

VIEQUES TELLS NAVY,

'STOP THE BOMBING!'

MILLIONS SAY:

"LEAVE THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE IN PEACE"

In the early evening of April 19, 1999, a U.S. Navy pilot flying his FA-18 jet dropped two 500-pound bombs, killing one civilian and wounding several others. This wasn't in Iraq, and it wasn't in Kosovo, two countries that U.S. planes were bombing regularly at the time.

Actually, the dead and wounded civilian victims of the April 19 bombing were U.S. citizens, killed when the bombs missed their intended target in Vieques, Puerto Rico. While the death and injuries were a mistake, they didn't come as a surprise to the peo-

ple of Vieques. For the U.S. Navy bombs much of the island with the same regularity that it bombs Iraq.

Since 1941, when the Navy expropriated three-quarters of the 52-square-mile island, Vieques has been a bombing test-site and ammunition storage center. Thousands of Viequenses have been driven off the island by the Navy. Now the remaining 9,000 of the island and most of the 3 million people on the Puerto Rican mainland want the Navy to leave Vieques.

NOT A NEW STORY

For a half-century, people on the island have been asking for an end to the bombings and the shelling. In the past 15 years along, more than 1,300 warships and 4,200 aircraft have used Vieques as a target range.

The effect on the people has been disastrous: 72% live below the poverty level; over 50% are unemployed. The island of Vieques has a 27% higher cancer rate than the rest of Puerto Rico.

TODO NUEVA YORK CON VIEQUES/ALL NEW YORK WITH VIEQUES CAMPAIGN GAINS SUPPORT

Now, "Todo Nueva York con Vieques" (All New York with Vieques) has been formed with prominent New Yorkers, major trade unions, religious and community organizations. The new coalition is urging President Bill Clinton to heed the voices of Puerto Rico and to order the withdrawal of the Navy from Puerto Rico.



Photo: Michael Rifkin

Commemorative site for those killed and wounded on April 19, 1999.

WHAT AND WHERE IS VIEQUES?

Vieques is a lovely Caribbean island. It is located 7 miles off the coast of Puerto Rico to which it belongs. It is 52 square miles, about the size of Washington, DC, with a population of 9,400.

Vieques is a peaceful place to relax--when the Navy is not bombarding it. Free of glitzy high-rises and casinos, Vieques has dozens of secluded beaches, shell grounds, coral reefs, archaeological digs, horse-back trails, and mangrove lagoons that serve as nesting and gathering places for 123 species of birds.

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

1941:

The U.S. Navy expropriates three-fourths of Vieques, including land used in a once-thriving sugar-cane and agricultural industry. In order to build a base and training grounds, the Navy displaces half of the population.

1997:

Four NATO warships dock at a public beach on Mother's Day. Dozens of fishermen drive them out after a two-hour struggle during which the sailors threw metal objects and sprayed pressure hoses on the small fishing vessels.

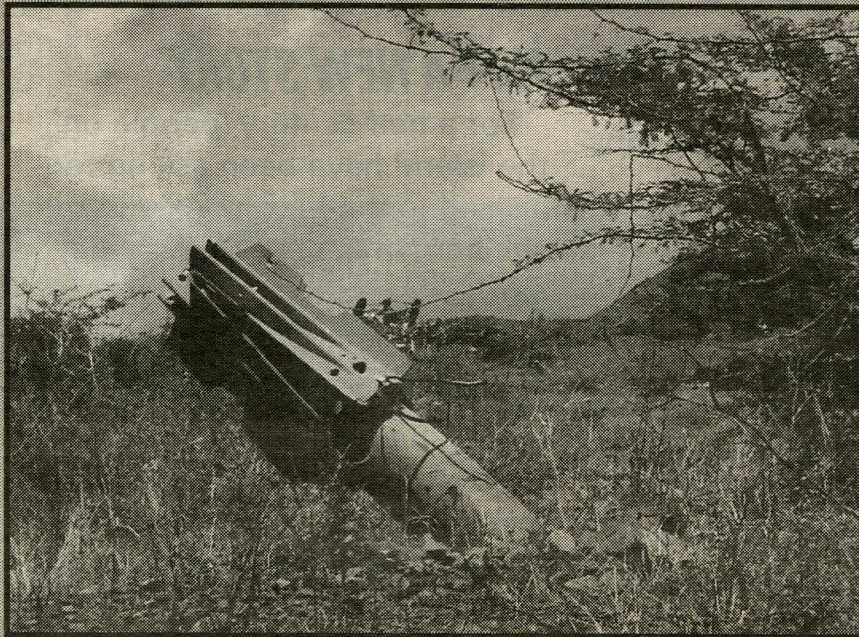


Photo: Michael Rifkin

One of many live munitions scattered around Vieques

1947:

The U.S. Dept. of the Interior issues a plan to move the island's entire population to St. Croix so that all of Vieques can be used as a military base. The plan was abandoned in the face of a near-consensus opposition in Puerto Rico.

1980:

U.S. Congress concludes that the Navy should leave Vieques and seek another place for its military exercises.

