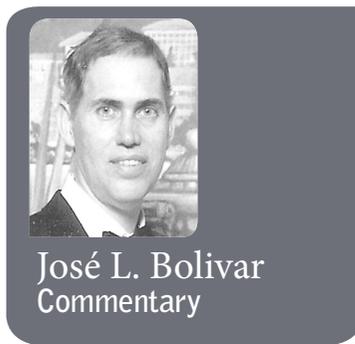


# Sacrificing in the name of National Security

Vieques has been in the news again! It seems that the U.S. Armed Forces is considering the possibility of recuperating some of the land ceded for civilian use. Viequesenses are not pleased. According to Dr. César Ayala, professor of sociology at UCLA and author of the recently published book "Puerto Rico in the American Century," many continental observers of the Puerto Rican situation have been surprised by the militancy and amplitude of the struggle to rid Vieques of the U.S. Navy in 1999-2003. After all, in many places of the United States, military bases generate employment and are an integral part of the local economy. Why then, such forceful opposition to the U.S. Navy in Vieques?

In Puerto Rico, where this issue was so broadly debated, the answer is a bit clearer. From 1948 to 2003, Vieques was used for target practice in military maneuvers only a few miles from a civilian population whose livelihoods and living conditions were profoundly affected by these maneuvers, and the restrictions on civilian life which they caused. The violence of the bombings, the incidence of cancer, the disruption of the fishing industry and the lack of economic alternatives to the local population are well known in Puerto Rico. Less well known, in Puerto Rico and in the continental United States, is the history of conflict and accommodation at the time the United States Navy first established its facilities, in the context of a World War and dangerous Nazi submarine warfare against military and civilian shipping in the Caribbean. The period of establishment of the military presence in



José L. Bolívar  
Commentary

the 1930s. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941, and especially after the declaration of War by Germany on December 11, 1941, building bases in the Caribbean for protection against German U-Boats acquired extreme urgency. These constructions necessitated the expropriation of numerous tracks of land in Puerto Rico. Vieques was placed in a peculiar situation, as the U.S. Navy determined it would need almost two thirds of the Island for its naval base. This required substantial sacrifices from the island's residents, sacrifices they had to endure even after the end of the Second World War.

Vieques suffered two different expropriation periods, one during the Second World War — from 1941 to 1942 — and the other during the Cold War, from 1947 to 1948. The expropriations in Vieques had a lasting and negative effect on the island and its residents. As Puerto

Vieques laid the foundations for subsequent civilian-military relations in the island. As is well known, these relations were strained and periodically erupted into conflict.

United States planners had been preparing for the possibility of war since

Rico moved forward, with a brand new industrialization program to substitute its dependence on sugarcane, Vieques was forgotten. During the following decades, Puerto Rico went from being the "poor house of the Caribbean" to the "miracle economy." Developing nations from Latin America to South Korea and Singapore came to see this "miracle" and to copy it while Puerto Rico was exporting its formula around the globe. Unfortunately, Vieques was ignored. So as Puerto Rico moved forward, Vieques moved backward. The continuous bombings contaminated its soil and the minimal land on which Viequesenses lived was not enough to sustain them. The base did not provide any meaningful employment, while fishing and agriculture were limited to subsistence economy.

Today, Viequesenses are again being asked to sacrifice in the name of national security. Instead, they should be asking the Obama Administration what the government will do for them, in order to compensative for the loss of 60 years of social and economic development.

Note: This column draws heavily from material to be published in the untitled book about Vieques being written by César Ayala, Bonnie Donohue and myself.

*José L. Bolívar is a historian and businessman and is completing a book on the economic impact of the Second World War on Puerto Rico, which is scheduled to be published this year by the University of Florida, and another on the history of the Development Bank of Puerto Rico.*

## Circumstantial evidence is valid

"Circumstantial evidence is not good enough" Why? If objective reporting is your legacy, then the editorial should not use misinformation.

