

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

June 26, 2015

The Honorable Gene Dodaro  
Comptroller General  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro,

We understand that the Department of State (State) is interested in moving forward with plans to construct a new, dedicated training center, known as the Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FAST-C), in Blackstone, Virginia. We are concerned this new site was selected without a complete, independent analysis of options, including augmenting an existing facility—an option that we believe would achieve significant cost savings. As stewards of taxpayer dollars, we want to improve diplomatic security training efforts in a cost-effective, timely manner. We believe a thorough and impartial review of proposals is necessary to determine the option that best addresses State's needs in a fiscally responsible manner.

In a 2008 report to Congress, the State Department determined it needed to consolidate its existing security training facilities to improve instructional efficiency and to provide training to an estimated 9,000-10,000 Diplomatic Security and other State personnel.

The State Department's initial proposal for the construction of FAST-C was estimated to cost over \$950 million. A reduction in scope later lowered the cost of the proposal to \$460 million, and subsequently to \$413 million. We have concerns that this scaled down version leaves critical infrastructure needs, such as boarding, medical, dining, and recreational facilities unaddressed. We are also concerned that costs would likely increase significantly after the initial groundbreaking to address these gaps in infrastructure, and potentially additional training needs.

In 2013, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) submitted a proposal to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to service State's training needs by augmenting the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC), in Glynco, Georgia, which provides security training for DHS and 95 federal partner organizations, including the State Department, as well as state and local law enforcement agencies. In its 2013 proposal to OMB, DHS included the construction of new buildings, weapons ranges, and driving tracks to meet the requirements of State's original FAST-C master plan. FLETC estimated that this new construction would cost \$272 million. By leveraging its existing facilities to meet State's training needs, FLETC estimates its proposal could also achieve significant cost savings over the long term.

In April, 2014, the Administration confirmed that it planned to adopt the State Department's proposal to build FAST-C in Blackstone, Va. However, in a meeting with Senate staff in May, 2015, OMB explained that the State Department never provided the necessary information to OMB, or to FLETC, to allow for an accurate comparison of the two options despite OMB

making the specific request that it do so, that the State Department has “artificially constrained the analysis” of the FAST-C proposal, and that OMB ultimately chose to simply defer the decisions to the State Department. It appears therefore that OMB failed to conduct a sufficiently rigorous analysis, in significant part due to a lack of cooperation by the State Department.

The proposals we have seen for FLETC and FAST-C vary considerably in cost, scope, and projected completion time. We believe that due to these significant differences, an impartial review is imperative before the Administration moves forward with either option.

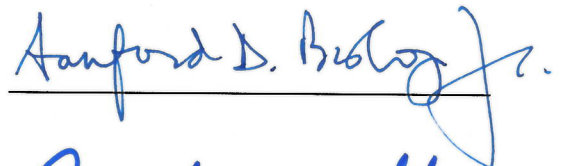
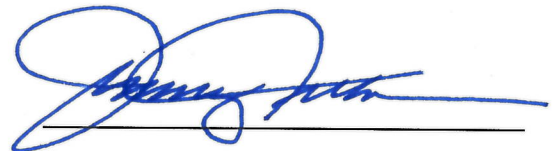
As such, we respectfully request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) review both State’s FAST-C proposal and the DHS proposal to expand FLETC’s Glynco site to meet State’s requirements.

In order to ensure that high security training is provided in a fiscally responsible manner, we request that GAO address the following questions during its review:

1. In terms of specific curriculum and training objectives, what requirements has the State Department established for the DS training, and how do the different options - the status quo, FAST-C, and an expanded FLETC - fulfill those requirements?
2. Did the State Department adequately prioritize its training requirements and distinguish between requirements and desires?
3. How did the State Department’s process and assumptions for developing its FAST-C proposal compare to best practices for project development for significant acquisitions by U.S. government departments and agencies?
4. What is your assessment of the assumptions made about dormitory, medical, recreational, dining facilities, and other support infrastructure in both proposals?

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter, and thank you in advance for your response.

Sincerely,



Jody Rice

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Barry Anderson

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Bob Woodall

Earl L. 'Buddy' Carter

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