



Vieques



The U.S. Navy occupation of the Puerto Rican island municipality of Vieques points to barbarism of U.S. militarism. For more than 60 years the U.S. Navy has used Vieques for bombing practices and war rehearsals, in the process causing great destruction to the environment and a health epidemic with cancer rates far surpassing those on the Puerto Rican mainland. After many years of denial and as a result of mass pressure, on May of 2000, the Department of Defense was forced to admit to illegally firing 263 rounds of Uranium 238 (depleted uranium) on Vieques.

THE BASE

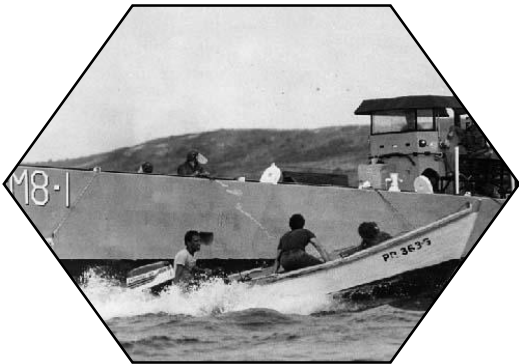
Military Use: Since World War II, numerous U.S. military intervention in the Western Hemisphere and the world was rehearsed on Vieques. In fact, the bombing destruction of Iraq, Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, killing tens of thousands of people, was practiced on the island.

On April 19, 1999, during military exercises in Vieques, civilian worker David Sanes Rodriguez was killed as a result of two off-target 500-pound bombs dropped from a U.S. Marine F-18 war plane. In Vieques, and throughout Puerto Rico, Rodriguez's death caused mass indignation that led to an overwhelming consensus and a popular movement opposed to the U.S. navy's presence there. The peoples' struggle to get the U.S. Navy out of Vieques gained significant awareness and support in the United States and throughout the world.



Naval toxics threaten the loss of paradise

For 15 years, beginning in 1985, the Navy informed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of the



amounts of heavy metals discharged into the waters near the impact area on eastern Vieques. The measurements showed that 20 substances exceeding the levels allowed by the Clean Water Act were dumped into the ocean, including lead, cadmium, arsenic, boron, cyanide, and hexavalent chromium. In December 2001, the Puerto Rican government's Planning Board ruled that both live-fire and "inert" bombs destroy coral reefs and archeological sites, threaten endangered species on the bombing range, and contaminate water supplies. They denied a permit requested by the Navy. The Navy has contemptuously refused to follow the Planning Board's order.

The Pentagon is promoting a bill in Congress that would permit military training exercises to be exempt from environmental regulations such as the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts, and laws protecting endangered species. At least 13 species facing extinction live on the direct impact bombing area. Unless the naval madness is stopped, Vieques is a paradise lost.



The historical cruelty of U.S. colonial domination in Puerto Rico is clearly reflected in the abuses committed by the Navy in Vieques. The same Navy that invaded Puerto Rico in 1898 displaced native inhabitants and contaminated the water, air and soil of this island. Despite the well-known outcry of the Puerto Rican people that demand the withdrawal of the Navy from Vieques, reparations, clean-up and return of the land, bombing practices continue to this day.



So we demand:
Close US military bases in Vieques and throughout Latin America

For more information visit www.lasolidarity.org, write to LASC@afgj.org or call 202-544-9355