Amendment 4231, Section 4013 To eliminate the proposed plan by the State Department to build a brand new $500 million training facility in Ruthsberg, Maryland.

The New Training Facility Cannot be Characterized as a "Shovel Ready" Project

Local Residents Have Expressed Serious Concerns About Having a New Government Facility in Their Backyard

The State Department Already Has Training Facilities – It Simply Wants New and Upgraded Facilities

Cheaper Options Exist if the New Facility Is Built In West Virginia Instead of Maryland

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The State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security is responsible for providing security at U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide.

According to State, the rising threats of terrorism, civil disorder, and crime mean that more and more embassies and consulates that were previously safe are now potential targets.

Unfortunately, the State Department has taken a very expensive route to providing security-related training by building a facility in Maryland instead of in West Virginia.

The current proposal would require spending $70 million in stimulus funding alone to plan a new facility, while another alternative would cost $75 million total.

This amendment would cancel the planning for a new training facility in Ruthsberg, Maryland, resulting in an immediate savings to taxpayers of more than $400 million.

The New Training Facility Cannot be Characterized as a "Shovel Ready" Project

"Shovel ready" stimulus projects are those that can be started quickly and help the economy by giving it and economic boost.

To be considered "shovel ready," we were told projects would meet the following common sense criteria –

- All design work is complete;
- All land necessary for construction has been purchased;
- All environmental and regulatory reviews have been completed;
- The project was proposed *before* the stimulus bill passed; and
- The project could be started within 3-4 months of the stimulus bill passing Congress.

When the new training facility project is examined in light of these criteria, it does not seem to pass the test.

Current plans to build the new facility in Ruthsberg, Maryland are on hold pending the results of an environmental impact statement.

Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW) observed the following as it relates to this project:

> "The location chosen currently [Ruthsberg] has no sewer or water lines, few roads, and would require tens of millions of dollars in additional infrastructure improvements to support major construction and eventually, a sprawling campus, complete with driving tracks, explosives and firearms training areas – hardly a shovel-ready project."[1]

This new training facility is hardly shovel ready if in order to build it there will need to be major infrastructure improvements first.

Local Residents Have Expressed Serious Concerns About Having a New Government Facility in Their Backyard

Residents of Queen Anne's County, where Ruthsford is located, forced the State Department to answer questions regarding the training facility at multiple town hall meetings.

The town hall meetings quickly turned adversarial when some claimed that the Government Services Administration (GSA) misled county leaders on the full impact of the facility.

Trip Callahan, a local farmer from Ruthsburg expressed his frustration at one of these town hall meetings about the facility, saying:

> This project to us looks like a large square peg, which is your center that you're trying to put in to a very small round hole, which is

[1] Paige, Leslie, "Stimulus Rebellion on the Eastern Shore," Citizens Against Government Waste, April 29, 2010, http://swineline.org/2010/04/29/stimulus-rebellion-on-the-eastern-shore/

> Ruthsburg. And what you're doing or what you've been doing for the last two or three months is whittling away at this very large square peg.[2]

Mr. Callahan went on to complain that the whole process seemed rigged to find no "significant impact" on the community.

Many others like him voiced similar concerns at the town hall, but the project moved forward anyway over their objections.

One report indicated that the objections by locals were widespread, with one resident even saying he felt "lied to:"

> "County Commissioners, most of whom initially supported the training facility, have now withdrawn support. Local businessman and community activist Sveinn Storm recalls that during one meeting, when residents assailed the facility as wasteful and unnecessary, GSA and State Department officials claimed that it would yield huge savings to taxpayers by enabling the agencies to close the 19 other training facilities and consolidate their activities.
>
> However, at a later meeting, when residents reminded government officials that the ARRA was supposed to be creating jobs and then pressed them about how many jobs would be lost at the 19 facilities slated for closure, agency officials reversed themselves, admitted that the other facilities would not be closing at all, and that the savings extolled earlier were nonexistent. **During the January 7, 2010 meeting, one angry resident asked "If this is such a godsend, why are they lying to us?"[3]**

The State Department Already Has Training Facilities – It Simply Wants New and Upgraded Facilities

Our overseas foreign service workers are a true asset to this country, and no one disputes that they need training facilities.

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[2] http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/138395.pdf

[3] Paige, Leslie, "Stimulus Rebellion on the Eastern Shore," Citizens Against Government Waste, April 29, 2010, http://swineline.org/2010/04/29/stimulus-rebellion-on-the-eastern-shore/

What is a question, however, is whether they need *brand new* facilities *right now*.

