

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
ROOM 2165 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515**

*May 6, 2004*

**The Coast Guard,  
Not the Governments of Panama, Liberia, Malta and Cyprus,  
Should Review Security Plans of Foreign Vessels  
Serving United States Ports**

**Support the Filner Motion to Instruct Conferees  
on H.R. 2443, the Coast Guard Authorization bill**

Dear Colleague:

The Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 requires foreign-flag vessels serving the United States to have a security plan approved by the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard has been undermining this requirement by allowing foreign vessels to have a security plan approved by their home country government.

This issue will be presented to the House when we consider the motion to go to Conference on H.R. 2443, the Coast Guard authorization bill. The Coast Guard bill passed by the House reaffirms the intent of the Maritime Security Act by requiring that the plans of foreign vessels be approved by the Coast Guard. We will offer a motion to instruct the House conferees on the Coast Guard bill to insist that the conference adopt the provision requiring Coast Guard approval of the security plans of foreign vessels.

Thousands of vessels serving our ports are registered in foreign countries. If the Coast Guard is allowed to continue relying on foreign governments for approval of security plans, countries such as Panama, Liberia, Malta, and Cyprus will be reviewing and approving security plans for vessels that carry millions of tons of cargo, including highly dangerous chemicals, into the United States.

Under the protocol on which the Coast Guard relies, the Coast Guard does not have the right to even look at a foreign vessel's security plan unless "there are clear grounds for believing the ship is not in compliance" with the international maritime standards. Moreover, the foreign vessel's plan may be in French, Spanish, or English.

We cannot depend on foreign governments such as those in Panama, Liberia, Malta, and Cyprus to protect American citizens from a terrorist attack using one of the thousands of foreign-flag vessels that enter U.S. ports every year.

When the House passed the Coast Guard bill, we specifically provided that the protection of our ports and coastal waters begins with the Coast Guard reviewing and approving security plans for all vessels, including foreign-flag vessels. We urge you to support our motion to instruct the House conferees to insist that this provision be retained in H.R. 2443 when it is reported from conference.

Sincerely,



Bob Filner  
Ranking Democratic Member  
Subcommittee on Coast Guard  
and Maritime Transportation



James L. Oberstar  
Ranking Democratic Member