

public uproar over this issue, this review will be thorough. I have spoken with people involved in the review. I said to the top people in the departments: Put your hands on this one, this is critical.

To rush ahead and say, no way, before this Commission has an opportunity to reach a judgment and advise Members of Congress and the American people about what their judgment, it seems to me, to be unfair. It is not the way we handle issues of this kind in America. It raises an awful question, which I ask everybody to think about because we promised people in this country—this extraordinary, greatest country in the world—that here you can be sure you will be judged by your merits, not by your race, or nationality, or religion, or gender, or sexual orientation, or age. I worry that in the midst of the war against Islamist terrorism, we are reaching a hasty judgment based on factors that ought not to be considered in the United States of America.

I don't know how I will vote ultimately on this proposal about the acquisition by Dubai Ports World, a company controlled by the United Arab Emirates. I don't know enough to reach a judgment on that. I am waiting for that 45-day review.

I do know that the United Arab Emirates has been, since September 11, an extremely important, constructive ally of ours in the war against terrorism. I know they have put their own people on the line in very dangerous places to assist us in the war on terrorism. I know that the Dubai Port, as I understand it, sees more visits by U.S. Navy ships than any other port in the world. So obviously, the U.S. Navy has enough confidence in the security of their port to have done that.

That doesn't mean that the acquisition of these terminals by Dubai Ports World should receive a free pass, but it should mean, in addition to the basic qualities of fairness that generally characterize American life, that this proposed acquisition does deserve a fair hearing, not a rush to judgment before all the facts are in, which I say respectfully is what the committee of the other body did yesterday and what the amendment offered by my friend and colleague from New York would have us do in this Chamber.

This is one of those moments where we are tested because the emotions are high, but we are leaders. We are elected leaders, and I hope we will rise to the occasion and at least let this company and this country have a fair trial before any of us reach a judgment about whether they are guilty or not guilty.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be given 5 minutes of the minority's time on this.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I have no objection. I would like to be recognized following the Senator from New York for a period of about 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, very much, Mr. President. We are approaching this cloture vote at 2 o'clock.

One thing is very clear; that is, that doing ethics reform and dealing with the Dubai issue are not mutually exclusive. We can easily do both this week, and the motion made earlier by the minority leader makes that perfectly clear. The two are not mutually exclusive.

Mr. President, the Senator from Virginia has asked that he speak before me, which I will accede to. He has always been gracious on the floor. So I ask unanimous consent that immediately following his time I be given 5 minutes of the minority's time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

PORT SECURITY

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I thank the courtesy of my colleague. I believe what I am going to say, since the Senator is addressing the issue of the DP World port terminal transaction, might bear on his remarks.

Mr. President, I have had the opportunity to work very closely with the White House and the administration, with our distinguished leader, BILL FRIST, and several other Senators on this question.

I have had the opportunity to meet and work with representatives of the DP World company who came to the United States for the purposes of sharing the importance of this contract and their perspective.

I shall not recount the events that have occurred here in the last few days. But I have just been contacted by Edward Bilkie, chief operating officer, of DP World. And in an effort to get this message to all interested parties as quickly as possible, I indicated a willingness to read a press release that is now being issued by DP World. It reads as follows:

Because of the strong relationship between the United Arab Emirates and the United States and to preserve this relationship, DP World has decided to transfer fully the U.S. operations of P&O Ports North America, Inc. to a United States entity. This decision is based on an understanding that DP World will have time to effect the transfer in an orderly fashion and that DP World will not suffer economic loss. We look forward to working with the Department of the Treasury to implement this decision.

His Highness Sheikh Muhammad al-Maktum, Prime Minister of UAE, has

directed the company, in the interest of the UAE and the United States, to take this action as the appropriate course to take in the future.

Mr. President, I would say that I started the day with the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and General Abizaid—discussing with them not the politics strictly—but potential security implications. It is not just the security of the United States with which we are concerned, but that of the free world, for much of the world is engaged in this war on terrorism.

It is absolutely essential that we, the United States, and our coalition partners in the region of the Persian Gulf, who are doing our best to secure the stated goals in Afghanistan and in Iraq, sustain a strong working partnership. Indeed, the relationships among the coalition of partners—most specifically the United States, the Government of UAE, the Government of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar—must be maintained as strong as possible because they are valued partners in this war on terror.

This is not just a matter of importance regarding the current operations at the moment in Afghanistan and Iraq, but rather in looking to the indeterminate future as to how long our coalition partners will be engaged in the war on terrorism to deter any attacks, and if necessary, to use force of arms to prevent injury to life and limb of citizens in the free nations of the world.

This has been a very interesting chapter in my 28 years of having the privilege to be a Member of the Senate. But I believe both governments have collaborated and acted in good faith, recognizing the circumstances at hand and our shared objectives from this time forward.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD two letters addressed to me from the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Army.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF,

Washington, DC, March 9, 2006.

Hon. JOHN W. WARNER,
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: In response to your letter of 28 February 2006, the loss of access rights for US forces to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) would severely impact US operations in the US Central Command area of responsibility. These strategically located ports and airfields are crucial to providing timely logistical support to our military operating in the region. Beyond port and airfield access, this loss would negatively affect bilateral exercises and result in loss of support from a strong regional ally.

In particular, Jebel Ali is the premier naval refurbishment port in the region and hosts more US Navy ships than any port outside the United States. It provides a dedicated deepwater berthing space for aircraft carriers, and is the only carrier-capable port in the Arabian Gulf. Additionally, the Port