

PUERTO RICO PRO-STATEHOOD VETERANS COMMISSION



"Defending Democracy Abroad, Demanding Democracy at Home"

Carlos A. Quiñones

COL CARLOS A. QUIÑONES, COL (RET) USAF



PUERTO RICO PRO-STATEHOOD VETERANS COMMISSION



"Defending Democracy Abroad, Demanding Democracy at Home"

Since 1899, one year after the United States took possession of Puerto Rico during the Spanish American War, Puerto Ricans have served in the U.S. military and are subject to federal law.

- Puerto Ricans are citizens of the U.S. since 1917.
- We have contributed with blood, sweat and tears to the security of the Nation in equal terms with our fellow citizens in the mainland.
- Over 152,000 veterans living in Puerto Rico pay their dues as U.S. citizens serving the Nation but do not enjoy equal rights under the U.S. Constitution.
- Today approximately 12,000 National Guard and Reservists from Puerto Rico continue to serve the Nation, providing a larger force than 25 other States. At the same time, we have over 40,000 serving in active duty.
- Nine (9) Puerto Rican soldiers have made the ultimate sacrifice and earned the Medal of Honor.
- Throughout our history Puerto Rico has met the recruitment goals of the Armed Forces.

- Puerto Rico contributes more soldiers per capita when compared to other states.

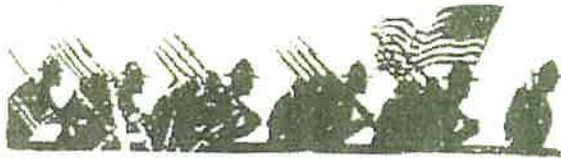
The most powerful weapon in the arsenal of the free citizens of the United States is OUR VOTING RIGHT

- On November 6, 2012, 54% of registered voters in Puerto Rico voted to end the current territorial status.
- When asked their preference to replace the territorial status 61.6% voted in favor of making Puerto Rico a State of the Union.
- These results represent the will of the U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico.
- On November 3, 2020, as part of the Puerto Rico general election, a clear majority (52.5%) voted "YES" to request the island's immediate admission into the Union as a State.
- Furthermore, we request your support in helping us change our political status by supporting **H.R. 1522 and S.780.**



Puerto Rico has a proud tradition of military service

18,000



In World War I



65,000

In World War II


48,000

in the Vietnam War




61,000

in the Korean War


10,000
in the Gulf War



More than **25,000**
PUERTO RICANS
are currently in active service,

5,000
are in the Reserves,

and more than

8,400

are in the National Guard.



38,000

deployments in Operation Enduring
Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom



Source: U.S. Dept. of Defense



117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1522

To provide for the admission of the State of Puerto Rico into the Union.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 2, 2021

Mr. SOTO (for himself, Miss González-Colón, Mrs. MURPHY of Florida, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. TORRES of New York, Mr. DIAZ-BALART, Mr. RASKIN, Mr. BACON, Mr. BERA, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. CARBAJAL, Mr. CARSON, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Mr. CORREA, Mr. CRIST, Mrs. DEMINGS, Mr. DEUTCH, Mr. EVANS, Mr. FOSTER, Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida, Mr. GALLEG0, Mr. GARBARINO, Mr. GIMENEZ, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. KATKO, Mr. KILMER, Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY, Mr. MCNERNEY, Mr. NORCROSS, Ms. PLASKETT, Mr. POSEY, Mrs. RADEWAGEN, Ms. SALAZAR, Mr. SAN NICOLAS, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. SIRES, Ms. STEFANIK, Mr. SWALWELL, Mr. TRONE, Mr. VARGAS, Mr. WALTZ, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Ms. WILD, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Mr. GOMEZ, Mr. BROWN, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mrs. BEATTY, Mr. BEYER, Mr. COHEN, and Ms. BARRAGÁN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To provide for the admission of the State of Puerto Rico into the Union.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds the following:

Sort

View

Party

Cosponsors by U.S. State or Territory

Latest Action: House - 03/10/2021 Committee Hearings Held. (All Actions)

Tracker:

Introduced

Passed House

Passed Senate

To President

Became Law

Summary(1) Text(1) Actions(4) Titles(2) Amendments(0) **Cosponsors(80)** Committees(1) Related Bills(1)**Sponsor:** [Rep. Soto, Darren \[D-FL-9\]](#) | Cosponsor statistics: 80 current - includes 52 original

