

LOU DOBBS TONIGHT

Opposition Rising in Congress Over So-Called Free Trade Agreement With Oman

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LOU DOBBS, CNN ANCHOR: Opposition is rising in Congress tonight over a so-called free trade agreement with the Middle Eastern country of Oman. Critics say the agreement would damage this nation's port security and certainly national security.

Bill Tucker has the report.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

BILL TUCKER, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice over): The objections were clear and plain. The idea of guaranteeing Oman or Omani companies the right to own and operate facilities in American ports is unacceptable.

REP. WALTER JONES (R), NORTH CAROLINA: How in the world can this country, with what's happening in Lebanon and Israel today, and what is happening in Iraq and Afghanistan, how and why in the world would we even consider jeopardizing our ports by allowing a foreign country to have access?

REP. JACK MURTHA (D), PENNSYLVANIA: It's unconscionable to knowingly agree to any trade agreement that contains obviations that limit our national security authority regarding sensitive infrastructure such as our ports.

TUCKER: The administration defends that promise, saying there is a security provision which would give the United States final say in any deal. But under the terms of the agreement, that decision would not be at the discretion of the United States. We would have to defend any such decision before a foreign tribunal.

REP. GENE TAYLOR (D), MISSISSIPPI: This agreement will allow a separate nation on to sovereign American soil and let them control one of our ports. That's insane.

TUCKER: And clearly, the battle of Dubai Ports World taking over port operations is much fresher in the minds of Congress than the administration.

REP. LINDA SANCHEZ (D), CALIFORNIA: The same people who supported the Dubai Ports World deal are telling us again that there's nothing to worry about with the Bush Oman trade deal. They were wrong before and they're wrong now.

TUCKER: DPW promised to sell off those facilities to a private operator. But four months after the promise, no buyer has been announced.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

TUCKER: A vote on the free trade agreement with Oman is scheduled for tomorrow, Thursday. Still to come, the free trade agreement with Peru, which contains the same guarantees. And, Lou, the Dubai government, through DPW, already runs and operates ports in Peru, which would mean they'd have the legal right to keep those properties and run them here.

DOBBS: As these are all approved by the U.S. Congress and this president. As we were just saying to our viewer who had written in, we will continue to watch very carefully. We guarantee it.

Bill Tucker, thank you for doing so.