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CONGRESSMAN TSONGAS REPORTS

"THE BATTLE OF FORT DEVENS"

The Ford Administration would like to close Fort Devens in Ayer. 2100 civilians and 6000 military personnel are presently based at the only remaining Army installation in New England. \$130 million would be lost to the local economy in payroll and federal contracts.

The closing of Fort Devens makes no sense on a military or economic basis. I am afraid that this action is still another example of the Nixon and Ford Administrations' complete disregard for the people of Massachusetts and our acute economic problems.

According to a study conducted by my office, military spending over the next budget year is to be reduced from \$54 million to \$47 million in the Northeast. At the same time, the South will receive \$800 million, an increase of \$141 million in the next budget year alone. In Massachusetts we pay \$10 in federal taxes for every \$9 received from the government. Some Southern states receive double the amount they contribute in taxes.

In the past few years Massachusetts has lost the Boston Naval Shipyard, Otis Air Force Base, Westover Air Force Base, the Chelsea Naval Hospital, and the Watertown Arsenal. During my first 15 months in the Congress we have had to battle the Administration and the Pentagon in order to retain the Air Force Cambridge Laboratories at Hanscom Air Force Base in Bedford. Despite an initial victory, the Air Force intends to reduce employment at CRL by 200. In addition, we were successful in halting a proposed 40% cut in funding and personnel at Lincoln Labs in Lexington and the Mitre Corporation in Bedford. Again, this was a difficult and protracted fight. It is immensely frustrating to be informed of intended reductions, mobilize forces, research issues, request studies and hearings, hold scores of strategy sessions and official meetings, then finally resolve the issue... only to be told one week later that the Administration plans to close another area facility.

I believe that the only way to end this type of regional discrimination is to elect a new President who will be equally concerned about all areas of the United States. Prior to the Massachusetts primary, State Rep. Bruce Weatherbee and I myself organized a forum to place presidential candidates on the record about the intended closing of Fort Devens. The following candidates pledged to keep the base opened: Udall, Shapp, Bayh, Wallace, Jackson, and Shriver. Harris proposed further study and Carter would make no commitment.

The Massachusetts Congressional Delegation and Senators have been working together since it became clear that the Army was considering the closing of Fort Devens. We have met twice with the Secretary of the Army to protest these intentions. In addition, Governor Dukakis and Lieutenant Governor O'Neill have been most helpful during this critical time prior to a formal announcement. At present, Senator Kennedy, Rep. Drinan and I have been attempting to set up a meeting this week with Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Budget Director Lynn to present economic arguments against the closing.

It is difficult to fight discriminatory practices and insensitivity. However, I intend to take every possible step in the battle to keep Fort Devens opened.