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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

May 28, 1976

Ft Devens

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Dear xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx:

Congressman Peyser has referred your correspondence concerning Fort Devens to me as a matter of Congressional courtesy.

I find it sad and disappointing that the decision to drastically curtail manpower at Fort Devens was made on a political basis and without adequate study.

Presently, a number of steps are being taken to try and reverse this decision. I have assisted in the organization of Congressional and State task forces that will compile a comprehensive economic impact statement for presentation to the Army. We expect to be able to prove that the transfer of Devens personnel will not be cost effective, and that federal compensation for loss of jobs and resulting economic damage in the area will far exceed any Army savings, and that base closings have discriminated against the Northeast and favored the South.

Members of my staff have also been participating in Army planning sessions of Fort Devens. We have been able to gain assurance from the Army that staff members and appropriate area officials will be invited to sit in on these meetings in order to insure that all views are considered during the next few months of study. This is the period in which the Army is supposed to conduct their own review of the Fort Devens "recommendation".

Finally, we are working to assure that no decision will be made until all relevant economic and social data on the impact of closing Fort Devens have been gathered and carefully assessed. The House of Representatives has recently passed legislation introduced by Representative O'Neill on behalf of the entire Massachusetts delegation which does just that. The legislation requires that one year elapse between the preliminary decision to close or drastically reduce manpower at a base and the time that the action is taken. It further requires that the Armed Service involved provide to Congress a complete economic impact statement on the closing or reduction at least three months before the final decision is made.

Senators Brooke and Kennedy have succeeded in having these provisions included in the Senate version of the Military Construction bill which has recently passed the Senate. Although a conference committee has not yet met to reconcile the House and Senate versions of the bill, there appears to be no doubt that the Fort Devens provisions will remain intact. This would mean that the earliest

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Page Two
May 28, 1976

that any action would be taken at Fort Devens would be April 1, 1977, and only then if the complete economic impact statement has been submitted to Congress by January 1, 1977.

While ^{the veto} passage of this legislation may seem to be a ^{stunning setback} modest victory, it is the first time that the Armed Services have been compelled to consider anything other than the "needs of the Service" in making decisions which have massive impact on the lives and livelihoods of the residents of the communities in which bases are located.

We are well aware of the tremendous impact that the dismemberment of Fort Devens would have on our already troubled economy. I do not see how Massachusetts' loss of nearly half of the total military personnel transfers throughout the country and nearly a third of total manpower cuts can be justified by the Army. Therefore, I intend to continue to do whatever I can to reverse this indiscriminate political decision.

If I may be of further assistance to you on this or any other matter, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

PAUL E. TSONGAS
Member of Congress

PET/vpd