

# Bush won't back off ports deal, aide says

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BY DONNA DE LA CRUZ

WASHINGTON -- The Bush administration said Friday it won't reconsider its approval for a United Arab Emirates company to take over significant operations at six U.S. ports.

The former head of the Sept. 11 commission said the deal "never should have happened."

Opponents, including the agency that runs New York and New Jersey ports, took their case to court, while the company, Dubai Ports World, stepped up efforts to change minds in Congress.

## 'It shouldn't have happened'

The president's national security adviser said the White House would keep trying to persuade lawmakers -- there's more time since the company offered to delay its takeover -- but **the administration wouldn't reconsider its approval.**

"There are questions raised in the Congress, and what this delay allows is for those questions to be addressed on the Hill," Stephen Hadley said.

Thomas Kean, a former Republican governor of New Jersey who led the bipartisan probe of the Sept. 11 attacks, said the deal was a big mistake because of past connections between the 2001 hijackers and the UAE.

"It shouldn't have happened, it never should have happened," Kean said. The quicker the Bush administration can get out of the deal, the better, he said. "There's no question that two of the 9/11 hijackers came from there and money was laundered through there," Kean said.

AP



"What happens in Crawford stays in Crawford."

—Jay Leno