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May 14, 2012

Via Electronic Transmission

The Honorable Charles F. Bolden, Jr.
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Two Independence Square
300 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Administrator Bolden:

I am writing you concerning Google Inc.'s (Google's) partnership with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and its activities at Moffett Federal Airfield (Moffett Airfield) in Santa Clara County, California. My office recently received troubling allegations regarding the Google fleet of aircraft housed at Moffett Airfield.

As you know, this private airport is operated by the NASA Ames Research Center, and according to public reports, Google signed a forty year lease with NASA in 2008 for 42 acres at Moffett Airfield for \$3.7 million per year.¹ According to information provided to my office, Google allegedly houses a variety of airliners including a Boeing 767, a Boeing 757, multiple Gulfstream G550s and helicopters.

Whistleblowers have questioned the benefit to the U.S. government from the Google fleet being housed at Moffett Airfield. A recent investigative report analyzed Google flight tracking data, which indicated only five percent of flights were science missions.² Further, many Google jets based at Moffett Airfield allegedly have flown all over the world, including Italy, the Caribbean, China and Ireland.³

Additionally, my office received allegations that Google has purchased jet fuel from the government at a discounted price, a price allegedly well below the market price due to its tax treatment.

¹ Verne Kopytoff; "Google leases acreage at Moffett for complex." *San Francisco Chronicle*. June 5, 2008.

² Stephen Stock, Liza Meak, and Mark Villarreal; "How Google Execs Get Flying Privileges at NASA Ames." NBC San Diego. May 7. 2012. <http://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/tech/150386125.html>

³ *Id.*

In order to gain a more complete understanding of these allegations, please respond to the following requests:

- 1) How did NASA arrive at the lease amount of \$3.7 million per year? Does that represent a fair market rate for the lease? Which individuals at NASA and Google negotiated the lease amount?
- 2) As of the date of this letter, how many aircraft owned or operated by Google are present at Moffett Airfield? Provide detailed descriptions of all aircraft.
- 3) Why does Moffett Airfield house Google aircraft and when did this arrangement begin? Provide all contracts between Google, NASA, and/or the military related to aircraft and aircraft fuel at Moffett Airfield.
- 4) Please describe the agreements by which Google obtains fuel for its aircraft at Moffett Airfield and provide fueling records for each aircraft over the past five years.
- 5) Are any of the aircraft used to support NASA research? Provide a specific explanation regarding the Dassault/Dornier Alpha Jet.⁴
- 6) Have any NASA officials flown on the Google aircraft? Please provide a list of each official and describe the nature and purpose of each trip in detail.
- 7) For each aircraft owned or operated by Google, provide all flight plans and passenger manifests for each flight originating and landing at Moffett Airfield in the last five years.
- 8) In the last five years, have any other aircraft owned by private companies or individuals housed aircraft at Moffett Airfield? If yes, provide a detailed description of the aircraft, the ownership of the aircraft.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to these matters. I would appreciate receiving a response by no later than May 25, 2012. Should you have any questions, please contact Brian Downey or Rob Donovan of my staff at (202) 224-5225.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member

⁴ Miguel Helft; "Google Founders' Fighter Jet Will Fly NASA Missions." *The New York Times*. October 24, 2008.