* = Original cosponsor

Cosponsor**Date Cosponsored**

Resident Commissioner González-Colón, Jenniffer [R-PR-At Large]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Murphy, Stephanie N. [D-FL-7]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Young, Don [R-AK-At Large]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Torres, Ritchie [D-NY-15]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Diaz-Balart, Mario [R-FL-25]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Raskin, Jamie [D-MD-8]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Bacon, Don [R-NE-2]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Bera, Ami [D-CA-7]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Bilirakis, Gus M. [R-FL-12]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Bishop, Sanford D., Jr. [D-GA-2]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Boyle, Brendan F. [D-PA-2]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Carbajal, Salud O. [D-CA-24]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Carson, Andre [D-IN-7]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Castor, Kathy [D-FL-14]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Correa, J. Luis [D-CA-46]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Crist, Charlie [D-FL-13]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Demings, Val Butler [D-FL-10]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Deutch, Theodore E. [D-FL-22]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Evans, Dwight [D-PA-3]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Foster, Bill [D-IL-11]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Frankel, Lois [D-FL-21]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Gallego, Ruben [D-AZ-7]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Garbarino, Andrew R. [R-NY-2]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Gimenez, Carlos A. [R-FL-26]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Hastings, Alcee L. [D-FL-20]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Katko, John [R-NY-24]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Kilmer, Derek [D-WA-6]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Krishnamoorthi, Raja [D-IL-8]*	03/02/2021
Rep. McNerney, Jerry [D-CA-9]*	03/02/2021
Rep. Norcross, Donald [D-NJ-1]*	03/02/2021
Del. Plaskett, Stacey E. [D-VI-At Large]*	03/02/2021

Sort	View	Party	Cosponsors by U.S. State or Territory	
Rep. Sessions, Lou [R-TX-11]				03/02/2021
Rep. Sires, Albio [D-NJ-8]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Stefanik, Elise M. [R-NY-21]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Swalwell, Eric [D-CA-15]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Trone, David J. [D-MD-6]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Vargas, Juan [D-CA-51]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Waltz, Michael [R-FL-6]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Wasserman Schultz, Debbie [D-FL-23]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Wild, Susan [D-PA-7]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Wilson, Frederica S. [D-FL-24]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Gomez, Jimmy [D-CA-34]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Brown, Anthony G. [D-MD-4]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Johnson, Henry C. "Hank," Jr. [D-GA-4]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Beatty, Joyce [D-OH-3]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Beyer, Donald S., Jr. [D-VA-8]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Cohen, Steve [D-TN-9]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Barragan, Nanette Diaz [D-CA-44]*				03/02/2021
Rep. Lawson, Al, Jr. [D-FL-5]				03/09/2021
Rep. Dean, Madeleine [D-PA-4]				03/09/2021
Rep. Lowenthal, Alan S. [D-CA-47]				03/09/2021
Rep. McEachin, A. Donald [D-VA-4]				03/09/2021
Rep. Pascrell, Bill, Jr. [D-NJ-9]				03/09/2021
Rep. Sherrill, Mikie [D-NJ-11]				04/01/2021
Rep. Hoyer, Steny H. [D-MD-5]				04/14/2021
Rep. Fitzpatrick, Brian K. [R-PA-1]				04/14/2021
Rep. Stevens, Haley M. [D-MI-11]				04/22/2021
Rep. Huffman, Jared [D-CA-2]				04/22/2021
Rep. Cárdenas, Tony [D-CA-29]				05/04/2021
Rep. Payne, Donald M., Jr. [D-NJ-10]				05/07/2021
Rep. Wilson, Joe [R-SC-2]				05/13/2021
Rep. Cleaver, Emanuel [D-MO-5]				05/13/2021
Rep. Mullin, Markwayne [R-OK-2]				05/18/2021
Rep. Doyle, Michael F. [D-PA-18]				06/11/2021
Rep. Langevin, James R. [D-RI-2]				06/14/2021
Rep. Leger Fernandez, Teresa [D-NM-3]				06/24/2021
Rep. Porter, Katie [D-CA-45]				08/06/2021
Rep. Kelly, Robin L. [D-IL-2]				08/31/2021
Rep. Cicilline, David N. [D-RI-1]				09/10/2021

Sort

View

Party

Cosponsors by U.S. State or Territory

[Rep. Mooney, Scott \[D-WV-1\]](#)[Rep. Blunt Rochester, Lisa \[D-DE-At Large\]](#)[Rep. Fletcher, Lizzie \[D-TX-7\]](#)[Rep. Lieu, Ted \[D-CA-33\]](#)[Rep. Reed, Tom \[R-NY-23\]](#)[Rep. Gonzalez, Vicente \[D-TX-15\]](#)[Rep. Tenney, Claudia \[R-NY-22\]](#)

03/17/2021

11/17/2021

11/18/2021

11/23/2021

02/07/2022

03/03/2022

03/11/2022

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 780

To provide for the admission of the State of Puerto Rico into the Union.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 16, 2021

Mr. HEINRICH (for himself, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. SCHATZ) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

A BILL

To provide for the admission of the State of Puerto Rico into the Union.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds the following:

(1) The United States national sovereignty in Puerto Rico was established by the Treaty of Paris between the United States and the Kingdom of Spain (30 Stat. 1754), signed on December 10, 1898.