First, the U.S. Attorney's office in San Juan had to prosecute once the Grand Jury had considered the accusations to have sufficient evidence to endorse a bill of indictment. Therefore, it was not the U.S. Attorney that decided there was enough evidence to prosecute, it was a Grand Jury, even if some believe that English invention should be abolished in the U.S.A.

Second, The Attorney's dictionary tells us that circumstantial evidence are, "Facts from which the existence of the fact in issue may be logically inferred. That evidence by which, through process of inference, it is sought to prove existence of other facts. ... A body of facts may be proved of so conclusive a character as to warrant a firm belief of the fact in issue, quite as strong and certain as that on which reasonable men are accustomed to act. ..." (The Attorney's Pocket Dictionary, p.85).

Therefore, as a faithful reader of the Puerto Rico Daily Sun, I disagree with the aforementioned editorial even if you express your opinion, as it is your right to do in an editorial. What you have no right to do is to misinform by implicating that the U.S. Attorney's Office should not prosecute, which is wrong and violates your legacy.

Anyway, I am satisfied that now the new Secretary of Justice of the Commonwealth will have to act in contrast to Roberto Sánchez Ramos, our past Secretary.

Liliam Coya Barbosa  
San Juan

## Who shall guard the guards?

I can't get over Anibal's veritable absolutism. We all took it for granted he was guilty as sin because the \$40K-wardrobe affair was

sleazy enough, because his smiley inappropriate affect was characteristic sociopath behavior and because one figured the FBI wouldn't drag the governor to court on the eve of an election if they didn't have more than enough to nail him.

So the feds are partisan after all. And we count on them to deter banana-republic barbarity here. Which now begs the Prætorian question: Who shall guard the guards?

Ernest Swallow  
Via email

## An exemplary whitewash

I'm not surprised at the verdict that has found former commonwealth governor Anibal Acevedo Vilá innocent of criminal complicity, but I'm astounded by the undisguised bias of the Daily Sun's editor in charging that the federal trial was the direct result of a conspiracy manufactured by the statehood political opponents of the governor. Rafael Matos barely acknowledges the uncontested evidence that reveals that large sums of money were indeed raised illicitly during AAV's campaigns.

Significantly, Matos concludes his Saturday, March 21st editorial by urging the defamed innocent to, in the future, "be more careful with whom he associates."

Now, this is the second time in ten years that we are called upon to believe that the president of a political party did not know what his own people were doing during his gubernatorial election campaigns. But the difference between the cynical defense of former governor Pedro Rossello's dubious integrity in the 1990s, and the same defense being offered today for AAV's likewise dubious integrity, is who speaks it.

Then, it was politicians, even Rosselló himself, decrying the malfeasance of those whom he had suborned, directly or indirectly, to raise illicit sums. Today, it is the editor of a

newspaper that is allegedly dedicated to truth, not to political truth, but to that other thing so easily lost in the passions of status preference.

Steven Greenia  
Río Piedras

## Culture and time

The recent "not guilty" verdicts have a strong basis, considering the government witnesses; Puerto Rican culture and a short time for verdict (less than 7 minutes per count.)

**First:** Once the government witness stated that the investigation started with a complaint from Carlos Romero Barcelo and Angel Cintrón, AAV's claim that this was politically motivated became very credible since this issue had already been adjudicated during the elections and did not have to reach accusations in federal court.

**Second:** Just as Juan Bobo is a likable figure in our culture, the figure of the "CHOTA" (a friend turning on a friend for personal gain or convenience) is an abominable one (even in the prisons) and his credibility must be extremely high; Michael Pasano — more effectively than Green — took care of that with Correa and thus, the "chotas" were not believed.

**Third:** The government's handling of the evidence and witnesses was very poor: 1) they could not even interpret correctly an American Express card statement; 2) a "fashionist" brought in, that showed AAV as a "non greedy" person who could care less about expensive clothes; and 3) whatever evidence they had against Inclan Bird could not be seen, even if using the telescope at the Arecibo observatory; thus the fast "not guilty" verdicts should not surprise us.

Ricardo Bird  
Guaynabo

