Washington, D.C. - As a member of the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, I am pushing for additional oversight of the DPW purchase, including the required 45-day investigation

The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) recently approved the purchase of a British company by Dubai Ports World (DPW)—owned by the Emir of Dubai—that manages a number of U.S. port terminals. Dubai is one of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

CFIUS has the responsibility for conducting reviews of proposed foreign investments in the United States to ensure they do not compromise our national security. For cases in which foreign investment involves ownership by a foreign government that could affect national security, current law requires CFIUS to conduct a more in-depth investigation lasting up to 45 days.

As a member of the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, I am pushing for additional oversight of the DPW purchase, including the required 45-day investigation. At the same time, I will continue to fight for much more federal investment in security at all our seaports so they do not remain vulnerable entry points for terrorists.

The Dubai Ports World management buyout would not mean the company would own any U.S. ports or port terminals, or would be given any port security responsibilities. The same American workers who currently load and unload ships at these port terminals would reportedly continue, and the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Customs and Border Protection will continue to provide security.

Legitimate concerns have been raised, however, about the access that terrorists might gain to logistical and security information related to U.S. ports if they were able to infiltrate the UAE government or DPW. In the past, terrorists have been successful in using UAE territory to stage operations and using UAE financial institutions to launder money. Concerns have also been raised that the CFIUS employs a relatively narrow definition of what might constitute a national security threat in reviewing foreign investment deals. In addition, the CFIUS has reportedly not conducted a 45-day investigation, which appears to be required by law in this case.

This is yet another instance of the Bush Administration acting unilaterally, without adequate consultation with Congress and without acknowledging the right of Americans to be fully informed on issues that directly affect them and the nation. Even the governors of states with ports that would be affected were left in the dark.

Unfortunately, the Administration's actions also reflect a broader, more alarming inattention to the security of all of our ports. The U.S. Coast Guard, which is responsible for the security of U.S. ports, estimated in 2002 that it needed $7 billion to make our ports secure. Since 2001, the Bush Administration has requested only $46 million specifically for port security, and Congress has appropriated less than $1 billion. Only 5 percent of the containers coming through ports are currently inspected, in large part because we are not investing enough in developing technology to inspect a larger percentage without substantially delaying cargo shipments. Even more disturbing, the system for ensuring the safety of cargo loaded at foreign ports is still largely inadequate.

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