteration of the Foreign Affairs Counter Threat (FACT) course will be required training for all Foreign Service personnel, with refresher training every five years, no matter where they are assigned overseas. Families will now get the same FACT curriculum on a space available basis, but that may change if conditions demand a required course for adult family members. Specialized high threat operational training for all of our 2,000 DS agents was a Benghazi ARB recommendation accepted and embraced by the Secretary. This involves an initial 10-week course and recurring skills refresher training, including heavy weapons instruction and interoperability training with Marine Corps Embassy Security Guard units based in Quantico, Virginia. Diplomatic Security also trains foreign police and security elements for the Anti-Terrorism Assistance program, as well as foreign security elements charged with protecting our diplomatic facilities abroad as part of our enhanced training program. We have extensive security training programs for our locally employed staff, including driving courses, investigation classes, and comprehensive bodyguard modules.

Security is everyone's responsibility; therefore, it is the Department's duty to ensure that the Foreign Service community, eligible family members, and foreign security forces charged with our protection receive the appropriate training needed to fulfill their mission. We take this responsibility seriously, and this is what a consolidated hard skills training facility at Nottoway County, Virginia, will allow us to do.

The requirements for this training center are clearly stated. Proximity to Washington, DC has always been a priority for us, for two reasons. First, DC is the natural hub for Department of State personnel preparing to go overseas, and having a closer training facility will cut down travel costs, provide training opportunities to family members, and improve logistics. More importantly, staying in the mid-Atlantic region allows us to continue to train with our critical security partners, especially the United States Marine Corps. Marine Security Guards, Marine Fleet Antiterrorism Security Teams, and Marine Security Augmentation Units are the primary DoD crisis response elements. DS continues to work with them in a variety of high threat environments. This collaboration is essential for the security of U.S. personnel, as we have seen in Yemen, Libya, and the Central African Republic.

Consolidation is not just a logistical benefit, it also increases the effectiveness of the training itself by allowing students to seamlessly transfer from

one real world scenario to another. Threats often emerge quickly and require immediate action to counter, and having a dedicated and consolidated DOS training center will provide the flexibility necessary to immediately train for emerging threats and major events. Just two weeks ago, we provided 190 personnel additional training prior to their deployment to Nairobi for the Global Entrepreneurship Summit. We were able to train at our existing scattered facilities, but having FASTC in Nottoway County will enable us to train more effectively and cost-efficiently.

As we have seen, our personnel have faced heavy weapons, major explosives, and complex attacks; this means that our specialized training for high threat environments includes heavy weapons, explosives demonstrations, armored vehicle driving, helicopter landings, and extensive night training, over 175 nights per year in fact. Finding a single site within close proximity to Washington DC that can accommodate all of these elements without disrupting the surrounding area has been challenging.

The Federal Law Enforcement Training Center has its strong core competencies in training federal law enforcement agencies, which is why we send our own agents there for basic training. But with FASTC, we are not training solely for law enforcement. We are preparing Diplomatic Security agents for service at critical threat overseas posts, which requires an extremely specific skill set distinct from those utilized by domestic law enforcement. We are training U.S. government personnel and their families for service in increasingly hazardous locations around the globe. We are training foreign security elements charged with providing protection for our diplomatic missions abroad. Emergency evacuation training takes place with our partners in DoD who provide airlift and protective capabilities to diplomatic missions abroad.

Our request for an advanced hard skills training location to provide specialized training is hardly unique. The Secret Service conducts advanced training at a purpose-built facility in Beltsville, Maryland; the Federal Air Marshals have a tailored facility for their needs in Atlantic City, New Jersey; and the Federal Bureau of Investigation Academy is located in Quantico, Virginia. A purpose-built facility allows us to tailor our training to the Department of State's unique overseas mission and the global security realities our personnel face.

We examined over 70 sites, and Nottoway County is the only one that meets all of the requirements. Over a period of several years, we have conducted exhaustive environmental and fiscal studies on the project, and the capabilities

planned for FASTC at Nottoway County, Virginia—a purpose-built, integrated facility designed to meet unique foreign affairs security needs – are essential. A consolidated training site close to our embassy security partners is critical to our national security. We need to move forward now. The FASTC project is well managed with a constant eye to both fiscal responsibility and keeping Americans safe. Working closely with GSA, this critically important project will be brought in on time and on budget. The Department remains committed to an open and transparent process with FASTC, and we look forward to working with you on this project. Thank you and I will be glad to answer any questions you have.