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Dubai ruler promises to sell U.S. ports

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16 March, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Dubai ruler promises to sell U.S. ports

The U.A.E. organization that recently purchased the shipping company P&O, and with it control of 22 American ports, has decided to offload its \$6.8bn acquisition. The Dubai-based DP World offered to sell its stake in the ports as a goodwill gesture towards the U.S. The company is the world's third largest ports company. It had been planning to increase its influence in international shipping but ran into a political storm following the ports purchase. American politicians were outraged that a foreign company would control U.S. ports, citing the situation was a major security threat. Few Senators openly admitted fears of an Arab group controlling U.S. docks.

The White House expressed its gratitude that Dubai's ruler, Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, promised to sell the ports. A political furor had erupted in Washington, with lawmakers in the House of Representatives voting 377-38 against DP World running port terminals in America. Sheik Mohammed immediately quelled those fears. Michael Seymour, head of DP World's U.S. subsidiary said there was "already significant interest...from American buyers". He added any buyer must be "a wholly owned American organization" but did not impart any information regarding possible purchasers. He intimated a sale would take place within the next four to six months.

WARM-UPS

1. TAKEOVERS: How do you feel when companies from other countries take over your nation's companies? What examples can you think of? What do you think when companies from your country buy companies from other countries?

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

The U.A.E. / shipping companies / ports / Dubai / goodwill / political storms / security threats / gratitude / fears / subsidiaries / information / purchasers

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. FOREIGN INTEREST: With your partner(s), talk about your thoughts on companies from the countries on the left taking over industries from your country (on the right).

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| • USA | • Ports |
| • China | • Electricity |
| • Russia | • Car making |
| • Pakistan | • Garbage collection |
| • France | • Airports |
| • United Arab Emirates | • Television stations |
| • Venezuela | • Bakeries |

4. HEADLINE PREDICTION: With your partner(s), use all of the words in the "Chat" activity above to predict what the news article will be about. Once you have your story, change partners and compare your different versions. Who was closest to the real story?

5. BUSINESS OPINIONS: Do you agree with the following opinions about international business? Talk about them with your partner(s).

- International business is destroying the earth.
- Businesses should not be sold to other countries.
- There should be a maximum of 49% foreign ownership in any business.
- Multinational companies must find local partners.
- It's dangerous to sell ports and other infrastructure to foreign companies.
- Politicians should never get in the way of international business.
- International business rules are set by America and rich countries.
- International business is draining the wealth and resources of poor countries.

6. GOODWILL: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "goodwill". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. A UAE company is going to sell 22 American ports. | T / F |
| b. The UAE company bought the ports for \$6.8bn in the 1970s. | T / F |
| c. The UAE company aims to be the world's third largest ports company. | T / F |
| d. Many US Senators openly expressed fears of US ports being Arab run. | T / F |
| e. The ruler of Dubai promised to sell the ports. | T / F |
| f. A political furor erupted among US lawmakers over the UAE control. | T / F |
| g. Any future buyer must be a wholly owned American organization. | T / F |
| h. The sale should take place in the next four to six weeks. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| a. organization | hullabaloo |
| b. offload | encountered |
| c. acquisition | divulge |
| d. ran into | enterprise |
| e. admitted | broke out |
| f. furor | purchase |
| g. erupted | alleviated |
| h. quelled | owned up to |
| i. impart | suggested |
| j. intimidated | sell |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| a. decided to offload | in Washington |
| b. sell its stake in the ports as a goodwill | a major security threat |
| c. ran into a political | gratitude that Dubai's ruler ... |
| d. citing the situation was | ...from American buyers |
| e. openly admitted fears of an | gesture towards the U.S. |
| f. The White House expressed its | storm following the ports purchase |
| g. A political furor had erupted | those fears |
| h. Sheik Mohammed immediately quelled | Arab group controlling U.S. docks |
| i. already significant interest | any information |
| j. ...but did not impart | its \$6.8bn acquisition |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Dubai ruler promises to sell U.S. ports

The U.A.E. organization that recently purchased the shipping company P&O, and with it _____ of 22 American ports, has decided to _____ its \$6.8bn acquisition. The Dubai-based DP World offered to sell its _____ in the ports as a goodwill _____ towards the U.S. The company is the world's third largest ports company. It had been planning to increase its influence in international shipping but _____ into a political storm following the ports purchase. American politicians were _____ that a foreign company would control U.S. ports, _____ the situation was a major security threat. Few Senators _____ admitted fears of an Arab group controlling U.S. docks.

outraged
stake
openly
control
gesture
citing
offload
ran

The White House expressed its _____ that Dubai's ruler, Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, promised to sell the ports. A political _____ had erupted in Washington, with lawmakers in the House of Representatives voting 377-38 _____ DP World running port terminals in America. Sheik Mohammed immediately _____ those fears. Michael Seymour, head of DP World's U.S. subsidiary said there was "already _____ interest...from American buyers". He added any buyer must be "a _____ owned American organization" but did not _____ any information regarding possible purchasers. He _____ a sale would take place within the next four to six months.

quelled
furor
intimated
against
wholly
gratitude
significant
impart

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Dubai ruler promises to sell U.S. ports

The U.A.E. organization that recently _____ the shipping company P&O, and with its control of 22 American ports, has decided to offload its \$6.8bn _____. The Dubai-based DP World offered to sell its stake in the ports as a goodwill _____ towards the U.S. The company is the world's third largest ports company. It had been planning to increase its influence in international shipping but ran into a political _____ following the ports purchase. American politicians were outraged that a foreign company would control U.S. ports, _____ the situation was a major security threat. Few Senators _____ admitted fears of an Arab group controlling U.S. docks.