(2) Puerto Rico is governed by the United States under laws enacted by Congress in the exercise of its power to make rules and regulations governing

S.780 - Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act

117th Congress (2021-2022) | [Get alerts](#)**Sponsor:** [Sen. Heinrich, Martin \[D-NM\]](#) (Introduced 03/16/2021)**Committees:** Senate - Energy and Natural Resources**Latest Action:** Senate - 03/16/2021 Read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. ([All Actions](#))**Tracker:**

Introduced

Passed Senate

Passed House

To President

Became Law

Summary(1) Text(1) Actions(1) Titles(2) Amendments(0) **Cosponsors(5)** Committees(1) Related Bills(1)**Sponsor:** [Sen. Heinrich, Martin \[D-NM\]](#) | Cosponsor statistics: 5 current - includes 3 original

Sort

View

Party

Cosponsors by U.S. State or Territory

* = Original cosponsor

Cosponsor

Date Cosponsored

[Sen. Padilla, Alex \[D-CA\]*](#)

03/16/2021

[Sen. Wyden, Ron \[D-OR\]*](#)

03/16/2021

[Sen. Schatz, Brian \[D-HI\]*](#)

03/16/2021

[Sen. Reed, Jack \[D-RI\]](#)

09/27/2021

[Sen. Whitehouse, Sheldon \[D-RI\]](#)

Fact Sheet:

Statehood for Puerto Rico Why it Makes Sense for the U.S.

February 2021

Statehood for Puerto Rico would make the United States more democratic

- **Improving Representativity of U.S. Senate:** The United States Senate is not representative of the country, statehood for Puerto Rico would help improve the balance.
 - The Senate gives the average black American only 75 percent as much representation as the average white American, and the average Hispanic American only 55 percent as much. [\(NYT\)](#)
 - Puerto Rico is more than 95 percent Hispanic, almost guaranteeing two Hispanic Senators.
- **Enfranchising People of Color:** The United States has been historically slow to grant full enfranchisement to people of color, statehood for Puerto Rico would be a step in the right direction.
 - Puerto Rico's colonial status has been upheld primarily by the infamous Insular Cases, which are still the 'law of the land' and use racist logic to allow the federal government to discriminate against the island and treat its residents as second-class citizens. [\(Slate\)](#)
 - The Insular Cases are the main reason no territory has become a state since Alaska and Hawaii 1959, the longest stretch the United States has ever gone without adding stars to the flag. [\(Slate\)](#)
- **Respecting the Will of Voters:** Puerto Ricans have explicitly voted against the current status and in favor of statehood, ignoring those self-determination votes constitutes a lack of democracy.
 - In 2012, the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico went to the polls and rejected the current territorial status by 54%. [\(Puerto Rico State Elections Commission, 2012\)](#)
 - In 2020, the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico went to the polls and chose statehood by 52.5%. [\(Puerto Rico State Elections Commission, 2020\)](#)

Granting statehood has been a regular part of U.S. history

- Congress admitted new states every decade from the Constitution's ratification in the 1780's through the 1910's, when Arizona and New Mexico joined the Union. [\(NYT\)](#) [\(U.S. Census\)](#)
- It has been 61 years since Congress admitted a new state (Hawaii in 1959), which is the longest stretch the United States has ever gone without adding stars to the flag. [\(Slate\)](#)

Overwhelming majority of Americans support statehood for Puerto Rico

- According to a 2019 Gallup survey, 66% of Americans favored admitting Puerto Rico as a state, which is consistent with the 59-65% of public support Gallup has recorded for Puerto Rico statehood since 1962. [\(Gallup\)](#)

Granting statehood is more achievable than many other democratic reforms

- Statehood only needs 51 votes in the Senate, and would make reforms in other issue areas more feasible and representative of the needs, goals and aspirations of all U.S. citizens.



