



Agency for Toxic Substances  
and Disease Registry  
Atlanta GA 30333

Luis Reyes  
Regional Administrator  
U.S. NRC Region II  
Sam Nunn Atlanta Federal Center, 23 T85  
61 Forsyth Street, SW  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-8931

AUG 5 2009

Dear Mr. Reyes:

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has been asked by Congressman Steven Rothman to take a fresh look at the health-related work that has been conducted on the island of Vieques. For your reference, I have enclosed a copy of Congressman Rothman's letter.

One of the recommendations made by Congressman Rothman is that ATSDR assure data collected by other agencies is freely available. In response to this request, the ATSDR Vieques webpage will be revised. If the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has a link to information regarding Vieques, we will include your website. We would also appreciate you providing your agency's Vieques contact person for the ATSDR website.

While it is not possible to anticipate which documents would be of interest to the public, for your convenience, I enclosed a list of the NRC documents that were referenced in the ATSDR public health assessments (PHA).

Should you have questions or concerns, please contact Lisa Hayes, Team Lead, at (770) 488-0737, or email at [LHayes@cdc.gov](mailto:LHayes@cdc.gov).

Thank you for your assistance and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

William Cibulas Jr., Ph.D.  
CAPT, U.S. Public Health Service  
Director  
Division of Health Assessment and Consultation

Enclosure:  
Congressman Steven R. Rothman's Letter, April 7, 2009  
List of NRC Documents Referenced in ATSDR PHAs

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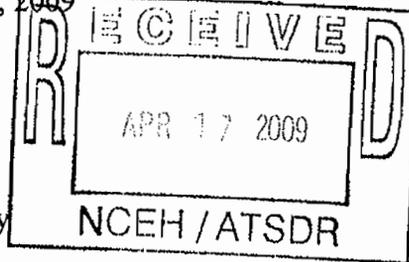
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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 7, 2009



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WEBSITE AND E-MAIL ACCESS:  
<http://www.house.gov/rothman>

Dr. Howard Frumkin, MD, DrPH  
Director  
Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry  
4770 Buford Hwy NE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30341

Dear Dr. Frumkin:

Thank you for your commitment made at the Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee hearing of Thursday, March 12, 2009 to reexamine and reopen the ATSDR's evaluation of the health crisis on the island of Vieques.

In light of the undisputed high rates of disease, the multitude of studies done by the University of Puerto Rico and other scientists finding elevated levels of heavy metals and other toxic chemicals in the soil, crabs, fish, goats, vegetation and hair studies of the Vieques people themselves, I believe that the ATSDR's credibility as a protector of human health has been seriously damaged. In light of the fact that you were not the Agency's director at the time of its public health assessments in Vieques, I am asking you to re-evaluate the health crisis there in order for you to fully understand the entire range of possible contaminants. This includes the following:

1. A complete listing with the amounts of every and all materials, weapons, bombs, experimental testing, pesticides, fuels, radiological, chemical and biological weapons that were used on the land, sea, or air above Vieques during the 62 years that the Navy or other armed forces (including foreign forces) used the island for training or weapons testing. We will need a listing or summary of these in order to adequately evaluate the adequacy of the ATSDR's testing of the island.

2. Testing has been done by other Government entities such as the EPA, CDC and the Navy itself, as well as the Government of Puerto Rico with regard to the island of Vieques and the people living on the island. Would you work to assure that this data will be freely available for independent evaluation, by Congress and others?

3. Specifically, I ask that when evaluating the degree of hazard posed by contaminants discovered on Vieques that your Agency use the same standards as recommended by the National Academy of Science when determining safe levels.

4. In the event that you maintain the ATSDR's prior conclusions regarding Vieques, I ask that you address the studies listed below. Each of these concludes that numerous hazardous chemicals, especially metals, have persisted in and have caused exposures dangerous to the

island's population. These exposures plausibly explain higher rates of human mortality and morbidity among Viequeses than have been found in the rest of Puerto Rico.

\* The Navy's own study showing bomb materials spread throughout Vieques (1978); United States Navy's Explosives Analysis of Water and Soil Samples Taken on Vieques Island, study conducted by John C. Hoffsommer and Donald J. Glover.

\* Heavy Metals in Reefs Where Bombs Are (1999); Dr. James Porter's Study of Pollutants of Reefs Surrounding Vieques.

\* Heavy Metals Found in Lagoons (2000); Heavy Metal Studies in Sediments from Gato and Anones Lagoons, Arturo Massol-Deyá, PhD and Elba Díaz, M.S., Casa Pueblo de Adjuntas, University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus, February 12, 2000.

