



# Griswold location best option to give troopers needed training

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In August 2015, a trooper joined a multi-jurisdictional high-speed pursuit of a fleeing armed bank robber in Bolton. The suspect refused to surrender his knife and advanced towards the trooper. Efforts to stop him with taser probes were unsuccessful. Shots were fired at, and struck, the suspect. He was taken into custody.

In May 2016, troopers responded to an active disturbance in Willington. Shots had been fired in a residence and the suspect, initially barricaded indoors, fled. Troopers apprehended him on the property.

Accounts like these demonstrate the importance of top-notch police training — and it's events like these that underscore why Connecticut State Police must be prepared to perform at their most effective best.

Every day, state troopers report to work across Connecticut, ready to serve and protect the public. In the Eastern District, the State Police is the only police presence in 40 of the 51 towns. Troopers respond to all of the calls for service in these towns and provide backup, tactical support, and participate in the investigation of crimes in all of the others. Over the past year, calls have included home invasions, drug trafficking and overdoses, domestic violence, sexual assaults, armed robberies and bank robberies.

Criminal activity, including violent crimes, is not unique to big cities.

To maintain effectiveness, training must keep pace with the threats that regularly present themselves, varying widely from accidental opioid overdoses to active shooter scenarios.

Right now, our troopers train on a range in Simsbury situated at the base of Avon Mountain, well within a flood plain, and abutted by the Farmington River. Even when rainfall is moderate, as has been the case this past year, the range floods. Repeated flooding and mold led to condemnation and then demolition of the classroom building. The flooding cannot be controlled due to federal regulations, and that negates replacing the instructional space.

It is increasingly difficult to provide the training troopers require in Simsbury. And it has been difficult to find a suitable new location.

Upgrading the current range is fiscally impractical and physically not feasible. Also, the site is too small to expand the range or add classrooms. The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection considered both private ranges and state-leased property including the National Guard's Rifle Range in East Haven. It was another dead-end. None of the private ranges lend themselves to the judgmental training CSP requires. This is also the case with the National Guard's range, which prepares its troops for combat, not community policing.

The state considered every state-owned property large enough for the range. All of them were excluded, most often due to deed restrictions or proximity to homes. The Department of Administrative Services solicited sellers and conferred with locally elected officials and after identifying a number of parcels of land for sale, DAS and DESPP held town meetings in Canterbury, Voluntown, Griswold, Hampton and Sprague.

Many in attendance did not want the facility built in their towns, or even their part of the state. Others were open to the possibility.

After the last of the town meetings, the department, as promised, set about evaluating the suitability of the 11 proposed parcels, and eliminated 10 properties for cause from further consideration.

The property on Lee Road in Griswold, the remaining site, is a remote location (<http://www.theday.com/statenortheast/20160511/planners-prefer-griswold-site-for-state-police-firing-range>). There is no abutting residential property and the site is adjacent on three sides to Pachaug State Forest. There is ample acreage to surround

the range in forest, providing a densely vegetated sight and sound buffer.

We are at the beginning of a process with a number of steps set out in statute including a state study called the Environmental Impact Evaluation that will answer many of the questions the public may have. Within the week, the state will launch a webpage that includes noise modeling data, an assessment of economic and environmental impact, a traffic study and other information of interest, with an option to sign up for regular updates. State Police and other state officials will be available at community meetings and other gatherings so that residents can come ask questions and meet the troopers.

While opinions have differed about the range, there is some consensus: We all want to live and raise our families in safe communities. And the State Police enjoys a reputation, over 100 years in the making, for contributing to the safety and wellbeing in every town where it has had a presence.

I am optimistic that a new facility can be built at the Griswold location, and that is critical. Our troopers must keep pace with emerging training requirements, ensuring they are ready to respond to the myriad of situations they encounter.

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