The State Department is currently meeting its training needs through a combination military bases and contracted use of other areas.

For example, State currently conducts defensive and counterterrorist driving training at the Bill Scott Raceway in Summit Point, West Virginia.

While State says that a brand new consolidated facility is needed to handle the increased demand for trained foreign service officers, it must be balanced against other budgetary priorities.

Cheaper Options Exist if the New Facility Is Built In West Virginia Instead of Maryland

In 2008 the State Department planned to build its new training facility adjacent to the Bill Scott Raceway in Summit Point, West Virginia, where it currently conducts training.

It estimated that this cost would be around $75 million to build the additional facilities needed for this project.

In late 2009, however, State changed its mind and found that its best option was a new $500 million facility in Ruthsberg, Maryland.

The State Department has not provided information on why Ruthsberg is a more suitable site for this training.

Compared with the 2008 proposal, the one receiving stimulus money would be six times as expensive.

If State had simply moved forward with its 2008 proposal, it could have paid for all of its needs with the stimulus money, instead of just the planning costs of a new center in Maryland.

Interestingly, State has been considering a new training facility for at least 20 years, but did not make it a priority until now.

According to a 2008 report of the State Department, in the late 1990s the State Department began examining potential options for placement of a Center for Antiterrorism and Security Training (CAST) facility.

According to State Department justification materials, military bases that were slated for closure were considered but anything outside of the Washington, DC area was discarded because of logistic concerns.[4]

Rather than trying to be economical and spend money on the most pressing needs, State is trying to cash in on free stimulus money and build a lavish new facility for itself.

Another explanation for moving the facility to Maryland is simple politics.

After the stimulus passed into law, Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) advocated that the center be placed in Maryland.

The training facility also had the support of fellow Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.), House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), and Rep. Frank Kratovil (D-Md.), a so-called Blue Dog Democrat who represents Queen Anne's County and whose House seat is widely-viewed as being in jeopardy in 2010."[5]

Passing this amendment could save up to $500 million if no facility was built and the State Department just continued with current operations.

However, even if the facility were built at the preferred site from the report: the Bill Scott Raceway in Summit Point, West Virginia, it would only cost $75 million, saving the taxpayers $425 million.

[4] Department of State May 2008 Report on the Consolidation of Diplomatic Security Training.
[5] Paige, Leslie, "Stimulus Rebellion on the Eastern Shore," Citizens Against Government Waste, April 29, 2010, http://swineline.org/2010/04/29/stimulus-rebellion-on-the-eastern-shore/

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The Federal Jobs a Maryland Town Doesn't Want

By Alex Altman

The residents of Ruthsburg, MD., have come here to escape. A cluster of cozy homes nestled amid rolling farmland on the state's Eastern Shore just 65 miles (105 km) from Washington, Ruthsburg has no stores, no stoplights and no noise apart from the geese squawking in nearby Tuckahoe State Park.

"It's as if you turned back time 100 years," says resident Sherry Adam.

But with a new neighbor angling to move in, this bucolic hamlet has become a battleground. On Nov. 30, the State Department and the federal government's General Services Administration (GSA) announced Ruthsburg was their top pick to become the home of a new antiterrorism and diplomatic-security training center. The proposed 2,000-acre (810 hectare) campus, which would streamline training now scattered across 19 sites, is expected to create 400 permanent jobs. At first, elected officials exulted. "The training facility is good news for three reasons: jobs, jobs and more jobs," Maryland Senator Barbara Mikulski said.

In sleepy Queen Anne's County, however, the massive project — which could cost up to $500 million and will receive $70 million in stimulus funds during the first phase of construction — is turning out to be politically poisonous. Residents whose homes abut the farms the GSA would purchase to develop the facility say driving tracks, firing ranges and explosive charges would pierce the cherished quiet. Conservationists are urging a more rigorous environmental review. Others question the decision to plunk such an installation into a pastoral community with comparatively low unemployment. "There's never been an explanation of why Ruthsburg

came to be the favored site," says Eric Wargotz, a Republican county commissioner running for Mikulski's Senate seat.

Opponents have a theory, however. "It has every appearance of being a political plum," says Jay Falstad, an official with the Queen Anne's Conservation Association. The local Democratic Congressman, Frank Kratovil, is a freshman Blue Dog on shaky footing in a Republican district. But officials say the choice was driven not by politics but by logistics. In an e-mail to Time, a GSA spokesman says Ruthsburg's selection was "based on dozens of criteria, including proximity to Washington, developable area, shape, topography, availability and mission requirements."