PUERTO RICO STATEHOOD COUNCIL
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Fact Sheet

Historic Importance of Puerto Rico's 2020 Plebiscite

December 2020

Background

Puerto Rico has been a U.S. territory since 1898, and island residents have been U.S. citizens since 1917. For the first time in history, on November 3rd, 2020, as part of the Puerto Rico general election, a clear majority voted "YES" to request the Island's immediate admission into the Union as a state. See the official results [here](#).

Why now?

This vote comes on the heels of two other plebiscites held in 2012 and 2017, where a majority of voters rejected the current territory status and more voters favored statehood than any other non-territorial status option. Statehood opponents have claimed that the results were questionable because of their boycott of the vote through blank ballots in 2012 and low voter participation rate in 2017. Although in a democracy only the votes of those who participate in an election and choose a valid option can ever really count, Congress has hesitated to act on those prior results. This has made clear that for Congress to take action on resolving Puerto Rico's ultimate political status, they need to know definitively that a majority of voters support a non-territorial alternative. Since statehood is the non-territorial alternative with the most support, asking this simple statehood YES/NO question was essential to show that an unquestionable majority of Puerto Ricans support it.

How was this vote different from previous plebiscites?

Although island residents have been asked multiple times in the past to vote on the island's future political status options, the question of statehood has never been asked in such a simple, direct and immediate way:

Should Puerto Rico be immediately admitted into the Union as a state?



This straightforward format allowed everyone who opposed statehood, for any reason (i.e. they favor keeping the territory, want independence, etc.), to vote "NO," and it allowed everyone who supported statehood (full voting rights and equality as U.S. citizens), to vote "YES". The question asked if voters wanted statehood immediately to show Congress the urgency of taking action on the results.

Does this vote matter even though it was "non-binding"? Was there any precedent?

Yes. Alaska and Hawaii also confronted delays in getting Congress to respond to their calls for self-government and self-determination when they were territories seeking statehood. To address that, both of territories voted in locally sponsored "non-binding" plebiscites expressing support for statehood. Those locally sponsored votes generated necessary pressure for Congress to pass their statehood admission bills, which required them to vote one final time before becoming a state. In both cases support for statehood grew significantly between the territory's first locally sponsored "non-binding" statehood vote (58% in 1946 for

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Alaska & 67% in 1940 for Hawaii) and their federally "binding" final vote after Congress enacted admission legislation (83% in 1958 for Alaska and 94% in 1959 for Hawaii).

Does the plebiscite have support in Washington?

Yes. To ensure that Congress listens to this vote and acts on the will of the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico, a bi-partisan group of House members led by Rep. Darren Soto (D-FL) and Rep. Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colón (R-PR) introduced H.Res.1113, a resolution calling for Congress to take action on the results of the plebiscite. The resolution had 23 cosponsors.

Many members have expressed support for the plebiscite and for Puerto Rico statehood including Sen. Marco Rubio, Rep. Rob Bishop, Rep. Donna Shalala, Rep. José Serrano and others. Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-NM), Chairman of House Natural Resources Committee (with jurisdiction over territories), stated he'd be open to addressing the issue of statehood in committee. Similarly, Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) suggested that a discussion about statehood could also take place in the Senate. Both Rep. Stephanie Murphy (D-FL) and Rep. Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colón delivered statements on the House floor recognizing that the majority of voters chose to become a state and calling on Congress to take action.

Did low voter participation rates or boycotts undermine the validity of the results, like in 2017 or 2012?

No. This plebiscite was held concurrent with the general election, so the voter participation rate was 52%. This was vastly higher than in the 2017 plebiscite which obtained 23% participation, a rate that was normal for an election event scheduled outside a general election. No registered political party in Puerto Rico called for a boycott of this plebiscite. In fact, all political parties actively campaigned for either the "YES" (New Progressive Party) or the "NO" (Popular Democratic Party and Puerto Rico Independence Party) options, and a new party, Citizens Victory Movement, had some of its candidates campaigning for "YES" and others for "NO".

Is it true that because US DOJ did not fund the plebiscite, it was not valid?

No. Congress has made clear in federal statute that Puerto Rico's right to determine its future political status can be exercised with or without the use of a federal appropriation that requires U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) approval. Exercising this right, Puerto Rico's elected government, which was elected to seek statehood, enacted a law on May 16, 2020 providing for the "Yes" or "No" vote on statehood. Additionally, history shows us that when both Alaska and Hawaii voted in locally sponsored plebiscites that were not federally approved, and expressed support for statehood, those results helped pressure Congress to eventually pass their statehood admission bills.

Was the plebiscite ever challenged in court? And if so, what was the result?