1983:

Puerto Rico Governor Carlos Romero Barceló settles a lawsuit with the Navy in exchange for pledges from the Navy to protect the environment and help in the island's economic development.

1989:

Navy attempts expropriation of Monte Carmelo Barrio Destino area. The eviction of people from their homes is blocked by supporters.

1993:

A Navy FA-18 Hornet jet drops five 500-pound bombs a mile away from the Vieques town of Isabel Segunda, 10 miles off the intended target.

1999

April 19: Navy drops two 500-pound bombs over an observation tower on the eastern tip of Vieques. A civilian guard on duty, David Sanes Rodríguez, is killed and four others injured.

April-May: Campsites to protest the Navy's presence are established on Navy training grounds at Mount David (named

for David Sanes) by young Viequenses, at Playa Carrucho by the Puerto Rican Independence Party, and at Playa Yayí by the Catholic Church of Vieques. Campers refuse to leave until the Navy is withdrawn.

May 11: Governor Pedro Roselló, who heads the pro-statehood party, appoints a Special Committee to study the impact of the Navy in Vieques.

May 26: Navy admits to have fired 263 rounds of shells loaded with depleted uranium in Vieques. Only 57 of the shells have been recovered.

June 10: President Clinton appoints a panel to study the impact of the Navy in Vieques and report to him by the end of summer.

June 30: Governor Rosello's Special Committee issues report, with 13 recommendations including the demilitarization, decontamination and return of Vieques to its people. The Committee found that the Navy violated every point of its 1983 agreement with then Governor Romero Barceló, in which it agreed to reduce the bombings, reduce the use of live bombs, protect endangered species, mangroves and marine mammals, and help the Vieques economy.

July 4: Todo Puerto Rico Con Vieques (All of Puerto Rico With Vieques) march of 50,000 at U.S. Roosevelt Roads military base near San Juan.

Week of July 12: The Navy admits to using napalm, a highly deadly and toxic chemical weapon, in Vieques in 1993.

August 1: Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry determines to visit Vieques to study the incidences of cancer among the island's residents, which is 24% higher than the rest of Puerto Rico. Viequenses argue that there are no chemical, nuclear or pharmaceutical plants on the island and that only the Navy's armaments and destruction of the environment explain the high cancer rate.

August 6: Puerto Rican Attorney General José Fuentes Agostini threatens to sue the Navy. The suit would allege violations of clean water, clean air, endangered species and hazardous waste laws by destroying coral reefs, threatening sea turtle habitat and failing to dispose of bombs that land off-range. Vieques contains three of the seven remaining bioluminescent bays in the world, is "ringed with stunning and valuable coral reefs," and is home to at least 10 species of federally threatened and endangered animals and plant.

AN ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER

"...the eastern tip of [Vieques] constitutes a region with more craters per kilometer than the moon....The destruction of the natural and human resources of Vieques violates the basic norms of international law and human rights. At the state and federal level, the laws pertaining to the coastal zone, water and noise quality, underwater resources, archaeological resources and land use, among others, are violated."

Professor José Seguinot Barbosa,
Director of Department of Geography
University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras

**FT. LAUDERDALE (FL) SUN-SENTINEL
EDITORIAL, APRIL 25, 1999**

"Amid palm trees and some of the Caribbean's most pristine beaches, residents of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques also have lived with bombs and live ammunition practices for more than half a century...

"It's time for the Navy to find a new bombing and shelling practice base, preferably one where people don't live.

**HARTFORD (CT) COURANT
EDITORIAL, MAY 6, 1999**

"...The commonwealth's legislature unanimously passed a resolution for an immediate end to the bombing....Puerto Rico is a densely populated small territory, comparable to Connecticut. It should not be a place for the testing of live ammunition.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

