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MassDTI makes strong pitch for enhanced Hanscom AFB

\$410 million infrastructure improvement plan would help create, retain 30,000 jobs

September 8, 2004 -- The Massachusetts Defense Technology Initiative (MassDTI) today unveiled a comprehensive plan to transform Hanscom Air Force Base in Bedford into a “cross-service center of excellence” for developing the next generation of U.S. military technology. The new vision for Hanscom would retain and create tens of thousands of jobs in Massachusetts, preserve more than \$3 billion in economic activity related to the installation, and minimize the base’s impact on local communities.

The \$410 million infrastructure improvement plan, to be formally presented by MassDTI to the Hanscom Area Towns (HATs) committee this evening, is designed to increase Hanscom’s value to the Department of Defense (DoD) through the federal 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. The current BRAC review will culminate next fall with the closure of up to 25% of the nation’s military installations. The project would only be pursued after a successful BRAC outcome and a decision by DoD to transfer new mission to Hanscom.

“It’s an excellent plan,” said Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA). “Massachusetts’ industries, universities, and research labs can provide the best possible support for these important 21st century missions for our armed forces. The plan, in coordination with our strategy for Natick, gives the Department of Defense an outstanding opportunity to build on the unique expertise available at Hanscom and Natick.”

“The jobs at Hanscom are just the type that we want to keep and attract to Massachusetts,” said Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney. “This plan eliminates one of the primary concerns identified by the military for the future of Hanscom AFB. Under this forward-thinking proposal,

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Hanscom has the ability to expand to absorb new military research and development missions if needed. I am committed to working with the community, our Congressional delegation and the Legislature to do everything possible to keep Hanscom AFB a strong component of the Massachusetts economy.”

An enhanced Hanscom installation would become an attractive location for the Department of Defense to site additional technology-focused Air Force, Army and Navy missions currently located throughout the U.S. At full capacity, the base is projected to deliver more than 4,000 new jobs to the region, returning Hanscom to its employment levels of the early 1990s. Hanscom and the Natick Soldiers System Center currently represent more than 33,000 jobs (direct and indirect) and pump more than \$3 billion into the state’s economy, according to a University of Massachusetts (UMass) study due out later this month.

The new Hanscom project would create 1.25 million square feet of new space for military research and development and related private sector activity. This new development would be achieved from reorganizing the current base footprint, not by expanding onto additional open space. Another component of the enhancement plan is the construction of 800 new units of self-financed housing, doubling the current number of housing units and mitigate daily commuter traffic to the base.

There would also be significant state investment in road infrastructure upgrades to improve highway access to the base, including the construction of a new underpass to replace the inefficient “jug handle” at Hartwell Avenue in Bedford. Of the \$400 million in the plan’s total projected cost, the state would fund \$241 million in infrastructure and mission absorption improvements while \$168 million in new on-base housing would be self-financed.

“This innovative plan effectively eliminates the two major perceived weaknesses of Hanscom in the eyes of BRAC evaluators: that it can’t absorb new mission and that it only has capacity to serve one military branch,” said MassDTI President Christopher Anderson. “The proposed state financial support for the project would yield a significant return on investment for decades to come.”

Anderson lauded Kennedy, Romney and the state’s congressional delegation for working closely with local, state and business leaders in crafting the plan. “This is a great example of all parties coming together for the good of the Commonwealth.”

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“The HATs communities want to ensure that Hanscom AFB remains a valued neighbor,” said Sara Mattes, HATs committee chair and member of the Lincoln board of selectmen. “We're especially pleased with the sensitivity to community involvement demonstrated by our Mass DTI partners in developing this innovative plan.”

MassDTI has also been working to convey to Pentagon planners the critical military value of retaining the Hanscom and Natick installations here, where they are proximate to the world's premier defense technology cluster. Massachusetts has a skilled and experienced workforce, innovative employers and unparalleled world-class academic institutions like MIT, Harvard University, UMass and others. MassDTI contends that if the missions of the two technical facilities are removed from the state's defense technology cluster, the future effectiveness of the US military would be threatened.

According to James Regan, Chairman and CEO of Dynamics Research Corp., "Business partnerships with Hanscom AFB and the Natick Soldier Systems Center are dependent upon close proximity to the installations. This 'intellectual eco-system' of academic institutions, laboratories, technology firms, military bases and other facilities working together in a synergistic manner is a precious national resource that could never be disassembled and reconstructed elsewhere."

MassDTI was formed by the Massachusetts High Technology Council in early 2004 to mobilize the public and private sectors to preserve the missions of Hanscom and Natick. With the leadership of Senator Kennedy, Governor Romney, the state's congressional delegation, and the technology and academic communities, MassDTI is a unique and powerful advocate for saving Massachusetts military technology facilities from closure.

For more information on MassDTI and its efforts to preserve the missions of Hanscom and Natick, please visit www.massdti.com.

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Accompanying materials:
Enhanced Hanscom site map
Plan Summary