

Chairwoman Loretta Sanchez (D-CA)
Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism
Committee on Homeland Security
Hearing on "Cargo Security at Land Ports of Entry: Are We Meeting the Challenge?"
October 22, 2009

Opening Statement as prepared

Today's hearing will examine cargo security at our land ports of entries along our northern and southern border. This subcommittee is focused on reviewing the growing challenge the Department of Homeland Security faces in identifying, interdicting and investigating cargo security threats.

To put the challenge we face at land ports of entry into perspective, think of this:

- There are over 160 land border crossings between the northern and southern borders, 43 of these crossings are dedicated to commercial use only, and many of those are operated and staffed 24 hours a day.
- Over 11 million truckloads and 2 million railcars come through those ports annually, contributing to over \$338 billion dollars and \$109 billion worth of imports respectively.

With those numbers in mind, it is important to facilitate trade and ensure that the cargo and trucks crossings are secure.

That is the challenge we will examine today. This hearing comes at a time when our ports of entry are experiencing infrastructure limitations and staff shortages that result in overworked officers.

Also, a new wave of violence has hit many of our major ports, such as a recent shooting at the Port of San Ysidro which was linked to a human trafficking attempt. In addition, there has been an increase in cocaine and cash trafficking between the United States and Canada.

With the volume of trucks and rail cars entering and exiting the country, it is imperative that we have the means to ensure they are secure and inspect them as needed.

As a sovereign nation we need to be able to control the ingress and egress from our country.

That is why I am interested in hearing from both our government and industry witnesses about what is and is not working. Also, I am interested in hearing from ICE about investigations into truck related seizures that originate in Mexico or Canada but are found in the United States.

I believe we must improve our overall border infrastructure to accommodate the growing amount of commerce and increasing number of people that cross the border every day, and to avoid delays and trade impediments.

Considering many of the primary inspections of trucks crossing into the United States are done by CBP officers, there is a valid argument to be made that staff shortages at ports of entry facilitate the importation of narcotics into the country.

I have always advocated for an increase in CBP officer staff and I hope to be able to move a CBP authorization bill that would address that problem.