

Members of Congress Push for Alternatives to OB/OD On Vieques

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Senators Elizabeth Warren and Richard Blumenthal along with Congress Members Alexandria Cortez and Jose Serrano sent a letter of concern to The Committee on Armed Services to push for alternatives to OB/OD for use on Vieques. In particular, the group is requesting \$10M from the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) be used for closed detonation chambers.

The letter reads in part, "The military has now been engaged in cleanup efforts on the island for years - a crucial and overdue process. But those efforts have included open-air burning and detonation of hazardous wastes."

According to the Congressional Research Service, these practices entail 'potential environmental and safety hazards,' and '[e]nvironmental concerns' have previously influenced how and where the Department of Defense carries them out."

"Residents and activists repeatedly condemned the open-air burning and detonation, and have expressed fears about the toxicity, human health effects, and environmental impacts of these practices. In April, 42 organizations sent a letter to the Environmental Protection Agency and Members of Congress, emphasizing that technologies now exist that offer a safer alternative to open-air burning and detonation."

"The provision included in the NDAA will help effectuate the use of those safer alternatives. It allocates \$10 million 'for the purchase, deployment, and operation of a closed detonation chambers ... that will bring the practice of open air burning and open air detonation to the lowest practicable level'."

"After decades of bombing exercises by our military resulted in severe harm to Vieques, we owe it to our fellow U.S. citizens on the island to clean up after ourselves in a safe, responsible way. As you finalize the NDAA, we therefore urge you to include the House provision that provides funding for safe Vieques cleanup. Thank you for your consideration of this request."

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