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Statement for the Record

Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

**Subcommittee on State Department and USAID Management, International Operations, and Bilateral
International Development**

Ensuring an Efficient and Effective Diplomatic Security Training Facility for the Twenty-First Century

October 8, 2015

Chairman Perdue, Ranking Member Kaine, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to offer this Statement for the Record and for holding this important hearing. The attempted construction of a Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) at Fort Pickett in Blackstone, Virginia to conduct Diplomatic Security (DS) training is the perfect example of bureaucracy run amok. In this instance, the State Department has attempted an end run around congressional oversight in order to jam the American taxpayer with a wasteful and duplicative project.

At every turn, the State Department has been openly hostile to efforts of inter-agency cooperation. In reports from both the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO), State is repeatedly admonished for its failure to cooperate with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to provide an accurate assessment of the cost of meeting its needs. As such, Congress and the American people have been denied a true and transparent 'apples to apples' comparison between constructing a duplicative facility at FASTC and accommodating the State Department's needs by expanding the high quality training being conducted at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) at Glynco, Georgia.

To what end is this stonewalling? It has certainly not expedited bringing this vital training on board. On the contrary, it has delayed the process as the State Department remains insistent on building its own facility regardless of the cost to taxpayers. As one Office of Management and Budget (OMB) official explained in an interview to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, his office came to believe the State Department would prevail not because of new substantive analysis or discussion but because of persistence. This is not how the people's business should be done.

Ensuring American outposts abroad and the diplomats that staff them are fully trained to protect themselves is of vital importance. That is why this Congress has fully funded the Administration's request for embassy security funding. It is incumbent on us all, however, to use limited taxpayer resources in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

Having reviewed reports from OMB and GAO, several meeting with officials who conducted the analysis, as well as repeated questioning of Assistant Secretary of State Gary Starr, I remain unconvinced that the

construction of a FASTC located at Ft. Pickett is the best use of taxpayer funds. While neither report can be considered complete, they offer several issues that should be addressed.

First, GAO reports in their analysis that the State Department has been working on cost estimates and course requirements since 2008 while FLETC had only 60 days to conduct an assessment on how they could accommodate training requirements laid out by the State Department. To ask any federal agency to conduct an assessment on such a large scope in such a short amount of time is completely unreasonable. The process effectively gave FLETC one day to complete an analysis which would be held to the same standard as one completed over the course of five weeks. Compounding this inequity, the GAO report found that the State Department withheld information regarding course requirements and certain training necessities from FLETC during those 60 days. I strongly urge the Subcommittee to address how FLETC could provide an accurate and comparable assessment under the time constraint. In addition, what benefit did the State Department believe its deliberate failure to withhold information would have to bringing the training online?

Second, the GAO report's finding that, over a period of 19-60 years, conducting training at FLETC could become more costly overtime is based on data it judged to be inadequate. It also relies on the State Department's blatant disregard for the intent of Congress by obligating some \$71 million in locating, approving, and beginning construction at Fort Pickett. As such, it takes into consideration the \$10,000 per day fine the State Department is incurring as a result of prematurely entering a construction contract before receiving congressional approval for a project of this magnitude. The State Department is being rewarded for attempting to get construction at Fort Pickett so far down the road that it's too late to turn around as Congress and the American people can work to stop the egregious waste of taxpayer dollars. I encourage the Subcommittee to examine the questionable legal authority the State Department used to begin construction and the budgetary implications of these actions.

Moreover, the GAO's finding on cost ignores the likely prospect of the State Department seeking additional funds in the future. As I am sure the Subcommittee is well aware, the State Department's cost estimates have fluctuated widely. From an initial proposal of \$950 million to a secondary \$907 million, then to \$461 million and most recently \$413 million, these projections must be approached with caution. The reduced costs are largely a factor of eliminating life support services and narrowing of the training offered. In contrast, FLETC has proposed to expand its existing high quality facilities to accommodate the full scope of State's *initial* proposal at a cost of \$272 million. I hope the Subcommittee today will examine the reduced capabilities of the most recent proposal by state and the likelihood, especially given State's repeated mismanagement of construction projects, for the Department to return to Congress for additional funding in the future.

By its own admission the GAO report is fundamentally flawed because it, "did not assess whether the training elements identified by [Diplomatic Security] were necessary for DS to accomplish its mission." Rather, it chose to accept State's requirements and build them in to its baseline assumptions in evaluating the two options. This is a critical failure in the report as there has been varying reports from State itself on what would meet the needs of this important training. I encourage the Subcommittee to examine this failure and whether the identified requirements are sufficient.

I also urge the Subcommittee to review reports of inappropriate actions taken by the State Department. Interviews conducted by the House Foreign Affairs Committee have uncovered a systematic effort by State to suppress OMB's report which found, "FLETC can meet the vast majority of State's current requirements for access to facilities and course scheduling, training requirements, and life support

services, all at a much lower cost." As I referenced earlier, the Committee found that OMB officials were persuaded to drop their objections to constructing a duplicative facility at Fort Pickett not because of new reports or analysis but as a result of a February 3, 2014 meeting with State Department officials. It is unclear what was said during this meeting but, according to OMB Resource Management Office Director Steve Kosiak, it was not the result of any new substantive analysis or discussion. I find it difficult to understand how FLETC was capable of providing the necessary resources while a facility is being built at Ft. Pickett but not after State embarked on construction.

I am also deeply troubled by actions taken by Deputy Secretary Higginbottom to prevent FLETC personnel from communicating with Congress. In an email dated March 7, 2014, Deputy Secretary Higginbottom stated to Director Kosiak that she was "annoyed" with FLETC personnel and she would call the Department of Homeland Security Deputy Secretary Mayorkas because these actions were "clearly out of bounds." This appears to be an effort to deny Congress the ability to conduct oversight and ignoring the mandate of every public official to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

Overall, my biggest concern is with the blatant disregard for the taxpayer funds and the correct process. The State Department's actions represent a "Washington knows best" mentality that has been rejected by the American people but is all too prevalent in the bureaucracy. Perhaps this is why the ten richest counties in the country are located in the vicinity of this city.

I want to again thank Chairman Perdue, Ranking Member Kaine, and the members of this Subcommittee for hold this hearing today. I believe this is a perfect opportunity to show the American people that we are listening and that we, too, are fed up with the out-of-control spending and the Washington bureaucracy ignoring the will of the people. I believe this is a chance for us, as Members of Congress, to rein in the bureaucracy and show how the people's business should be done.

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