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November 15, 1999

The Honorable James E. Hall  
Chairman  
National Transportation Safety Board  
490 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20594

Dear Chairman Hall:

As you are well aware, as a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation, I have closely examined and monitored the federal government's investigation of the July 17, 1996 crash of TWA Flight 800. As you also know, I prepared a report last year for the subcommittee on my review of government's probe.

Since issuing my report I have continued to monitor the National Transportation Safety Board's investigation of Flight 800. Over the past several months certain issues relative to the investigation have been brought to my attention. In order to fully resolve these issues, I would appreciate it if you could answer the following questions:

- 1) Earlier this year I sent a letter to the Department of Defense (DoD) asking how many U.S. Navy vessels, including submarines, were within 300 miles of the crash site at the time of the crash. The U.S. Navy provided a detailed response in which it listed all of the vessels within 300 nautical miles of the crash site at the time of the crash (see enclosure #1). In reviewing certain addendums sent to my office by the NTSB, my staff came across a consulting report prepared by DoD's Joint Spectrum Center, JSC-CR-99-006, on the electromagnetic environment preset at the time of the crash. As part of its analysis the center reviewed possible electromagnetic ship platforms. The report listed all of the U.S. Navy vessels considered for EME determination (see enclosure #2). Two ships listed in the report as being within 300 nautical miles of the crash site at the time of the crash, the USS Seattle and the USS Halyburton, were not on the list provided to my office by the Navy. The report also did not include in their analysis certain ships listed by the Navy, including the USS Oak Hill and the USS Oklahoma City.

How do you account for these discrepancies? Does the NTSB believe that the center's report may have been compromised because it did not take into consideration all of the Navy ships in the area at the time of the crash?

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- 2) To clarify the record, how did the NTSB derive the time history used in the CVR and FDR reports?
- 3) Has the NTSB been able to determine precisely when the very loud sound picked up by the CVR occurred?
- 4) Did the NTSB utilize the expertise of other federal agencies or entities or private organizations in analyzing the FDR and CVR? If yes, could you provide the names of these agencies and/or organizations?
- 5) When will the NTSB's report on the tests conducted in Bruntingthorpe be made a part of the public docket?

Thank you in advance for your time and expeditious response. You know much I appreciate the dedication and professionalism of the NTSB. I have enjoyed working with you and your staff, and look forward to working with you in the future. As always, don't hesitate to contact me or my chief of staff, Paul Marcone, should you have any questions or comments relative to this inquiry.

Respectfully



James A. Traficant, Jr.  
Member of Congress

JAT/pm

Enclosures