



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 183-A

Resolution calling upon the United States Navy to vacate its training facility on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques and to cease and desist from violating the civil rights of the Puerto Rican people to peaceful assembly on the Island Vieques.

By Council Members López, The Speaker (Council Member Miller) and Council Members Rivera, Baez, Brewer, Clarke, Davis, Diaz, Foster, Jackson, Martinez, Perkins, Quinn, Reed, Reyna, Serrano, Stewart, Weprin and Yassky; also Council Members Gerson, Koppell, Sanders, DeBlasio and the Public Advocate (Ms. Gotbaum)

Whereas, Since World War II, the United States Navy has operated a training facility on the 9,300 resident Puerto Rican island of Vieques; and

Whereas, The United States Navy is in possession and control of approximately three-quarters of the island, occupying approximately 25,360 acres, which the Navy uses for munitions storage (the western 8,000 acres), practice with live weapons (the eastern 15,000 acres) and naval training, amphibious landings and other practice exercises (the contiguous seas and shore acreage); and

Whereas, The storage, disposal and firing of live and inert weapons of all classes, including napalm, bullets reinforced with depleted uranium and 500 pound bombs fired from jets travelling at high altitudes and great speed, places the residents of this island in imminent peril and exposes them to the long-term health risks, including cancer, associated with exposure to radioactive materials; and

Whereas, On April 19, 1999, a Navy pilot launched two 500 pound bombs from an FA-18 Hornet jet, missing the bombing range and, instead, hitting an Observation Post located on Cerro Matias killing one civilian and injuring four others; and

Whereas, On May 11, 1999, the Governor of Puerto Rico issued Executive Order 1999-21 appointing a Special Commission on Vieques to Study the Existing Situation on the Island Municipality with Regard to the Activities of the United States Navy ("the Commission") chaired by Puerto Rico's Secretary of State, Norma Burgos; and

Whereas, On June 25, 1999, the Commission issued its report which included in its recommendations a demand that the United States Navy immediately and permanently cease all military activities on Vieques and transfer, in an orderly and rapid fashion, all property controlled by the Navy on Vieques to its people; and

Whereas, President Bush has reaffirmed the commitment instituted by President Clinton that the Navy will cease bombing operations in Vieques by the year 2003; and

Whereas, The Governor of Puerto Rico Sila Maria Calderón has consistently demanded the removal of the Navy from the island of Vieques, returning the land to the Puerto Rican people and to the jurisdiction of the Government of Puerto Rico; and

Whereas, On the weekend of April 6-7, 2002, the Navy attacked the people who were peacefully manifesting on Vieques with pepper spray gas, tear gas, and rubber bullets, physically harming them and causing many of them to be hospitalized, including New York State Assemblyman José Rivera, the daughter of U.S. Congressman Luis M. Gutierrez of Illinois, and dozens of New Yorkers that were participating in a Convention in Puerto Rico, which group of people were exercising their civil rights; and

Whereas, A coalition of lawmakers and advocacy groups, both on Puerto Rico and the mainland, has called upon President Bush to order the immediate closure of the Navy's facilities on Vieques; and

Whereas, According to published reports, On September 3, 2002, the United States Navy resumed a new round of training exercises using dummy bombs in their maneuvers; and

Whereas, United States Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld recently stated that the bombing range in Vieques was an important training location and that the government plans to continue operations on a basis consistent with their obligations; and

Whereas, Secretary Rumsfeld's statement has been construed by many as meaning that the Navy was not going to pull out from Vieques, prompting the Governor of Puerto Rico, Sila M. Calderon, to urge President Bush to put in writing his verbal promise to withdraw Navy forces from Vieques by May 2003; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United States Navy to cease and desist from violating the civil rights of the Puerto Rican people to peaceful assembly; and, be it further

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United States Navy to vacate the training facility on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques; and, be it further

Resolved, That copies of this Resolution be sent to: President George W. Bush, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, the United States Congressional Delegation of the State of New York, Puerto Rican Governor Sila Maria Calderón, and the Mayor of Vieques.

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