

¡VIVA VIEQUES LIBRE!



The people of Vieques have waged a David vs. Goliath struggle against the U.S. military. In 1979, a flotilla of fishing boats blockaded an amphibious landing in Vieques. For four months, fishermen, clergy, teachers and independence activists have occupied the impact zone in defiance of the Navy, to stop the bombing and get the Navy out of Vieques.

Photo courtesy of the ¡ViequesLibre! website.

NAVY OUT OF VIEQUES! FREE VIEQUES NOW!

In 1898, the U.S. invaded Puerto Rico, as it did Hawai‘i, Guam, the Philippines, American Samoa, and Cuba. Vieques, a small island off the coast of Puerto Rico’s main island, is home to 9300 residents. In the 1940s the Navy took 3/4 of the island for military use and relocated the residents. Intense bombing and live-fire training have destroyed the environment and threatens the lives of the residents. Seventy-two percent of the Vieques’ population live below poverty level. Unemployment is at 50%. Cancer rates are at least 30% higher than the rest of Puerto Rico.

Like David vs. Goliath, the community has courageously resisted the military’s abuses. On April 19, 1999, two 500-pound bombs missed their target in a Navy exercise, killing civilian security guard David Sanes Rodriques. This event ignited the long-smoldering fires of decades of struggle by the people of Vieques. Since April, community leaders have occupied the impact zone in five encampments, at the risk of physical harm and arrest. On July 4, 1999, 50,000 Puerto Ricans marched on the Roosevelt Roads Naval Base to demand that the Navy leave Vieques.

The four demands of the people of Vieques are: 1. Demilitarization; 2. Decontamination; 3. Devolution (Return the land to the people); and 4. Development (sustainable, community-based economic development).

The Navy has announced plans to resume training in September. The community has vowed to engage in massive civil disobedience if training resumes. President Clinton will soon make a decision on the whether the U.S. Navy leaves or stays in Vieques.

1. CALL THE WHITE HOUSE TODAY AND TELL THE PRESIDENT TO “ORDER THAT THE U.S. NAVY LEAVE VIEQUES NOW”. WHITE HOUSE COMMENT LINE: (202) 456-1111, M-F, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM EST.
2. SIGN THE HAWAI‘I STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE OF VIEQUES.
3. SEND MESSAGES OF SUPPORT TO THE PEOPLE OF VIEQUES. Contact the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques, P.O. Box 1424, Vieques, Puerto Rico 00765. (787) 741-8651. E-mail: <bieke@coqui.net>.
4. GET INVOLVED IN LOCAL WORK TO DEMILITARIZE HAWAI‘I AS WELL AS PUERTO RICO: Contact the American Friends Service Committee - Hawai‘i Area Program, 2426 O‘ahu Avenue, Honolulu, Hawai‘i 96822. (808) 988-6266. E-mail: <afsc@pixi.com>.