

San Mateo County Times

Lantos demonstrates swift leadership on security

Thursday, September 30, 2004 - BACK in July, when much of San Mateo County was celebrating the birth of the United States on Independence Day, several thieves broke into a local explosives bunker and stole more than 200 pounds of C-4 and other blasting materials used by the County Sheriff's Office, the San Francisco Police Department and the local field office of the FBI. That lapse in security left egg on the face of local law enforcement agencies and raised troubling questions about how to better safeguard explosive materials in the County.

Fortunately, our local representative in Washington, D.C. responded swiftly and moved to investigate the theft and the security failure that allowed the robbery to take place in the first place. And now, Congressman Tom Lantos, D-San Mateo, has introduced legislation that would impose tight restrictions on public explosives storage facilities.

In August, Lantos convened a hearing on safety provisions at local explosives bunkers. He heard testimony from local enforcement officials and fellow lawmakers. As a result of the hearing, Lantos, along with Congressman Chris Shays, R-Conn., introduced H.R. 5162, a bill that sets out to establish a system of state and federal oversight of facilities where explosives are stockpiled. If voted into law, the bill will help law enforcement officials establish an inventory of explosives along with a comprehensive accounting for each of these depots.

The July theft brought to light the fact that many of these facilities exist unbeknownst to state or federal authorities. Lantos' swift and responsive leadership on this critical issue are worthy of the highest praise as we continue to struggle against potential threats abroad and at home.