

Cynthia J. Atwood
Assistant Director
Field Training Directorate
Federal Law Enforcement Training Center
Department of Homeland Security
Before
The House Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Management, Investigations and Oversight
Regarding
“Ensuring We Have Well-Trained Boots on the Ground At the Border”

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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rogers, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, it is a pleasure to appear before this Committee today to discuss the status of the Border Patrol training being conducted at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center’s (FLETC) Artesia, New Mexico site. This training is being accomplished in support of the Secure Border Initiative.

INTRODUCTION

FLETC’S mission is to train those who protect our homeland. FLETC is the Federal Government’s leader for and provider of world-class law enforcement training. FLETC prepares new and experienced law enforcement professionals to fulfill their responsibilities in a safe manner and at the highest level of proficiency. Training consists of all phases of law enforcement instruction, to include firearms, drivers training, defensive tactics, and legal instruction.

Through consolidated training, FLETC can respond quickly to emerging training needs, readily adapt to new requirements and focus exclusively on training, which is FLETC’s only mission. FLETC delivers interagency training with optimal efficiency through the government-wide sharing of facilities, equipment, and expertise, which produces economies of scale available only from a consolidated law enforcement training environment. There are currently 83 Federal partner organizations engaged in law enforcement training at FLETC sites.

FLETC currently operates four training sites throughout the United States for multiple agency use. FLETC headquarters and its largest training site, Glynco, Georgia, has classrooms, dining and residence halls, and state-of-the-art facilities for firearms, physical techniques, driver, marine, and computer-based training. Two field locations that provide both basic and advanced training are located in Artesia, New Mexico, and Charleston, South Carolina. The fourth training site, Cheltenham, Maryland, provides in-service and re-qualification training for officers and agents in the Metropolitan Washington, DC area. In collaboration with the Department of State, FLETC operates International Law Enforcement Academies in Gaborone, Botswana, and San Salvador, El Salvador. FLETC also maintains a very robust state and local training program.

As Assistant Director for Field Training, I am the senior FLETC official with management oversight on behalf of the Director of the FLETC for the field sites in Artesia, Charleston, and Cheltenham, and for the National Center for State and Local Training.

ARTESIA, NEW MEXICO, CENTER

As this Committee is aware, from the testimony of FLETC's Director, Connie L. Patrick, when she appeared before the Committee on May 24, 2005, the Artesia, New Mexico Center is the principal site for Border Patrol training. This site consists of more than 3,000 acres. FLETC Artesia has been operational since 1989 and serves to accommodate Border Patrol training, Bureau of Indian Affairs Police and Tribal Officer training, Federal Flight Deck Officer training, Federal Air Marshal training, and other law enforcement training as required. In 2003, Border Patrol training conducted at other FLETC sites was consolidated at FLETC Artesia. As necessary, FLETC continues to utilize its other locations to host Border Patrol training. Today, the Artesia site has the latest state-of-the-art facilities and offers the type of specialized training environment most suited to Border Patrol functions. The practical, hands-on training capabilities at a single location affords the Border Patrol training that is second to none. This year, FLETC will complete a new dormitory that will accommodate 608 trainees and allow for the total housing of over 2,000 trainees at any one time. FLETC also has "built-in flexibility" at the Artesia site to further expand its existing housing as needed.

Much of what has been accomplished in Artesia would not have been possible without the generous support of Congress through the annual appropriation process. With Congressional funding support, and the strong cooperation and leadership of the Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection, FLETC believes it is in the very best position to accomplish the goals set for Border Patrol training in the secure border initiative and within the timeframe established.

BORDER PATROL TRAINING WORKLOAD

The aggressive growth plan for new Border Patrol agents is necessary in order to reach the President's goal to significantly increase the number of agents. We have approached the training program and scheduling with urgency and the need to accelerate training. The plan has been to train as quickly as possible to the level of putting the new Border Patrol agents needed on our borders in an orderly and sensible manner. For Fiscal Year 2007, FLETC and CBP project 3,900 agents will commence training. I am pleased to note that we are on schedule and will reach a 34-class overlap next month. While this is a significant milestone, we have in place all the necessary resources to meet the training challenge. In Fiscal Year 2008, with the President's funding request, we will conduct training for 4,350 new trainees. By the end of the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2009, the remaining workload of 850 to meet the 6,000 net total (with attrition) of new trainees provided for in recent appropriations will be completed. By the end of the calendar year of 2008, the projected number of Border Patrol will be at 18,000.

BORDER PATROL TRAINING PROGRAM

In Fiscal Year 2007, the Border Patrol and FLETC instituted an 81-day training program following a full review of the training curriculum. In Fiscal Year 2008, the planning and anticipation is for two program lengths: 55 days for trainees with Spanish language proficiency and 95 days for those requiring language training. This plan will significantly reduce the amount of time to prepare bi-lingual trainees to be deployed to our borders. Let me assure the Committee that we are working very closely with CBP and the Border Patrol Academy to maximize the training experiences and maintain the quality of the training. At the same time, we are pleased that the costs associated with this training continue to be very economical. In Fiscal Year 2007, the total cost for training at Artesia, to include tuition, room and board, miscellaneous, and instructors is currently \$16,220 per student for 81 days of training. Specifically, the tuition and miscellaneous cost is \$4,807, the lodging and meals cost is \$2,256 and instructors and support staff cost is \$9,157. (Tuition includes items consumed by students, such as printing, pencils, paper, ammunition, and uniforms; miscellaneous costs are contract costs for bus transportation, dining hall, custodial services, and other student services.) We continuously revise our numbers based upon training volume and other changes as they occur throughout the training year and we expect this total cost actually will be lower by the end of fiscal 2007. We will be pleased to provide this committee with the final cost numbers at the end of fiscal year 2007.

CAPACITY

Questions have been asked regarding FLETC's capacity to meet Border Patrol training requirements. From the beginning, FLETC has pledged that it will bring to bear every resource it has to successfully implement this important initiative.

In addition to housing, significant upgrades in other facilities have been completed at our Artesia, NM training site. These include language laboratories, expansions to the physical training facilities, an enclosed aquatic training site, two new emergency response ranges, an off-road four-wheel drive course, and a Border Patrol Check Point practical exercise area. Also, a skeet (shotgun training) range and renovation of an existing firearms range to accommodate 100 yd rifle training is underway.

Should it prove necessary to consider alternatives to the present training plan, FLETC is prepared to utilize other FLETC or DHS sites to assist in meeting the training demand. Finally, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, allow me to underscore the points that FLETC does understand the significance of conducting this training effectively and expeditiously and we will not lose sight of the very important mission entrusted to us.

CLOSING

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify today. This completes my statement and I would be pleased to address any questions the Committee may have.