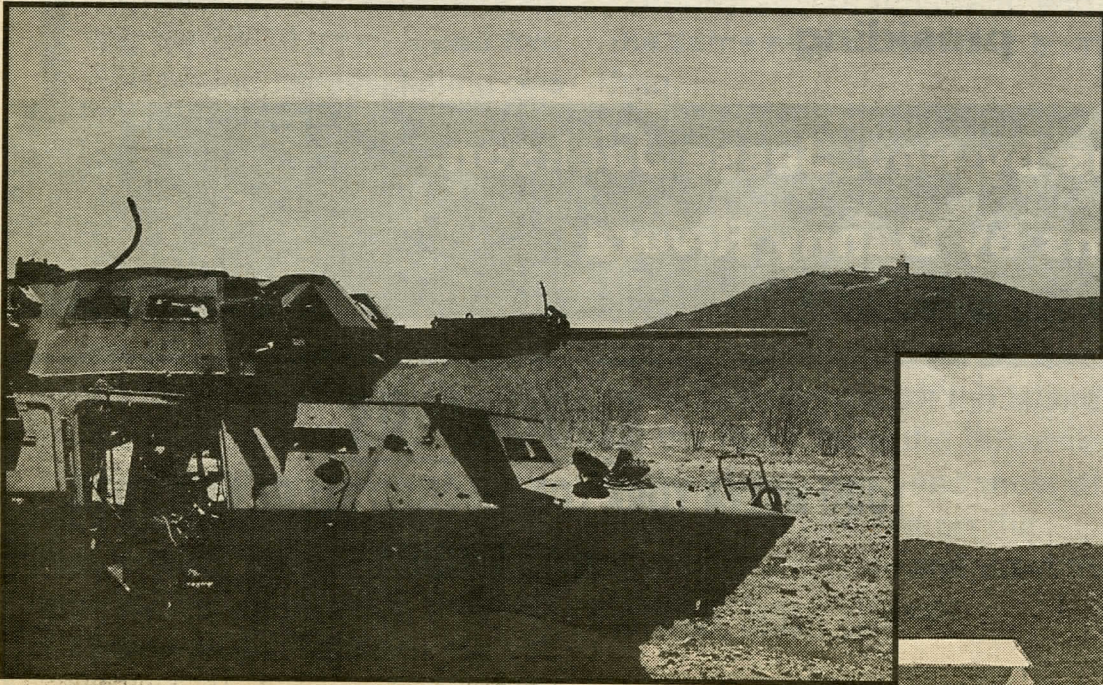


Photo: Michael Rifkin

Army tanks litter the landscape.

"It's difficult to picture such a Navy site near a small U.S. town or city. The residents wouldn't tolerate it, nor would their elected officials or their representatives in Congress. But Puerto Rico, a U.S. Commonwealth, must tolerate this, apparently because its residents, who are U.S. citizens, don't vote for anyone in Congress or the White House. The Navy's use of Vieques in this context is a throwback to the worst days of colonialism."

**WASHINGTON POST EDITORIAL,
MAY 3, 1999**

"[The bomb that killed David Sanes was] a bad accident, you might say, one for which regrets and compensation should be duly rendered. Except that it is more than an isolated accident. It is the latest instance of predictable harm to the people of Vieques that goes back through decades of military neglect of island interests...

"The military can find another site. There simply should be no bombing on a small inhabited island."

**MIAMI (FL)
HERALD
EDITORIAL,
MAY 20, 1999**

"[Vieques] is one of the few U.S. military installations anywhere where lie bombs are so near a civilian population. President Clinton should order an immediate and permanent halt of the use of bombs and live ammunition on the island...

"The United States should find a better, safer place for practicing with bombs and alive ammunition--someplace far away from civilian populations."

**CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR
EDITORIAL, JUNE 11, 1999**

"In no other location does live bombing take place so close to a significant civilian population. It doesn't take



Photo: Michael Rifkin

The Navy makes no attempt to clean the environment.

much to see the potential for disaster, and the Puerto Rican government has for years tried to get the Navy to move the exercises elsewhere...

"None of the 50 states would tolerate a bombing range so close to a town. A state's congressional delegation would make sure any such operation got shut down. But Puerto Rico isn't a state; its governor and non-voting delegate to the House must rely on persuasion instead.

"We're persuaded. It's time for the Navy to phase out the live-fire exercises or move them to a safer location."

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1999

Ecumenical Prayer Service for Peace and Justice in Vieques

St. Cecilia's Church, 106th Street, between Park and Lexington

4pm

His Excellency Archbishop of San Juan, Puerto Rico

Roberto González Nieves

presiding

Reflections by Rev. Jesse Jackson

Hymns by Danny Rivera

CALENDAR OF EVENTS WHAT YOU CAN DO

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1999

12:00 noon
Press Conference
Steps of City Hall

10:00 pm – 4:00 am
King Changó por Vieques **Club Monaco**
323 W. 44th Street b/w 8th and 9th Ave.

\$10.00 admission charge to support the Comité Pro Rescate
y Desarrollo de Vieques

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1999

12:30-4pm
Fact Finding Hearing
Council Chambers, City Hall

Come hear the people of Vieques as they testify to
federal, state and local elected officials

6:00 – 8:00 pm

CONCERT

Eugenio María de Hostos Community College
500 Grand Concourse, Main Theater, Room C140

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1999

10:00am
City Council Hearings
Council Chambers, City Hall

*All above dates, times and events are subject to
change so please call (212) 631-4620 for confirmation.*

ENDORSERS*

TODO NUEVA YORK CON VIEQUES/ALL OF NEW YORK WITH VIEQUES

Rev. Jesse Jackson

U.S. Senator Charles Schumer

U.S. Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez

U.S. Congressman José Serrano

1199 SEIU

Hispanic Federation

*Black and Hispanic Caucus of the
New York City Council*

Co-chairs:

Hon. Guillermo Linares
and Hon. Helen M. Marshall

City Council Members

José Rivera

Margarita López

Adolfo Carrión, Jr

Pedro G. Espada

Lucy Cruz

Victor L. Robles

Martín Malavé-Dilán

Angel Rodríguez

Phillip Reed

Bill Perkins

Lawrence A. Warden

Wendell Foster

Archie Spigner

Thomas White, Jr.

Juanita E. Watkins

Mary Pinkett

Annette M. Robinson

Una Clarke

Tracy Boyland

Priscilla A. Wooten

Lloyd Henry

*List in formation