

## Murtha's Defense Earmarks Draw Questions

### CBS Evening News: FBI Investigates Those Close To Powerful Lawmaker

Spring in Washington is "earmark season" - a busy time for Congressman John Murtha.

"That's my business," Murtha said. "I've been in it for 35 years."

As head of a powerful Defense committee, Murtha controls hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars, reports **CBS News investigative correspondent Sharyl Attkisson**. And he's not shy about directing money to those who give generously to his election campaigns.

**CBS News** has learned that this month, Murtha is steering new earmarks toward 10 companies that recently donated to his campaign.

Murtha wants \$8 million for **Argon ST**, a defense contractor whose CEO gave Murtha the maximum allowed by law - \$2,400 by an individual. He's directing a \$5 million earmark toward **Advanced Acoustic Concepts**, which also gave the max - \$5,000 for a political action committee - to his campaign. In all, 10 recent Murtha donors are slated to receive \$31 million in Murtha earmarks for 2010.

Taxpayer watchdogs may not like how it looks, but it's not against the law unless donations were required in order to receive the earmarks. Looking for evidence of wrongdoing, the FBI has recently raided offices of two other companies linked to Murtha.

"The sooner it gets to a bright line that's a direct connection of 'you give me money, you're going to get taxpayer dollars,' that's when you really cross the line," said Steve Ellis, with Taxpayers for Common Sense.

That line was crossed in one case, according to a defense contractor who spoke to us on condition of anonymity for fear of losing government contracts.

The contractor was set to receive \$1 million tax dollars. He said the military told him the money would come through a company called Commonwealth Research Institute, whose parent company, Concurrent Technologies, ranked among the largest earmark recipients. Both were set up with Murtha's help in his own hometown. The defense contractor said Commonwealth officials told him to get the money, he should "consider opening an office" in Johnstown, Murtha's hometown, and chided his company for not giving "enough campaign contributions to Murtha," and not making "a showing at Murtha's annual defense contractor fair."

The contractor told **CBS News**: "I wouldn't do it. We're just not going to play." He didn't get the funds.

"You called this a 'shakedown?'" Attkisson asked Ellis.

"If you want the money then you've got to do these things, and that's being shaken down," Ellis said.

"Is there anything illegal about that?" Attkisson asked.

"It's hard to tell until you have all the details," Ellis said. "Illegality is a tricky thing on this. It's very hard to prove a quid pro quo because most of these things aren't written down."

Commonwealth, subpoenaed in a separate federal probe, would only say it's always encouraged companies to relocate to Johnstown, and attend Murtha's fair to promote growth - but does "not encourage anyone to make campaign contributions."

Murtha wouldn't comment for our report. He did recently tell a home state newspaper that he's only trying to bring home the bacon.

"If I'm corrupt," said the congressman, "It's because I take care of my district."

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