The purpose of this letter is to request a suspension of any plans to vacate or demolish the hydrodynamic tow tank at Langley Air Force Base, Hampton Virginia, pending a review of requirements for the tow tank as part of the Department of Defense test and evaluation infrastructure.

The Langley Tow Tank is one of the two largest hydrodynamic tow tanks in the United States; and the only large, high speed, high Reynolds number tow tank facility in the world capable of conducting hydrodynamic research and testing in both salt water and fresh water. As such, it provides a unique capability for research and testing in an instrumented, controlled, salt-water environment that can only be replicated in at-sea testing at considerably higher cost.

The Langley Tow Tank was constructed in 1931 by the National Advisory Council on Aeronautics for high speed, seaplane hull testing. The 2880 feet long, 5.4 million gallon tow tank facility is currently owned by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA's)

Langley Research Center. It has been operated by the Navy as a tenant since 1960. Since the early 1980's the Naval Undersea Warfare Center has operated the tow tank in support of its own research and development programs and those of other Navy laboratories, the Office of Naval Research, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, NASA, universities and industry. Over the past ten years the Langley Tow Tank has had utilization rate of approximately 55 percent and a 72 percent utilization rate is predicted for fiscal year 2001. Operated as a Navy Industrial Fund activity, the facility has shown a profit or been revenue neutral for 18 of the past 20 years.

Recently, NASA has determined that the agency has no further requirement for the Langley Tow Tank facility and plans to turn the facility over to the Department of the Air Force. Citing flight safety requirements at Langley Air Force Base and deterioration of the tow tank building, the

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Department of the Air Force has stated its intention to demolish the tow tank facility beginning in July of this year and the Department of the Navy has been advised to vacate the facility. The Military Research and Development Subcommittee is concerned that a precipitous action to vacate and demolish the Langley Tow Tank may deny the Department of Defense and the United States a necessary element of our defense test and evaluation infrastructure. A decision to close and demolish the facility should only be taken after a careful review that includes consideration of the views of the various stakeholders in the issue and recommendations by the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation. I request that you suspend actions to vacate and demolish Langley Tow Tank, pending completion of such a review.

I look forward to hearing from you on this matter at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely yours,

Duncan Hunter
Chairman,
Military Research & Development Subcommittee