

2262 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0703
(202) 225-3661

59 ELM STREET
SECOND FLOOR
NEW HAVEN, CT 06510
(203) 562-3718

DURHAM/MIDDLEFIELD/MIDDLETOWN
(860) 344-1159

STRATFORD
(203) 378-9005

Website: <http://www.house.gov/delauro>



UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ROSA L. DELAURO

3RD DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

August 20, 2008

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POLICY COMMITTEE

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The Honorable Pete Geren
Secretary
United States Department of the Army
Army Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310-1600

Dear Secretary Geren,

Thank you once again for taking the time to speak with me on August 1st with regard to the proposed construction of an Armed Forces Reserve Center in Middletown, Connecticut. Last evening, Colonel Keith Landry, Commander of the United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Louisville District, and several members of his staff attended a meeting at which Middletown's elected officials were able to ask several questions and clarify the process by which a site for this facility will be chosen. I was encouraged by Colonel Landry's willingness to more directly involve the City and the community in the upcoming site selection process.

As we discussed, Governor Rell determined that the 205th Engineer Company of the Connecticut National Guard will not be consolidated into this facility, and I understand that as a result of that decision new specifications for the project will be forthcoming shortly. It is also my understanding that because of this reduction it is probable that a significantly smaller acreage size will be required for the facility. This would likely open up several additional properties for consideration and, as such, Colonel Landry has stated that a new site selection process will begin as soon as the updated specifications are ready. The City of Middletown has always expressed interest in siting the Armed Services Reserve Center in Middletown. However, the site selected needs to not only meet the needs of the Army's specifications, but must also provide an economic benefit to the City while maintaining the quality of life of its residents.

At last evening's meeting several questions were once again raised, which I believe need to be fully addressed so that the community is more comfortable moving forward. As you may be aware, the team from Louisville will be in Middletown again next Thursday, August 27 for a meeting in which the public will be able to pose questions. I believe it would be beneficial to all of those involved if some of these issues were addressed prior to that meeting.

First, the BRAC language states that the consolidation and building of a Reserve Center in Middletown shall take place "if the Army is able to acquire land suitable for the construction of the facilities." In November 2006, Mayor Giuliano of Middletown received a letter (enclosed) from the Real Estate Division of the New England District of the Corps which states that "We are inquiring as to the availability of approximately 16-25 acres of land in the town of

Middletown or within 20 driving miles of the town limits that could be used for an Armed Forces Reserve Center.” In recent meetings, representatives of the Corps have explained that their mission states that the Reserve Center must be built within the city limits of Middletown. As I am sure you can understand, these varying positions have caused great confusion and raised the question as to whether or not this facility must be located in Middletown.

I am therefore requesting that you provide me with a legal clarification as to whether this Reserve Center is required to be located within the city limits of Middletown and, if so, a detailed explanation of how the Department of the Army arrived at that determination. Furthermore, your Department’s most recent letter to me of August 4 states that, if a suitable site cannot be identified in a timely manner, “this significant construction project will be cancelled and the Reserve and Guard soldiers will remain at existing locations.” Yet, it is my understanding the Army Corps must find a way to implement the BRAC recommendations. Can you please clarify what your legal interpretation of the law is, what the Army’s definition of a suitable site is, and what steps you may take if a suitable site is not found in Middletown?

A second issue that I believe needs to be addressed is with regard to the permits and approvals which the Corps may need to seek prior to proceeding with the construction of this facility. It is my understanding that, under current federal law, the Corps would be required to seek both a Section 401 permit, issued by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, as well as approval from the local Inland/Wetlands Commission. Yet, during this process, there has been some debate as to whether or not the Corps would need to seek such approvals. I would ask that you confirm whether these approvals, under current federal statutes, are required.

As stated above, I am very encouraged by the direction in which Colonel Landry has proposed to move forward with the site selection process. It is absolutely critical that the community be fully involved in this process and I believe that this new approach will provide Middletown’s citizens with greater input and help to avoid the community frustration that we have witnessed thus far. Again, I would ask that every effort be made to address these issues prior to the public meeting scheduled for Thursday, August 27th, as I believe it would be of great benefit to all of those involved if these questions were resolved before moving forward.

Again, thank you for taking the time to speak with me earlier this month. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff assistants, Allison Dodge at (203) 562-3718 or Daniel Zeitlin at (202) 225-3661 if we can provide you with any additional information. I appreciate your time and prompt consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



ROSA L. DeLAURO
Member of Congress