

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 212

Expressing the sense of the Congress concerning continued use of the United States Navy training range on the island of Vieques in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 27, 1999

Mr. BUYER (for himself, Mr. SPENCE, Mr. YOUNG of Florida, Mr. HYDE, Mr. STUMP, Mr. HUNTER, Mr. BATEMAN, Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania, Mr. HEFLEY, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, Mrs. FOWLER, Mr. MCHUGH, and Mr. CHAMBLISS) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Congress concerning continued use of the United States Navy training range on the island of Vieques in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Whereas the success or failure of the Nation's Armed Forces when sent into combat and the risk of loss of life, both to United States military personnel and to civilians, are a direct function of the degree of training received by members of the Armed Forces before combat;

Whereas from World War II through the most recent crisis in Kosovo the Nation's military has been able to meet the call to arms due to training such as that afforded at the

United States Navy training range on the island of Vieques in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico;

Whereas in April 1999, following an accident at that training range that resulted in the death of a Navy civilian employee, training activities at that range were suspended by direction of the Secretary of the Navy pending a safety review;

Whereas officials of the Department of Defense have testified before congressional committees that the Vieques training range is the only range along the Atlantic seaboard that allows critical combined arms live fire training that includes the coordinated use of naval surface fire support training, Navy/Marine amphibious combined arms training, Carrier Battle Group strike training and high altitude tactics, and subsurface training;

Whereas officials of the Department of Defense have testified before congressional committees that the safe conduct of operations on the island of Vieques has been and will remain the primary concern of the Department of the Navy and that the recent death of the civilian Navy employee on the range was the first civilian death on the range since its purchase in 1941;

Whereas the John F. Kennedy carrier battle group, which was unable to continue training at Vieques after the April accident, deployed in September 1999 in degraded readiness condition and the Dwight D. Eisenhower carrier battle group, which is scheduled to deploy in the spring of 2000, will be forced to deploy in a significantly degraded readiness condition if not allowed to conduct training activities at the Vieques training range before departing on that deployment;

Whereas the suspension of training activities at the Vieques training range has resulted in a loss of critical combat training that is essential to the Nation's Navy and Marine forces; and

Whereas, given that recently deploying Navy and Marine Corps battle groups have been sent directly into combat operations in Kosovo and Iraq, thereby placing service personnel immediately in harm's way, it would be unthinkable to knowingly deploy members of the Armed Forces in the future without this essential training, since to do so would place American lives, including the lives of members of the Armed Forces from Puerto Rico, at high risk: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
 2 *concurring), That the Congress—*

3 (1) calls upon the Secretary of the Navy and
 4 the Attorney General of the United States to
 5 promptly ensure that the Federal property located at
 6 the Vieques training range in the Commonwealth of
 7 Puerto Rico is safe and secure and, once the range
 8 is safe and secure, for the Secretary of the Navy to
 9 resume critical live fire training at that range;

10 (2) calls upon the President, as Commander-in-
 11 Chief, to ensure that United States forces deploy
 12 with 100 percent of the combat qualifications needed
 13 to meet national security requirements;

14 (3) strongly urges the Department of Defense
 15 and the Government of Puerto Rico to reestablish a

1 mutually supportive relationship, to resolve the
2 issues between the Department of the Navy and the
3 people of Puerto Rico, and to implement a program
4 that addresses the economic and social needs and
5 safety concerns of the residents of Vieques and the
6 citizens of Puerto Rico; and

7 (4) recognizes the significant contribution by
8 the residents of Vieques and the citizens of Puerto
9 Rico to the Nation's defense.

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