

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 1, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary
Department of Defense

Dear Secretary Austin:

The Department of the Army conducts Cadet Summer Training (CST) to train the next generation of officers.¹ For that training, each year “10,000 cadets from around the country attend training in Basic or Advanced Camp.”² One of the largest CST programs takes place at Fort Knox, Kentucky.³

I write today with respect to a July 15, 2023, Army Times article that reported poor food quality and water issues during CST at Fort Knox.⁴ The report explains that U.S. Army Cadet Command (USACC) “terminated the food service contract that supported the Warrior Restaurants for CST on July 1st due to the contractor not fulfilling its obligations.”⁵ Following this, the Dining Facility at Fort Knox was shut down until July 5th when a temporary food service provider was hired.⁶

During this time, USACC relied on their stockpile of Meals, Ready-to-Eat (MREs) to feed the cadets.⁷ Reports indicate that some cadets were given expired MREs.⁸ Richard Patterson, a spokesperson for USACC stated that “cadets and cadre have consumed more than 288,000 MREs,” during the 2023 CST and that they had, “a few that were found to be not suitable, and we replaced them immediately.”⁹

Our military and the treatment of its personnel are of the utmost importance to me. Reports of the greatest military on the planet not being able to properly feed its fighting force

¹ Savannah Baird, *CST 2022 Wrap Up*, CADET SUMMER TRAINING, (Aug. 18, 2022), <https://futurearmyofficers.army.mil/2022/08/18/cst-2022-wrap-up/>.

² *Cadet Summer Training*, U.S. ARMY, (June 21, 2019), <https://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2019/06/21/>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Jaime Moore-Carrillo, *Fort Knox Cadets Taste Army Life: Walkouts, Expired MREs, Water Issues*, ARMY TIMES, (July 15, 2023), <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2023/07/14/fort-knox-cadets-taste-army-life-walkouts-expired-mres-water-issues/>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

requires transparency. In order for Congress to perform an independent and objective review, please provide answers to the following questions by August 15, 2023:

1. Please explain what contractual provisions were not performed that required the termination of the food service contract. Have these issues been addressed in order to prevent another contractual breach from occurring with the new food service provider?
2. Prior to canceling the USACC food service contract, did the Army have a new service provider ready to provide food for the remainder of CST at Fort Knox? If not, why not?
3. Have there been any other instances of food contract disputes during CST at Fort Knox or other locations? If so, where and when?
4. In regard to MREs, the USACC spokesman claimed only “a few that were found unsuitable.” It’s my understanding there were much more than just “a few” and that many cadets did in fact have to purchase their own food through a delivery service which is contrary to the Army’s assertions to the press. Exactly how many MREs were determined to be unsuitable?
5. What changes are taking place to make sure none of this happens again, since reportedly problems of this nature occur nearly every year?

If you have any questions, please contact Julian Wilson at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget