

---

Posted on Mon, Aug. 02, 2004

## Congress members blast explosives oversight

By Will Oremus  
Mercury News

Declaring that he was "appalled" by the lack of federal control over the storage of dangerous explosives, Rep. Tom Lantos (D-San Mateo) vowed after a hearing Monday to craft legislation to address the problem.

"Since high explosives are the weapon of choice of terrorists, to have this rather relaxed attitude toward thefts is outrageous," Lantos said.

Rep. Christopher Shays (R-Connecticut) called the rare "field hearing" of the House Subcommittee on National Security at Lantos's request after a thief twice broke into a local bunker over the Fourth of July weekend to steal more than 200 pounds of high explosives.

Four suspects have since been caught and all the stolen explosives recovered, officials say.

But Lantos said the subcommittee hearing, held at San Mateo City Hall, convinced him there is a pressing need to keep better track of explosives storage sites; to regularly inspect sites maintained by law enforcement agencies; and to require more advanced security measures at both public and private bunkers.

Alongside Lantos and Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Palo Alto), Shays -- who is chairman of the subcommittee -- visited the burglarized bunker near Crystal Springs Reservoir, then grilled expert witnesses from the federal, state and local governments about explosives security in San Mateo County and around the nation.

---

© 2004 MercuryNews.com and wire service sources. All Rights Reserved.  
<http://www.mercurynews.com>