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July 15, 2009

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Gates:

We urge the Navy to take action to resolve an interagency dispute that threatens an historic resource of tremendous significance. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the United States Navy are at sharp odds over the future of Hangar One at Moffett Federal Airfield near Mountain View, California. Hangar One was built in 1932 to house Navy dirigibles and served as a docking station for the USS Macon. Today it is one of the most recognized landmarks of California's Silicon Valley and is emblematic of the region's contributions to aviation and space advancement, as well as technology research and development. Following its listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994, Hangar One was placed on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 2008 list of *America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places*.

The Navy is responsible for remediating environmental contamination at Moffett Field, even though ownership of the facility was transferred to NASA Ames Research Center in 1994. A 2003 inspection of Hangar One revealed PCB contamination in the structure's steel panels. The Navy initially proposed to demolish Hangar One in order to remove the toxins, but this decision was reconsidered because of the structure's historic importance. In late 2008, the Navy finalized a CERCLA Action Memorandum for the cleanup, proposing to remove the exterior siding, doors, and windows. The plan leaves only a steel frame of the structure intact, which would be unusable and susceptible to deterioration and corrosion caused by salt-laden air in the marine environment. The Navy made its decision in spite of considerable public pressure. Previous letters from the Bay Area Congressional Delegation encouraged the Navy to ensure that Hangar One's exposed steel frame would not be left exposed to the elements.

The public hoped Hangar One could be saved when NASA pledged in early 2009 to work cooperatively with the Navy in re-siding Hangar One during the remediation phase. However, this plan changed when NASA's cost estimates for the re-siding work far exceeded the Navy's original estimates. NASA instead offered to take over long-term environmental management after cleanup remedies were in place. Unfortunately, the Navy rejected NASA's offer and on April 7, 2009, issued a Request for Proposals for the removal, but not replacement, of the structure's siding. The Navy plans to award a contract for this work by July 31, 2009.

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We are disappointed that, despite repeated requests, NASA and the Navy have been unable to resolve this very serious issue. Both agencies have responsibility for Hangar One under Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470h-2), which charges federal agencies with managing and maintaining historic properties under their control in a way that considers the preservation of their historic, architectural, and cultural values. Hangar One is a valuable and endangered national asset and, without agency leadership and compliance with Section 110, the public could be left with an unusable frame. We urge Navy leadership to engage in negotiations to ensure that a coordinated effort will be made to re-side Hangar One and protect it for future generations.

Warmest regards.

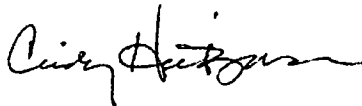
Sincerely,



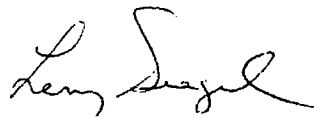
Richard Moe
President
National Trust for
Historic Preservation



Milford Wayne Donaldson FAIA
State Historic Preservation Officer
California State Historic Preservation Office



Cindy Heitzman
Executive Director
California Preservation Foundation



Lenny Siegel
Chairman
Save Hangar One Committee

RM:bt

cc: The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo, 14th District of California