Still, presentations given to demystify the project have drawn scores of irate residents. The backlash crested at an ugly session on Jan. 7, when opponents, citing mixed messages about the facility's purpose and scope, accused the government of duplicity. "If this is such a godsend," one wondered, "why are they lying to us?"

The following day, Mikulski wrote a letter to the GSA that called the rollout an "unmitigated disaster" that had stirred "what I fear is now an implacable opposition to the project." Kratovil has exhorted locals to "take a deep breath" and await the environmental-review results, and four of the five county commissioners have rescinded their support. "What we're up against are politicians with their fingers in the wind and without the slightest care about the individuals who will be hurt most," says Sveinn Storm, a businessman and activist who visited a similar facility in Playas, N.M., to document its effect on the community.

Yet proponents, including a number of business owners, argue that thunderous denunciations from a small minority have manufactured the illusion of widespread hostility. A January poll found that just 27% of the 403 residents surveyed opposed the project. "The people that are against it are always the loudest," says Linda Friday, president of the county's Chamber of Commerce.

As they scramble to recover from a flubbed p.r. campaign, GSA officials have promised to muffle noise by installing earthen berms, vegetated perimeter buffers and baffled firing ranges. But the government has the final say over whether to purchase the property, and at times the anger and

tough talk have a hint of helplessness. "They're trying to ram this down our throats," says Andrew Eastman, a Ruthsburg resident. "I just don't trust them."

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http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/22/AR2010022204958.html

Some in Md. town call anti-terrorism training plan a dud

By Aaron C. Davis

The few hundred residents who live in a bucolic corner of Maryland's Eastern Shore don't object to the 400 jobs that might come from a new State Department facility funded with stimulus money. It's just that they're

not really into the noise and commotion that would come from the chases, machine-gun fire and bomb blasts.

The little bombs scheduled to go off nine or 10 times a week in Ruthsburg would be a nuisance, and the bigger ones detonated every few weeks could be more of a headache. But it's the three-pounders that have residents in a panic. They're convinced that it'll amount to mini-earthquakes, shaking pictures off walls and slowly tearing apart a historical landmark -- not to mention scaring the bejesus out of their children, chickens and horses.

"Our house was built in 1850 on a foundation of bricks and mortar," said John Roschy, 69. "How long is it going to take to start crumbling from the concussions from all those explosions?"

About 30 miles east of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, down a quiet country road behind some trees a couple hundred yards from Roschy's back door, the State Department is deep into a plan to use $70 million to buy two tracts of farmland and begin building one of the nation's largest and busiest anti-terrorism and security training facilities.

The 2,000-acre site would have a racetrack to teach thousands of diplomats how to evade would-be attackers, firing ranges for target practice for machine-gun-wielding bodyguards and blasting pits to show embassy workers how to sift through rubble for evidence.

"We need to get more people out to high-threat and dangerous places than ever before, and this would help us do that," said Jeffrey W. Culver, director of the State Department's Diplomatic Security Service, which employs 35,000 people and guards everyone from Afghan President Hamid Karzai to the U.S. Olympic team in Vancouver.

"Quite frankly, currently, it's a nightmare," said Chris DiZebba, a State Department planner, explaining how each year about 10,000 trainees play musical chairs at 19 rented sites from Virginia to California before jetting overseas.

But missteps by federal officials and fierce opposition from a few hundred locals have led to months of delays and left the State Department in damage-control mode to convince neighbors and members of Maryland's

congressional delegation that they can build berms and plant trees to muffle the blasts.

Window into the stimulus

The conflict over the site helps explain why dozens of stimulus projects totaling billions of dollars remain on drawing boards more than a year after Congress passed the $787 billion plan.

Despite being pitched as shovel-ready, any project like the training facility that requires land-use approvals can quickly end up mired in local zoning, environmental and not-in-my-backyard battles.

In some cases, the deeper level of public scrutiny has also raised questions about why such projects are labeled "stimulus." Community hearings on the State Department project, for instance, have revealed that the bulk of spending would not go to creating jobs but to buying farmland. Remaining funds would pay for limited construction work at the end of the year -- nearly two years after the stimulus package was passed.

