

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-5401**

November 18, 2011

The Honorable Doc Hastings  
Chairman  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Edward J. Markey  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1329 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Fleming  
Chairman  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife,  
Oceans and Insular Affairs  
140 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife,  
Oceans and Insular Affairs  
H2-186 Ford House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hastings, Ranking Member Markey, Chairman Fleming, and Ranking Member Sablan:

I write to respectfully request that you schedule an oversight hearing in early 2012 to assess the ongoing federal response to the significant land use, environmental and public health challenges facing the U.S. citizens of Vieques, Puerto Rico.

The Committee has primary oversight responsibility for the Department of the Interior, which currently has administrative jurisdiction over a large portion of the land in Vieques, including nearly 18,000 acres that the Department is managing as a National Wildlife Refuge. As the agency vested by Congress with ultimate responsibility for this land, the Department of the Interior is central to coordinating the federal response to—and, ultimately, the resolution of—the multiple challenges confronting my constituents in Vieques.

For over 60 years, the U.S. Navy conducted training operations in eastern Vieques, including ship-to-shore bombing exercises, aerial bombing exercises, and ground-based exercises involving smaller munitions. The Navy also established support facilities in western Vieques to store munitions used in its training in eastern Vieques and to dispose of obsolete or damaged munitions.

In the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001* (P.L. 106-398), Congress directed the Navy to close its facilities in western Vieques and to transfer approximately 3,100 acres to the Department of the Interior. In the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002* (P.L. 107-107), Congress authorized the Navy to close its training facilities in eastern Vieques if equivalent training facilities were available elsewhere and directed the Navy, upon closure, to transfer administration of the nearly 15,000 acres of that property to the Department of the Interior. In January 2003, the Navy certified to Congress that alternative training sites had been identified and confirmed that training operations would cease on Vieques by May 2003. Today, much of the transferred land constitutes the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge. The Navy is responsible for administering and funding the cleanup of munitions and contamination that resulted from its past activities on Vieques. To fulfill this mandate, the Navy must coordinate with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Interior.

Although the Navy closed its facilities on Vieques in 2003, its past training operations continue to impact present-day life for the nearly 10,000 residents of the island. These legacy effects fall into three main categories: (1) the impact on public health; (2) the impact on the natural environment; and (3) the economic impact associated with the lack of public access to federally-held lands. If an oversight hearing is held, I believe it would be prudent for the Committee to receive witness testimony on each of these three issues.

For six decades, the U.S. citizens of Vieques sacrificed so that our country's military readiness and national security could be advanced. Accordingly, it is my firm belief that the federal government—and particularly this Congress and this Committee—have a responsibility to remain informed about the various legacy effects that prior training operations are having on the island's residents.

Thank you very much for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Pedro R. Pierluisi".

Pedro R. Pierluisi  
Member of Congress