

News From

U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski

Democrat from Maryland



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 23, 2007

CONTACT: **Melissa Schwartz**
202-228-1122
<http://mikulski.senate.gov>

MIKULSKI TESTIFIES ON OPPOSITION TO LNG FACILITY AT SPARROWS POINT

*"We must do all we can do to protect the Port of Baltimore and
the people of the Baltimore metropolitan area."*

BALTIMORE, Md. – **Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.)** testified today at a field hearing of the House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee chaired by delegation colleague **Congressman Elijah E. Cummings (D-Md.)**. Senator Mikulski has been an outspoken critic of the proposed Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facility at Sparrows Point in Baltimore. She has also continued to challenge federal agencies on the safety and security impact of the current facility at Cove Point in Calvert County.

"I oppose this because of my fears and my frustrations. We're talking about burns, vapor clouds and asphyxiation. We're talking about injury and possible death. I worry about a terrorist attack. I worry about an accident with ghoulis consequences," testified Senator Mikulski. "I want to make sure every single agency with authority over LNG plants and shipping has looked at the risk of a terrorist attack. It is my responsibility as a U.S. Senator to ensure the right people are asking the right questions to protect the American people from terrorism."

Following her testimony on a panel with **Governor Martin O'Malley** and **Baltimore County Executive Jim Smith**, Senator Mikulski joined her congressional colleagues to question witnesses from the U.S. Coast Guard, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the AES Corporation and the Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association.

Senator Mikulski prepared testimony is below:

"Thank you Chairman Cummings and Ranking Member LaTourette for your leadership in holding this hearing today on the Coast Guard and LNG facilities. Mr. Chairman, let me be clear – I am absolutely opposed to a new LNG facility at Sparrows Point.

"We must do all we can do to protect the Port of Baltimore and the people of the Baltimore metropolitan area. I oppose this because of my fears and my frustrations. I worry about a terrorist attack. I worry about an accident with ghoulis consequences. This is a national security issue and a community security issue, not just an energy or a budget issue.

-more-

~~"I'm on the Intelligence Committee. I know that the threats to our country are real. I~~

know terrorists are plotting to kill us every day. I'm on the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee. I know that our ports and vital infrastructure are high-risk targets. These are targets of choice; we do not want them to be targets of opportunity. That's why I worry about an LNG facility in a densely populated area near one of the busiest ports in the nation. With LNG laden tankers passing by a nuclear power plant and under the Bay Bridge?

"My concerns about grim and ghoulish consequences are not mine alone. Mr. Chairman, I bring to the Committee's attention a GAO [Government Accountability Office] Report: *Maritime Security – Public Consequences of a Terrorist Attack on a Tanker Carrying Natural Gas Need Clarification*. Scientists and engineers have raised enormous concerns about potential hazards of an accident or an attack on an LNG facility. And what do they tell us? Let's look at page 5: 'Individuals who come into contact with LNG could experience freeze burns... as the liquid warms and changes into natural gas, it forms a visible, fog like vapor cloud.' Can you imagine a vapor cloud coming from Sparrows Point? 'Under certain atmospheric conditions, this cloud could drift into populated areas.' What would be the effect? Not just a bad smell. 'Because an LNG vapor cloud displaces the oxygen in the air, it could potentially asphyxiate people who come into contact with it.' Hello! Is this what we want in Dundalk? In Turner Station? '

"We're talking about burns, vapor clouds and asphyxiation. We're talking about injury and possible death. The GAO said that we simply don't know what the impact could be of a serious LNG accident on public safety. How can anyone make a decision on LNG without knowing the impact on public safety?

"Mr. Chairman, I am really hot about this and I am not new to this issue. I have been working on the safety of LNG facilities since 2001, when I first learned of plans to reopen the LNG terminal at Cove Point. It was just one month after 9/11 – October 11, 2002.

"Let me tell you where Cove Point is – it is on the Bay in Calvert County, 3.5 miles from the Calvert Cliffs nuclear plant. Let me read from my letter to Patrick Wood, Chairman of FERC: 'Dear Mr. Wood, What were you thinking when you granted preliminary approval to reopen the natural gas unloading plant at Cove Point, Maryland? I cannot believe you would give this approval on the one month anniversary of the terrorist attacks on America, while President Bush was announcing that our country was at war.'

