



COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO  
PUERTO RICO FEDERAL AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATION

July 10, 2013

The Honorable Raymond Mabus  
Secretary of the Navy  
1200 Navy Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20350-1200

Re: Vieques

Dear Secretary Mabus:

I appreciate your efforts toward restoring the natural environment of the island of Vieques after decades of use as a military testing ground. Following on your productive meeting with Governor García-Padilla last month, I write to you today requesting a more rapid pace of environmental restoration and an increase in funding for this priority in upcoming funding cycles.

An increase in annual funding is urgent. It has been estimated that even after ten years of clean-up efforts, only 5 percent of the munitions on the island and the surrounding bodies of water have been removed. This is a painfully slow pace. I understand the constraints set forth by Congress on the amount of funds provided to the Environmental Restoration account under which the Vieques decontamination project is funded. However, your Department has within its discretion the ability to determine the allotment upon which those funds are allocated to projects within its ambit. I respectfully request that, of the over 300 million in funds allocated to the account, that the amount for Vieques be increased over the approximately 20 million currently allocated.

I was pleased to see that the House Appropriations Committee shares my concern for the urgency of the clean-up and understands that the scope of the clean-up will likely be expanded. Specifically, the Committee included the following report language within its proposed Fiscal Year 2014 Defense Appropriations Bill:

*"The Navy is conducting environmental restoration at sites on Vieques Island associated with former Navy activities. Investigations for cleanup of the western part of the island have been planned and carried out with the collaboration and approval of the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality board, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, and the Fish and Wildlife Service, with currently operates the 400 acre site as part of the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge. In response to concerns expressed by the public, the Navy is conducting additional sampling and will develop additional alternatives for the final remedy, which will be included in an addendum to the Feasibility Study of the site. The Committee understands that the final remedy for the site will be selected by consensus amongst the Navy, the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, and the Fish and Wildlife Service, and that it will support public access and use. The Committee is encouraged by these efforts and directs the Secretary of the Navy to inform the congressional defense committees on the progress of the site cleanup."*

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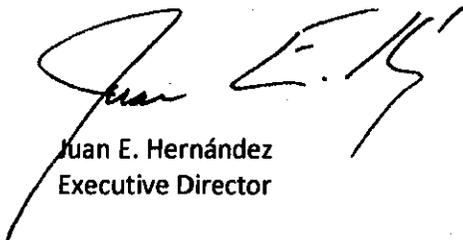
The particularized focus for Vieques provided by the Appropriations Committee within the Committee Report for the Fiscal Year 2014 Defense Appropriations Bill adds support to the request for increased funding for the Vieques clean-up project moving forward.

The very livelihood of the residents of Vieques relies on a successful decontamination process. The Navy used approximately 75% of the island for military exercises and storage. The presence of the Naval installations there have critically limited the land available for residents for even the most basic subsistence needs. Given that the will of the residents there was to restore access to these previous uninhabitable parts of the island to the public, it is imperative for the Navy to carry out the clean-up as promptly as possible.

Again, I urge you to increase the amount allocated to the clean-up at Vieques greater than that currently allocated to renew and improve the quality of life for the residents of Vieques, both now and in the future.

I look forward to working with you on this matter.

Cordially yours,



Juan E. Hernández  
Executive Director