THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-1000

October 2, 2009

The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0001

Dear Representative Eshoo:

This is a follow-up to our telephone conversations of Friday, September 25, 2009, and response to your letter of September 22, 2009 expressing concern about the Navy's decision to move forward to award a contract for the environmental cleanup work required for Hangar 1 at Moffett Field. You asked for my commitment and assurance that the Navy will not move forward with the actual "de-skinning" of the hangar until there is a plan to "re-skin" Hangar 1.

We are sensitive to the desires of the city and recognize the historic significance of Hangar 1 to the local area. As you know, the environmental cleanup award of Hangar 1 has been held in abeyance since July 30, 2009, while we attempted to negotiate a re-skinning plan acceptable to the Navy, NASA Ames Research Center, and the City of Mountain View. Despite hard work, we have not been able to resolve the impasse between NASA and Navy over the responsibility for restoration of Hangar 1 after the Navy's environmental remediation is complete. As you know, our Agencies have jointly requested the assistance of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to adjudicate our differences. We are awaiting their review of our respective cases and their decision on which agency is responsible for the long term preservation of the hangar.

In the meantime, protection of human health and the environment remains our paramount concern. The protective coating on the hangar's outer surface, applied in 2003 to prevent further release of contaminants, has exceeded its expected service life and manufacturer's guarantee and is breaking down. We must act quickly or risk release of the hazards we're required to safeguard and possible enforcement action by the regulatory agencies. With the end of the fiscal year at hand, we reached the point where the decision to award the cleanup contract could no longer be delayed. If failed to execute the $23M planned for the remediation contract in FY09, that money would likely have been taken by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Comptroller and used for other critical resource priorities. Finally, current contractor bids expire this week and if we are required to re-bid the remediation work, it would result in a possible claim for losses by the current selected contractor, additional re-bidding costs, and a delay of four months or more.

Accordingly, I have directed my Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Installations and Environment to award the contract for our planned 30-month environmental clean-up. Work will not begin for six months, and it is my intention that no siding will be removed from the hangar until the arbitration process has concluded. Once OMB's decision has been made, the Navy will work with all parties to ensure that the 30-month remediation effort supports future plans for Hangar 1.

I enjoyed our conversation about Hangar 1 and look forward to visiting you in your district as we discussed. Please feel free to call me at any time.

Sincerely,

Ray Mabus