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Howard R. Hughes's giant wooden flying boat in a hangar in Long Beach, Calif. The photograph was taken last month.

Navy and NASA Indicate Interest in Reactivating Hughes's Big Plane

LONG BEACH, Calif., Nov. 24 (AP)—Hidden 29 years in a cavernous hangar, Howard R. Hughes's giant wooden flying boat, the Spruce Goose, is getting a new look from Government officials who say they may try to send it aloft.

The late billionaire's Summa Corporation, the conglomerate that runs the Hughes estate, released yesterday a series of photographs of the plane, including one taken in 1947 that shows

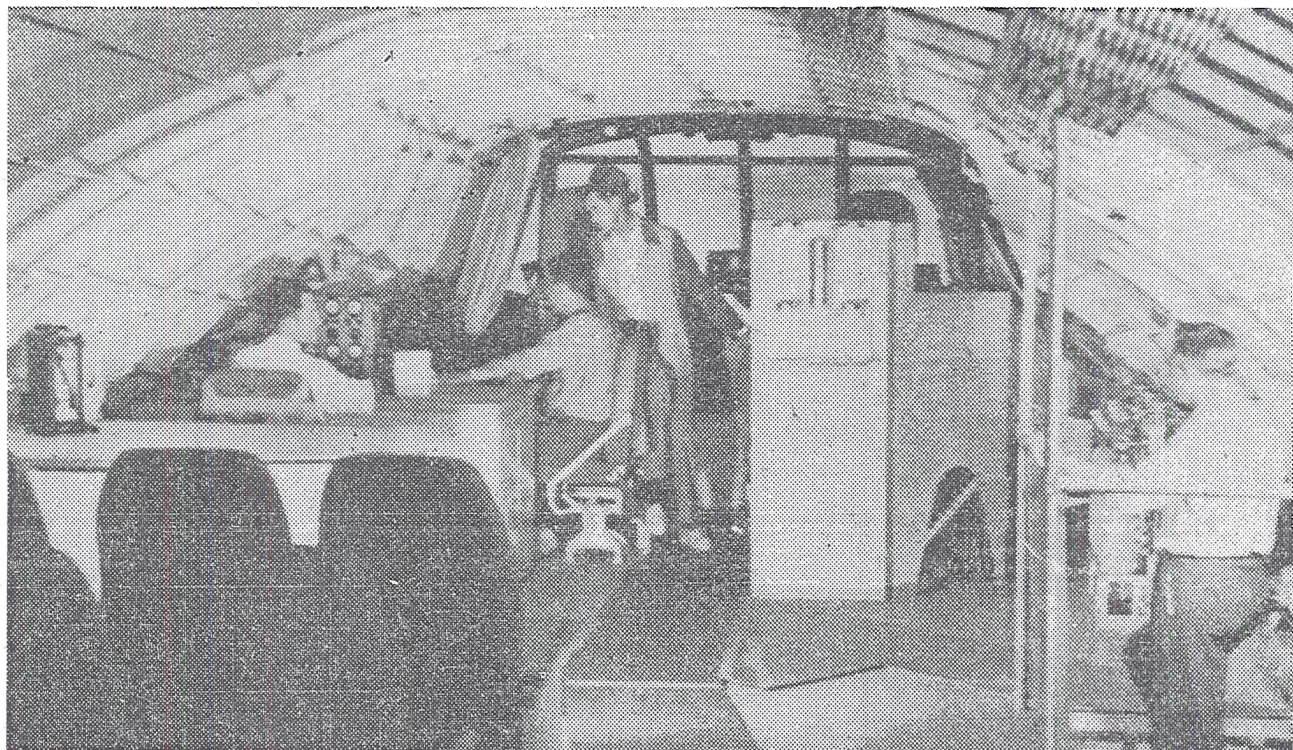
Mr. Hughes talking to technicians inside the three-story-tall craft.

The plane made its lone flight Nov. 2, 1947, skimming along 70 feet above the water for less than a mile with Mr. Hughes at the controls. Ever since, it has been locked in its hangar at the harbor here under 24-hour guard.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Navy say they are interested in the Goose, known more formally as the Hercules Flying Boat, as a part of a vehicle research project.

John McTigue, a NASA research engineer, said he was "surprised at the shape it's in after 30 years," adding, "It has been kept in a fairly controlled environment. They have air blowing over the surfaces continually, trying to keep the temperatures of the vehicle and the air exactly the same so there will be no condensation or corrosion."

The plane is owned by the Government and rented by Summa Corporation for \$800 a month, plus maintenance costs.



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Mr. Hughes, standing, in the plane, dubbed the Spruce Goose, in 1947, the last time it was shown to the public