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COMMITTEE ON
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND
CAPABILITIES
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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August 26, 2011

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
Appropriations Committee
H-307
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman
Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related
Agencies Subcommittee
H-309
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Restore Vital Hurricane Hunters Aircraft Operations

Dear Speaker Boehner, Chairman Rogers, and Chairman Wolf:

I respectfully request that the Appropriations Committee work to restore the devastating cuts to the Hurricane Hunter Aircraft Operations under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the proposed 2012 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill. As you are aware, the bill is likely to come to the floor for amendment this fall.

For communities across the country facing the threat of devastation from hurricanes, there is no greater asset than information. Accurate and timely information can mean the difference between life and death. That is why I am so concerned about the proposed cuts to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's budget, particularly the amount from the aircraft operations. The Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill passed by the committee includes a forty percent cut to the vital hurricane hunters operation. I plan to offer an amendment to restore this funding when this bill comes to the floor.

We must do everything we can to address our debt and deficit, however we must balance it in a way that recognizes the needs of communities. The costs of the hurricane hunters operations pale in comparison to the lives and money saved with the increasingly accurate

predictions that come from these flights out of MacDill Air Force Base. James Franklin, head of forecast operations for the National Hurricane Center said, "If those flights were to stop for whatever reason, there would be a degradation in our forecasts for storms threatening the United States." The aircraft at MacDill are unique and crucial to the research being done in improving hurricane predictions. Improved predictions not only save lives, but can save millions of dollars in unnecessary business closures and evacuations.

We have talented people working at MacDill to develop new science and advancements that have made tracking of hurricanes and storms so much more accurate than in the past. I have attached an article that outlines some of their successes, including narrowing the cone of uncertainty by as much as 50 percent in the past decade. Unfortunately, without the funding for the aircraft, this research will be in jeopardy. As Frank Marks, research meteorologist and director of the NOAA/Atlantic Oceanographic Meteorological Laboratory Hurricane Research Division, said, "take them out of the equation and our research is dead in the water."

We must continue to support the research and advancements of the hurricane hunters operations. I urge you to support my amendment to restore funding to this vital program.

Sincerely,



Kathy Castor
United States Representative
Florida – District 11