\* Heavy Metals Come From Missiles, Bombs Dropped on Island; "Contamination Produced by Explosives and Explosive Residues in Vieques," Rafael Cruz-Perez, College of Engineers, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

\* Heavy Metals in Sea Grasses Around Vieques; Preliminary Evaluation of the Physical and Chemical Conditions of Sea Grasses *Thalassia testudinum* and *Syringodium filiforme* in Vieques, Fernando L. Herrera, PhD., Maria Calixta Ortíz, M.S., Brenda Alicea, B.S., Blanca Díaz, B.S., Siomara Cardona, Neritza Guerra; Metropolitan University, School of Environmental Affairs, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Arecibo.

\* Heavy Metals in Crops on Vieques; Trace Element Composition in Forage Samples: Vieques vs. Puerto Rico, Elba Diaz and Arturo Massol-Deya, Department of Biology, University of Puerto Rico.

\* Heavy Metals Found in Plants in Impact Zone (2000); Vegetation in Impact Zone, Arturo Massol-Deyá, PhD and Elba Díaz, M.S., Casa Pueblo de Adjuntas, University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus, April 10, 2000.

\* Heavy Metals in Civilian Zone Vegetation (2001); Toxic Metals in Vegetation at Civilian Zone, Vieques, Puerto Rico, Arturo Massol-Deyá, PhD and Elba Díaz, M.S., Casa Pueblo de Adjuntas, University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus, January 10, 2001.

\* Heavy Metals Found in Crabs (2000); Biomagnification of Carcinogenic Metals in Crab Tissue, Vieques, Puerto Rico, Arturo Massol-Deyá, PhD and Elba Díaz, M.S., Casa Pueblo de Adjuntas, University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus.

\* Heavy Metals in Fish Around Vieques; Toxicological Studies for Heavy Metals in Fish Populations at Vieques Island, Doris Caro, PhD, Mei-Ling Nazario and Noel Díaz, Ana G. Méndez University System, Metropolitan University.

\* Heavy Metals Found in Animal Food Source on Vieques; Herbivorous: additional evidence of heavy metal mobilization through the food web, Arturo Massol-Deya.

\* Heavy Metals Found in Vieques Residents (1999); Dr. Jorge Colón Hair Sample, Dr. Carmen Ortiz Roque Pilot Hair Study.

\* Heavy Metals Found in Vieques Residents (2000); Ortiz Roque Civilian Hair Study, June 2000 Testing of Civilian Population, Vieques, Puerto Rico, Carmen Ortiz Roque, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.

\* Heavy Metals Confirmed in the People of Vieques (2001); Study to Determine Presence of Heavy Metals in Hair of Humans at Vieques, Carmen Ortiz Roque, M.D, M.P.H., M.S., May 2001, Physician, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Ashford Presbyterian Hospital and Auxilio Mutuo Hospital, San Juan, Puerto Rico and President, Environmental Health Committee, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Puerto Rico.

5. I ask that your Agency satisfactorily address the criticisms of the ATSDR's public health assessments in Vieques laid out in the critiques by Dr. John Wargo of Yale University. The ATSDR must also address the current evaluation of the hair testing analysis in Vieques being performed by Dr. Wargo.

6. I am asking that your conclusions and results be peer reviewed by a panel of independent academic scientists with no current or previous relations with CDC or DOD.

7. Finally, I ask that your Agency conclude your reexamination and the tasks spelled out in this letter within six (6) months. If for some reason that time frame is unreasonable, please explain.

For decades, the security and safety of all U.S. citizens was protected by the use of Vieques. The U.S. citizens of Vieques have paid a very heavy price, which continues to be exacted to this day, in the damage to their health and their island's environment. They deserve our appreciation, and they certainly deserve to know the extent of persistent contamination, where it is, and what has caused their loss of health and how to protect their families from future harm.

Sincerely,



Steven R. Rothman, M.C.

## **Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)**

### **Documents Referenced in ATSDR Public Health Assessments**

- NRC. 2000. Environmental Survey Inspection Report, Vieques Island, Puerto Rico: June 6-15, 2000. Cover letter dated September 28, 2000.



# ATSDR

AGENCY FOR TOXIC SUBSTANCES  
AND DISEASE REGISTRY

## ANNOUNCES

the

## PUBLIC HEALTH ASSESSMENT

for

## ISLA DE VIEQUES BOMBING RANGE VIEQUES, PUERTO RICO

Enclosed for your review is the Public Health Assessment for Isla De Vieques Bombing Range. This document, dated August 26, 2003, was prepared by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

Please mail correspondence to:  
Chief, Program Evaluation, Records, and Information Services Branch  
Division of Health Assessment and Consultation  
ATSDR, Mailstop E-60  
1600 Clifton Road, NE  
Atlanta, GA 30333

If you have questions about the document or site activities, please call Jeffrey Kellam, the health assessor, at (404) 498-0373.

Enclosure

You May Contact ATSDR TOLL FREE at  
1-888-42ATSDR or  
Visit our Home Page at: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov>