



NEWS from

Congressman

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Sabo Offers Port Security Funding Amendment to Emergency Supplemental Bill

*Amendment Would Provide \$1.225 Billion for Port Security, Emergency Communications
and Preparedness*

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Martin Olav Sabo (D-MN), the top Democrat on the Homeland Security Appropriations Committee, today will offer an amendment to bolster port security and emergency communications and preparedness capabilities in the \$91 billion emergency supplemental spending bill. The Dubai Ports World deal has shined a spotlight on inadequate U.S. port security, and Rep. Sabo believes now is the time to fix it.

“Now, in this emergency bill, is the time to address our most critical port security gaps,” Sabo said. “The American people expect us to do more than talk about inadequate port security and disaster preparedness. They demand that we back up our talk with action.”

The Sabo amendment would provide \$825 million to strengthen U.S. port security:

Expanding Overseas Container Inspections to All Overseas Ports that Ship to the US (\$300 million): The Container Security Initiative (CSI), responsible for reviewing manifests and opening and inspecting high risk containers, is currently operating in only 43 of the 140 overseas ports that ship directly to the U.S. This amendment would expand the program to all overseas ports that ship directly to the U.S. and require that 100% of all container manifests be reviewed by U.S. customs agents. It would also fund improvements to the current container targeting system and increase auditing of preferred shippers, as recommended by the General Accounting Office.

“Some may argue that we should settle for CSI in 50 foreign ports by the end of 2007. What about the other 90 foreign ports that ship directly to us?” Sabo asked.

Increasing Port Security Inspections and Surveillance (\$125 million): United States ports handle over 95 percent of U.S. overseas trade and the volume of goods imported and exported through ports is expected to double over the next 20 years. The Coast Guard is responsible for ensuring that port facilities and vessels comply with maritime security regulations. Last October, the Coast Guard reported that its maritime security exercise revealed the need for clearer chains of command, improved guidance and additional training. Under current plans, the Coast Guard will not have vessel security verification exams completed until the end of 2006 and in that time will have visited only 79 of the 140 countries that ship to the US. This amendment would fund additional maritime security inspections.

“The Coast Guard told us that it has not completed its review of vessel security and it has not reviewed all foreign ports that ship directly to us. This agency, which performed so well in response to Hurricane Katrina, can handle the tough jobs. Congress and the President should give the Coast Guard the right resources to do them,” Sabo said.

Placing Radiation Portal Monitors at all Ports of Entry (\$400 million): Fewer than half of the ports of entry are equipped with radiation portal monitors and DHS does not plan to have them at all ports of entry until 2011. This amendment would allow each entry point to have a radiation portal monitor.

“With this amendment, we could install radiation portal monitors at every U.S. land and sea port of entry,” Sabo said. “To date, less than half of these radiation detectors have been installed. Without this amendment, the Bush Administration would have Americans wait until 2011 to complete this crucial security measure.”

The Sabo amendment would provide \$400 million for disaster preparedness:

Nationwide Communication Back-Up Capability (\$300 million): The supplemental spending bill contains sufficient funding only to provide an emergency communications backup capability in the Gulf Coast. This backup capability consists of trucks loaded with equipment that can be quickly moved into devastated areas to bring up cell phones and VHF, UHF and SHF radio networks to help first responders and search and rescue efforts. This capability should be provided in critical locations nationwide. The amendment would provide funding for this capability in at least three other locations.

“We need this emergency communications equipment in other regions of the country, as well,” Sabo said. “This amendment would provide it.”

Disaster Preparedness Mitigation Response and Recovery (\$100 million):

Simulation exercises are necessary at all levels of government to uncover gaps in our preparedness plans. Funding is provided to double the number and type of such exercises (\$50 million). Project Impact, which was not funded in 2006, uses seed money to leverage private funds such as creating disaster resistance strategies, revising local building and land use codes, and securing communities against real disaster threats. The amendment would fund Project Impact at \$50 million.

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