

## Foreign Investment in the U.S. Is Too Secret

To the Editor:

I read with interest Jeff Gerth's articles on the reputed wealth — including substantial U.S. holdings — of President and Mrs. Ferdinand E. Marcos of the Philippines (Nov. 2, 12 and 20). As a member of Congress, I have become increasingly concerned about the extent and anonymity of foreign ownership of U.S. assets.

Foreign investment — made attractive by America's budget deficits, which have driven up interest rates, and made possible by our record trade deficits, which are depositing billions of our dollars on foreign shores — is increasing rapidly. Foreign governments, corporations and individuals own at least \$1 trillion in U.S. assets that we are aware of, conceivably much, much more.

Although as many as 16 agencies of

the U.S. Government collect information on foreign investment, the information is so general, limited or hidden in bureaucratic quagmires as to be of little practical use in assessing the extent of the phenomenon, or actually kept confidential by law — denied even to Congress.

We don't know whether these foreign investors are legitimate business people; corrupt foreign officials reinvesting what they have skimmed off from their own people or our economic and military aid; drug traffickers, members of the Mafia or American white-collar criminals laundering money through foreign banks or dummy corporations, or businesses secretly trying to monopolize an industry or gain control of another company in violation of our antitrust or securities laws. We just don't know, and I think that is dangerous.

If the Marcos family has vast U.S. holdings purchased with funds of dubious origin, the American and the Philippine people deserve to know. And the U.S. Government, which has supported the Marcos regime despite widespread human-rights abuse and decidedly antidemocratic tendencies, ought to know how our taxpayers' money is being put to use.

This type of situation is one reason I have introduced in the Congress a foreign-investment disclosure and reciprocity bill, which would require full public disclosure of the ultimate beneficial owner of all major foreign holdings here.

The legislation would also require that foreign investors certify that their countries of origin permit U.S. investors to make the same type and extent of investment.

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