



Commonwealth of Puerto Rico
Environmental Quality Board

ATLANTIC FLEET WEAPONS TRAINING RANGE

**Subcommittee on Real Estate consideration of and hearings on
Acquisition Report No. 102 and Disposal Report No. 300**

[H.A.S.C. No. 91-62]

House of Representatives
Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Real Estate
Washington, D.C.
Wednesday, June 10, 1970

Hon. Frank Sanders
Assistant Secretary of the Navy

“Culebra is an essential part of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Range, which provides important fleet training to the ships and aircraft of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet. The type of training done in the range cannot be conducted elsewhere in the Atlantic. There have been several studies to determine if there were alternatives to this range, and therefore to Culebra. The answer in each case was “No.” This judgment was based on the following criteria for such a weapons training area:

1. An area within which simultaneous operations can be conducted, such as, amphibious operations, ship-to-shore gunfire, air operations and deepwater fleet training.
 2. An area relatively free of commercial and nonparticipating aircraft and ships.
 3. An area within a region of optimum weather conditions.
 4. An area with favorable geography, oceanography, topography, and low population density.
 5. An area that is preferably on U.S. territory.
 6. An area contiguous to a Navy support activity.”
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Hon. Jorge L. Córdova
Resident Commissioner
Puerto Rico

“A few days later, I read in the Armed Forces Journal issue of May 23 an amazingly revealing letter addressed by Adm. Alfred R. Matter on December 5, 1969, to a developer who planned to build dwellings to attract vacationers to Culebra:

Culebra Island is a keystone in the Atlantic Fleet weapons range, which encompasses Naval Station, Roosevelt Roads, nearby Vieques Island and thousands of square miles of ocean area. This large complex is expanding and operations are becoming



increasingly intensive, frequently being conducted through several days of the week. As such use increases, inhabitants of nearby areas such as your property will be subjected to the noise of supersonic booms, gunfire, rocket fire, and heavy air traffic.”

Rear Admiral M. U. Moore
Atlantic Fleet Inspector General

“The Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range has its nerve center at Roosevelt Roads. The integrated range—and I stress integrated—is comprised of:

(A) The underwater range at St. Croix where advanced tests involving submarines and other ASW forces are conducted.

(B) Installations at St. Croix, Roosevelt Roads and St. Thomas where information for the control of drone targets as well as the aircraft that are operating against them, is done, and this is done in connection with missile firing at sea.”

“(C) An extensive microwave system with links on Culebra, Luis Peña, St. Thomas, St. Croix, Pico del Este in Puerto Rico, Western Vieques, and Roosevelt Roads.

(D) Large sea areas northeast and southeast of Puerto Rico for missile firings both surface-to-air and air-to-air, and fleet exercises.

Finally, the inner range—the Culebra/Vieques complex.”

“Eight miles south of Culebra is the Island of Vieques. It is also a part of the inner range, and offers an amphibious landing area and marine maneuver area on the eastern end. This target group is also referred to as an impact area; it is composed of assorted vehicles and emplacements that present a realistic combat scenario. This Vieques impact area is the only other air-to-ground target facility in the inner range of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range.”

“As a final point, I would like to emphasize the importance of concurrent target activity. With three air-to-ground target subareas—the east and west ranges at Culebra and the impact area on Vieques—it is possible to conduct at least three simultaneous weapons delivery operations. The ability to conduct these concurrent operations without mutual interference permits the conduct of major combined fleet training exercises and also accommodates peak training loads for individual units [...] This is not simply a scheduling problem, but rather a fundamental requirement for coordinated fleet-level operations at the final advanced training level that I described earlier.”



House of Representatives
Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Real Estate
Washington, D.C.
Friday, July 17, 1970

Hon. Joseph A. Grimes
Special Assistant to the
Secretary of the Army

“The Navy, because of the unusually broad missions assigned to it, must be prepared to conduct integrated operations on land, on sea, and in the air. To prepare itself for these missions it must have an area where it can conduct coordinated training operations, including open ocean maneuvers, ship-to-shore gunfire support, air-to-ground weapons firing, and Marine amphibious landing and maneuvers.”

“The Navy has made an exhaustive search of the entire Atlantic basin and it has found no alternative to the Roosevelt Roads operating area which includes installations on Puerto Rico, Culebra, Vieques, St. Thomas, and St. Croix as well as 118,000 square miles of open ocean to the north and south.”

“It is not exaggeration to say that Culebra is the keystone of the range [...] Culebra, therefore, is not just nice to have. It is an irreplaceable part of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Range.”

“The two air-to-ground target sub-areas, in combination with the Vieques Impact Area, provide our carrier based air groups with three air-to-ground weapons delivery target, sub-areas for concurrent use without mutual interference. This in turn permits at least three concurrent target activities without danger of in-flight accidents from overlapping flight patterns, ordnance....detonation patterns on the targets.”

“The eastern end of Vieques has been mentioned as an alternative Walleye target. It has also been suggested that the other targets in the air-to-ground target sub-area to the east of Culebra be moved to the eastern end of Vieques. What these suggestions fail to recognize is that the eastern end of Vieques is already one of the three air-to-ground target sub-areas in the Culebra/Vieques complex. Furthermore, the Vieques impact area is more restricted than the two sub-areas near Culebra, because safety regulations do not permit simultaneous amphibious landings, artillery fire and air-to-ground ordnance delivery unless these operations are part of a coordinated exercise.”