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AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'security' and 'threat'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "INTERNATIONAL TAKEOVERS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about international takeovers and security concerns.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- recently
- stake
- third
- storm
- control
- openly
- expressed
- furor
- quelled
- subsidiary
- wholly
- intimidated

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Have you been following news of this story?
- c. What do you think of the US lawmakers voting over whether they wanted a UAE company to own US ports?
- d. What do you think of Sheikh Mohammed's goodwill gesture?
- e. Do you think American companies would have listened to the lawmakers of another country in the same situation?
- f. Do you think American lawmakers would have voted if the purchasers of the port were not from an Arab country?
- g. Do you think the security concerns expressed by the US lawmakers real?
- h. Do you think there should now be rules governing the purchase of parts of certain industries by companies from other countries?
- i. What do you think are the opinions of UAE nationals towards the actions of the US lawmakers and the Dubai ruler?
- j. Do you think American companies have a controlling interest in the ports and other sensitive infrastructure of other countries?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Would you have voted for or against the purchase of the ports by the UAE company?
- d. What is your image of the UAE?
- e. What does this incident suggest about America and free trade?
- f. Would you have any objections to the countries neighboring yours from buying parts of key industries in your country?
- g. Which countries would you object to buying parts of key industries in your country?
- h. What industries in your country do you think should always be kept in 100 percent national control?
- i. What fears would you like quelling?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

FOREIGN TAKEOVER: In pairs / groups, talk about the plus points and minus points of the following takeovers of industries in your country:

Takeover	Plus points	Minus points
1. Your ports by an(other) Arab country		
2. Your TV stations by an American (or Chinese) company		
3. Your airports by a Russian (or Kenyan) company		
4. Your soccer teams by an Australian (or Canadian) company		
5. Your hotels by a Japanese (or Thai) company		
6. Other _____ _____		

Change partners and talk about what you wrote with your previous partner(s).

Discuss which of the takeovers would be most / least preferable. Give a presentation explaining your thoughts to the class.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information about this story. Talk about this with your partner(s).

3. FOREIGN OWNERSHIP: Design a poster outlining the rules that the world should put in place to safeguard a country's strategic assets from foreign takeovers. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Which one(s) did you like most and why?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to Dubai's ruler explaining what you thought of his goodwill gesture. Write another letter to the politicians who expressed outrage at the sale of U.S. ports to the UAE. In the next class, compare your letters. Who had the most interesting ones?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. F c. F d. F e. T f. T g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. organization	enterprise
b. offload	sell
c. acquisition	purchase
d. ran into	encountered
e. admitted	owned up to
f. furor	hullabaloo
g. erupted	broke out
h. quelled	alleviated
i. impart	divulge
j. intimidated	suggested

PHRASE MATCH:

a. decided to offload	its \$6.8bn acquisition
b. sell its stake in the ports as a goodwill	gesture towards the U.S.
c. ran into a political	storm following the ports purchase
d. citing the situation was	a major security threat
e. openly admitted fears of an	Arab group controlling U.S. docks
f. The White House expressed its	gratitude that Dubai's ruler ...
g. A political furor had erupted	in Washington
h. Sheik Mohammed immediately quelled	those fears
i. already significant interest	...from American buyers
j. ...but did not impart	any information

GAP FILL:

Dubai ruler promises to sell U.S. ports

The U.A.E. organization that recently purchased the shipping company P&O, and with it **control** of 22 American ports, has decided to **offload** its \$6.8bn acquisition. The Dubai-based DP World offered to sell its **stake** in the ports as a goodwill **gesture** towards the U.S. The company is the world's third largest ports company. It had been planning to increase its influence in international shipping but **ran** into a political storm following the ports purchase. American politicians were **outraged** that a foreign company would control U.S. ports, **citing** the situation was a major security threat. Few Senators **openly** admitted fears of an Arab group controlling U.S. docks.

The White House expressed its **gratitude** that Dubai's ruler, Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, promised to sell the ports. A political **furor** had erupted in Washington, with lawmakers in the House of Representatives voting 377-38 **against** DP World running port terminals in America. Sheik Mohammed immediately **quelled** those fears. Michael Seymour, head of DP World's U.S. subsidiary said there was "already **significant** interest...from American buyers". He added any buyer must be "a **wholly** owned American organization" but did not **impart** any information regarding possible purchasers. He **intimated** a sale would take place within the next four to six months.