The bulk of the major construction work, such as building dormitories and laboratories, is expected to cost hundreds of millions more through 2014 -- and potentially several times the project's initial share of stimulus money -- as well as require future congressional budget approval.

What's more, during local public hearings, officials have acknowledged that they've never done a comprehensive analysis to prove that, while more convenient, a new campus would save taxpayers money in the long run.

"I'll try an analogy, off the cuff: If you own a home or go to a hotel, one is much more expensive," Ellyn Goldkind, a State Department architect, said when asked about cost savings at a town hall with 300 residents last week. When that answer didn't fly, she quickly fessed up. "I'm not going to pretend, I don't even have a ballpark. . . . From all these meetings, one thing that's very clear is we need more numbers."

So far, some say, the only stimulus the project has created is jobs for a couple dozen government consultants to answer questions about noise, traffic and environmental concerns.

Poor communication

In December, farmers and families whose homes dot quiet horse trails and trickling streams surrounding the soybean fields on the proposed site were flabbergasted when federal officials announced that Ruthsburg was the State Department's preferred spot for the project. Residents began arguing that the installation would ruin the peace and quiet that decades ago led Maryland to set aside a large swath of nearby land as Tuckahoe State Park.

The NIMBY fight, however, quickly mushroomed into a much larger regional conflict, complicated by mistakes, poor communication and sloppy work by federal officials who were racing to spend the money as fast as they could.

Descriptions published in a solicitation for the land, for example, said air operations, .50-caliber machine guns, grenade launchers and other heavy artillery could be used at the site. State Department officials say the document was wrong, but they waited so long to address it that Queen Anne's County lawmakers withdrew support, and U.S. Rep. Frank Kratovil (D), Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski (D) and others who had worked to bring the site to Maryland backed away.

Last month, a series of awkward responses by federal officials at a raucous town hall meeting of more than 500 people also left the impression the government might later take more land through eminent domain and that the largest bomb blasts, which government consultants say would be about as loud as sandblasting or a rock concert, would occur weekly. Last week, State Department officials said neither is true and made their best effort at setting the record straight and offering neighborly concessions, such as limiting the three-pound blasts to six times a year and firing guns and using the racetrack only during business hours.

But with so many revisions and contradictions and a vocal group of activists effectively sowing distrust over the facility, many residents say they no longer know what to believe.

Two Eastern Shore activists have already traveled to another State Department training area in New Mexico and filmed a blistering documentary on the alleged impact on local residents. Sales of the $5

video have been brisk outside local meetings with State Department officials. Eastern Shore business groups, which contend that polling shows a majority of county residents support the facility, have responded with a campaign to discredit the activists' video.

"We all kind of anticipated that there would be and continues to be some resistance to this, but we also want people to know that we want to work with those who have concerns and address each and every one the best that we can," said Culver, the head of the Diplomatic Security Service.

State Department officials say they are hopeful that they can remain on an original schedule to buy the land this summer and break ground by the end of the year, but they have already extended public comment periods by two months and acknowledge that delays, including legal challenges, are possible.

"We need to have a facility like other law enforcement agencies have, a place that we can call our own," said David J. Schnorbus, diplomatic security director of training. "I mean, it's our time."

Rhonda Tuel, who fears that the site and blasting will worsen her son's asthma, disagrees.

"It's a waste of money," Tuel said. "How many military bases and places does the government own across the country? There's not one other one they can use? The government needs to learn how to share."

Stimulus Rebellion on the Eastern Shore

http://swineline.org/2010/04/29/stimulus-rebellion-on-the-eastern-shore/

Posted on April 29, 2010 by Leslie Paige

There is a brawl brewing in the bucolic fields of Queen Anne's County, Maryland. The Obama Administration's $862 billion stimulus fund, ostensibly targeted toward shovel-ready, jobs-producing projects, is going toward the construction of a decidedly non-shovel-ready 2,000-acre U.S. State Department security training facility that residents in the region neither need nor want. This tiny band of committed activists, comprised of Republicans, Democrats, private property rights advocates, conservationists, and small business owners, may go down in history as

one of the only communities in the country to successfully reject a wasteful stimulus pork project.

The idea for a centralized national security training facility began in the 1990s and gained added urgency in the wake of al Qaeda bombings at U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya. In 2007, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) determined that the State Department's 19 different training facilities for future diplomatic and embassy security personnel were too far-flung and inefficient and recommended giving serious thought to consolidating some or all of those facilities into one, located somewhere within a one-hour car ride from the nation's Capitol. The concept lingered for several years without much forward momentum.

