

Stop Poisoning the People of Vieques

Fund Closed Detonation Chambers

Vidas Viequenses Valen seeks your support to defend public health during the Vieques cleanup



Since 2003, the U.S. government is cleaning up thousands of acres of military contamination in the island-municipality of Vieques, Puerto Rico. After decades of bombing practice, the Navy is blowing up unexploded ordnance in the open air and causing added health risks to its population.

Soon the Congress will vote on providing \$10 million for the purchase of closed detonation chambers in the clean-up of military contamination in Vieques, Puerto Rico. We urge Congress to keep these funds, already approved by the House of Representatives, in the final version of the National Defense Authorization Act.

The bombing practices in Vieques ended in 2003. But this other “bombing,” under the guise of “cleanup,” continues. Please help put an end to OB/OD (open burning/open detonation) of unexploded munitions, which releases toxins into the environment and sickens the local population.

On July 11, 2019, the U.S. House of Rep. approved amendment 334 to the National Defense Authorization Act, presented by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-NY. The measure would allocate \$10 million to purchase closed detonation chambers in the efforts to rid our island of unexploded ordnance.



The Ocasio-Cortez amendment calls for closed detonation chambers “of the dimensions necessary to achieve a substantial reduction in open air burning and open-air detonation that will bring the practice of open air burning and open-air detonation to the lowest practicable level.” Closed detonation chambers are like blowing up a bomb in a great big, safe box. It means we won’t have to breathe in contamination or have it seep into our soil and water.

Although a report from the Congressional Research Service states that closed detonation methods are more effective at containing pollutants and toxic emissions during military cleanup efforts, the Naval Facilities Engineering Command says open detonation “is the quickest and most efficient way to complete the cleanup.”

We believe it is essential that the safest and most sustainable remediation practices are followed.

We are aware of the use of controlled detonation chambers in the following military sites around the country:

*Pueblo Chemical Depot (CO)... Santa Susana Field Laboratory (CA)...
Blue Grass Arsenal (KY)... Edgewood Chemical Biological Center at*

*Aberdeen Proving Ground (MD)...Massachusetts Military Reservation (MA)...Port of Seattle Pier 9
0- 91 Formerly Used Defense Site (WA)*

Background on the Vieques Clean Up



For more than 60 years, about a trillion pounds of explosives and toxic substances were dropped on Vieques by the U.S. Navy, NATO and their allies. After decades of protest and a campaign of nonviolent protest, the US Navy closed its military base on May 1, 2003. Vieques is a small island located about seven miles off the southeast coast of Puerto Rico.

Although we celebrated the closing of the bombing range, our activism continues because contamination and neglect afflict our communities. Vidas Viequenses Valen (VVV) was founded by the people of Vieques in 2015 to continue the pursuit for justice. We have held many events to remember the victims of cancer and other diseases caused by military toxics and to achieve a safe and responsible cleanup. Our people suffer higher incidences of many diseases, including cancer, heart disease, asthma and diabetes.

Our efforts include seeking an adequate budget to carry out a complete cleanup of the land and waters that were contaminated with "conventional" arms (bombs, grenades, projectiles) and "non-conventional" arms (napalm, Agent Orange, depleted uranium).

As the cheapest form of removal, open detonation just continues poisoning us. Closed detonation chambers is an alternative technology designed to protect our communities and the environment from toxic emissions. We need genuine community participation in the process of decontamination, so that the cleanup will be thorough and effective.

To support our campaign, contact Vidas Viequenses Valen (*Vieques Lives Matter*)

153 Calle Flamboyán, Vieques, PR 00765

(818) 963-2344

www.justiceforviequesnow.org.

Contacts:

Myrna Pagán (paganveda@aol.com)

José Pepe Rossy-Millán (albany-vieques@outlook.com)