"Today, I am here to tell you about the safety and security lessons learned from Cove Point and why these issues need to be examined more closely before new LNG terminals are approved in populated areas like the Port of Baltimore. We still don't have the answers we need on Cove Point. Maybe today we can get some real answers.

"First, I want to remind you about the LNG facility at Cove Point. In the aftermath of 9/11, as America fought the war on terrorism, we could not do business as usual. Yet, FERC was preparing to rubberstamp its approval for a LNG facility – highly flammable liquefied natural gas transported on foreign ships – 3.5 miles from a nuclear power plant.

-more-

~~"I did five things to ensure that the safety and security of this plan was fully examined:~~

1. I demanded FERC review its decision in the interest of national security.
2. I got DHS [Department of Homeland Security] and FBI involved in the review process, asking them to fully consider potential terrorism risks.
3. I asked the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to look at the potential threat to Calvert Cliffs and the people of Maryland.
4. I urged the Coast Guard to rigorously review the proposal.
5. I pushed the Coast Guard to review how they will keep Cove Point secure. Believe it or not, it was the very first of its kind for a LNG terminal. In their report, the Coast Guard assured me they had sufficient resources to control and secure LNG tanker shipping. The Coast Guard promised to provide waterside security during gas transfer, scrutinize crew lists, board and inspect tankers, escort the tankers up the Bay, and enforce exclusion zones.

"The Coast Guard stood up and took the lead, and they have done their job effectively. But guess what? They are overstretched. Now the Coast Guard is turning over some of its security responsibilities to Dominion Power. The Coast Guard has bailed out. Now security for Cove Point is shared between the Coast Guard, Dominion Power and local law enforcement. So the safety and security of the people of Calvert County and all who live or work on the Bay is provided by an uncertain mix of private security guards, local law enforcement and the overstretched Coast Guard. What will this mean? I've tried to find out – all I get is platitudes and abstractions – and a lot of paper. If there is a problem, do you call the Sheriff of Calvert County? Do you call the rent-a-cops from a private security firm? We must have these answers!

"Now a second LNG terminal is proposed at Sparrows Point. This site only amplifies my safety and security concerns. Sparrows Point is more than 50 miles further up the Chesapeake Bay. LNG tankers would have to travel through the narrowest portions of the Bay, under the Bay Bridge, through heavily used commercial fishing and recreational boating areas, to the mouth of the Port of Baltimore – our state's economic engine. The Port supports 42,000 maritime related jobs, generating nearly \$6 billion a year in salaries and revenues. This is a densely populated area – the site is less than two miles away from residential communities that are home to more than 65,000 residents. I know Governor Martin O'Malley and Baltimore County Executive Jim Smith will go into that with more detail next.

"So here we are again, six years after the attacks of 9/11, questioning why a federal agency is willing to rubber stamp plans for an LNG facility. This time, I'm here with my partners at the state and local level, Governor O'Malley and County Executive Smith.

"Today, there is even more evidence that approving a new LNG plant is unsafe and unwise. A recent GAO report found that more research is needed on the public safety impact of LNG spills.

-more-

~~"In this post 9/11 era, the Coast Guard is overburdened and stretched thin, straining to~~
protect our coastlines and waterways. How can they assure the safety of yet another LNG facility? I have too many unanswered questions.

"I am committed to promoting America's energy independence. However, it must be home grown and not compromise our national security. I want to make sure every single agency with authority over LNG plants and shipping has looked at the risk of a terrorist attack. What would be the consequences? What can and should be done to review and control the plants, the docks, the ships, the crews and the neighboring communities?"

"I don't want permits issued and foreign-flag tankers coming to our ports until we know the answer to these questions from the Coast Guard, DHS, FBI and FERC. It is my responsibility as a United States Senator to ensure the right people are asking the right questions to protect the American people from terrorism. I thank the Chairman for this opportunity to testify, and look forward to joining you for questioning in the next panel."

###