Along came the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Immediately after the ARRA bill was signed into law, the General Services Administration (GSA) and the U.S. State Department joined forces to begin vetting possible locations for the new Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) and grasping members of Congress began lobbying to acquire the center, along with the $70 million in stimulus funds made available for it.

A May 1, 2008 U.S. State Department report on the consolidation of diplomatic security training makes it obvious that the original location for the center was to be Summit Point, West Virginia, almost certainly supported by the King of Pork, Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), who over the years has managed to force Congress to finance new government facilities and place them in West Virginia. The Summit Point location already offered many of the amenities necessary to accommodate the kind of hard-skills training necessary to protect embassies and diplomatic personnel.

However, at some point in the process, Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) advocated that the center be placed in Maryland. With the support of fellow Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.), House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), and Rep. Frank Kratovil (D-Md.), a so-called Blue Dog Democrat who represents Queen Anne's County and whose House seat is widely-viewed as being in jeopardy in 2010, Sen. Mikulski finally staked a claim on the new center. She crowed about it in a press release, saying "This is a big win for Maryland. The training facility is good news for three reasons: jobs, jobs, and jobs." The project was projected to create 400 permanent jobs.

Which is when the trouble began. In the 15 months since the ARRA bill became law, the President's oft-repeated statement that stimulus expenditures would be timely, targeted, and temporary has largely gone down the collective memory hole, along with his promise that stimulus money would be given to shovel-ready infrastructure projects in order to jump-start the economy and create jobs.

At 8.4 percent, Queen Anne County's jobless rate is well below the national average of 9.7 percent. In addition, $20 million of the $70 million is slated to be used to purchase 1,250 acres of farmland from a private seller, not a dime of which will create jobs. The $70 million appropriated through the ARRA will defray only a small portion of the center's final price tag, estimated to be around $500 million.

The location chosen currently has no sewer or water lines, few roads, and would require tens of millions of dollars in additional infrastructure improvements to support major construction and eventually, a sprawling campus, complete with driving tracks, explosives and firearms training areas – hardly a shovel-ready project. Local residents believe the imposition of the unwanted facility will eventually lead to pressure for higher taxes, more congestion and, in due course, the obliteration of their local environment and pastoral culture.

The other danger is that this cadre of pork-barrel-loving politicians from Maryland, unwilling to force already angry constituents to pay for the additional infrastructure, will simply use the partially-funded training center as a convenient rationale for snagging more federal earmarks. The project has been identified in both CNN's list of most wasteful stimulus projects and Sen. Tom Coburn's (R-Okla.) report on wasteful stimulus spending.

Residents in the sparsely-populated hamlet of Ruthsberg, many of whom chose to live there expressly because of its quiet beauty and wide open spaces, rose up and demanded answers. The Queen Anne's Conservation Association submitted several Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests demanding all documents related to how the Queen Anne's County site was chosen; its FOIA submissions were summarily rejected with little explanation. GSA and State Department officials have indicated that they have no intention of releasing any documents related to site selection criteria, deliberations, even the identity of the decision makers for another

eight to 14 months, hardly the sort of transparency that the Obama administration has so relentlessly preened over.

After residents of Queen Anne's County forced the GSA and the State Department to stand and deliver at multiple town hall meetings, several of which became acrimonious and changed few minds, it became clear that GSA officials had misrepresented the true nature of the FASTC. County Commissioners, most of whom initially supported the training facility, have now withdrawn support. Local businessman and community activist Sveinn Storm recalls that during one meeting, when residents assailed the facility as wasteful and unnecessary, GSA and State Department officials claimed that it would yield huge savings to taxpayers by enabling the agencies to close the 19 other training facilities and consolidate their activities.

However, at a later meeting, when residents reminded government officials that the ARRA was supposed to be creating jobs and then pressed them about how many jobs would be lost at the 19 facilities slated for closure, agency officials reversed themselves, admitted that the other facilities would not be closing at all, and that the savings extolled earlier were nonexistent. During the January 7, 2010 meeting, one angry resident asked "If this is such a godsend, why are they lying to us?"

Today, the final disposition of this $70 million pork-barrel stimulus project remains in limbo while the stakeholders await the outcome of an environmental assessment, which is already one month overdue. One Ruthsberg resident was quoted in the April 12 edition of *Time* magazine, saying, "They're trying to ram this down our throats…I just don't trust them." Sounds eerily familiar.