Yes. In a decision by the Puerto Rico Supreme Court in the case of Vega Ramos v. PR State Elections Commission, the Court found that the statehood "YES" or "NO" plebiscite was a Constitutionally valid and non-discriminatory exercise of the right of self-determination of the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico. In the Court's words, "it permits all Puerto Ricans, on equal footing, to participate and express themselves in favor or against the ratification and implementation of the status option that was favored in the plebiscites celebrated in 2012 and 2017."

THE EPOCH TIMES



Bernardo Rivera celebrates holding a Puerto Rican Flag as he walks around a burned military vehicle at the former U.S. Naval Station Camp Garcia in Vieques, Puerto Rico, on May 1, 2003. The U.S. Navy abandoned Camp Garcia just before midnight on April 30 with a ceremony marking the land transfer back to Puerto Rico. Hundreds of protesters then rushed onto the former Navy area, destroying vehicles, burning flags and attacking buildings. Vieques served as a practice bombing range for U.S. Navy for almost 60 years. (Gerald Lopez-Cepero/Getty Images)

VIEWPOINTS

What Does Puerto Rico Have to Do With Strategic Situation With China? A Lot

Puerto Rico is experiencing concerning trends

**John Mills**

January 24, 2022 Updated: January 26, 2022

A  Print*Commentary*

The parts of the United States called American territories aren't well understood anymore. While a premier component of American superiority in the 20th century, in the age of [Howard Zinn's textbooks](#) in the public school system, our territories now are ignored or simply used as cudgels in hyperbolic attacks against the rare historical experiment of a constitutional republic called the United States.

Of the five populated territories, [Puerto Rico](#) is the largest by land mass and population (roughly 3.3 million). The Department of Defense (DOD) gunnery and bombing range called Vieques Island became a cause célèbre for left-leaning personalities such as Al Sharpton in the late 1990s. With the peace dividend looming over DOD budgets in the later years of the Clinton administration and the raging theater and feigned outrage by non-Puerto Ricans, the DOD decision was made to shut down and depart—with dire strategic consequences for U.S. diplomacy and security being felt today.

The off-island activists won, slapped each other on the back, folded their roadshow, and departed, and a devastating economic toll was inflicted upon the residents—[\\$300 million a year departed Puerto Rico in 2004 dollars](#) with the loss of jobs and DOD funding. With the shutdown of Roosevelt Roads Naval Station and the related gunnery range on Vieques, the knowledge, memory, and understanding of Puerto Rico and its relationship to the rest of the United States has begun to fade, while the governance and social conditions across Puerto Rico started a downward spiral.

Puerto Ricans are [increasingly frustrated, upset, and vocal](#) about the corruption of state and local government. Hurricane Maria hit and devastated the island in 2017 and was a tipping point for the [pre-existing dysfunction](#). Two more concerning phenomena are also occurring, a spike in [fentanyl usage](#) and a [disconcerting flight of population](#) ([Hawaii also faces similar grave issues, stoked by the similar causal factor of dysfunctional state and local government](#)).

As described to me by former Secretary of State and Puerto Rico Lt. Gov. Elmer L. Román, the “closure of Roosevelt Roads and the lack of a comprehensive U.S. strategy towards Puerto Rico has left the United States exposed in its furthestmost eastern flank, weakened its sea control over the Caribbean, and potentially offsetting U.S. dominance in the Atlantic.”

In other words, putting an end to Mahan’s Sea power theory and the Monroe Doctrine.

As a strategic analyst and planner, the proper term to describe what’s going on in Puerto Rico is “vacuum” as in, “A vacuum is developing.” In other words, the situation in Puerto Rico is creating a strategic “vacuum” or offset with destabilizing issues including the loss of population, a surge in criminal activity, and the increase of foreign powers in the region. Nothing good ever comes from a vacuum, except the opportunity for someone else to come in and take advantage of the situation.

Puerto Rico is part of America; we can’t let this happen.

Creating a New Puerto Rico to Deter Chinese Adventurism

We must address the Puerto Rican situation with alacrity. The Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) Silk Road effort is already roaming the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. To begin to change the dynamics in Puerto Rico, and as members of the American nation-state, the American citizens of Puerto Rico deserve better state and local governments. One key tenet is driving out the culture of corruption and replacing this dysfunction with the exact opposite.

There are other tangible measures that can be taken. In times of Great Power Competition, as Román expressed, it’s time for the United States to be blunt and reclaim what belongs to it from Chinese, Russian, or other foreign power influence. First is consideration of moving Southern Command from Miami to a reopened Roosevelt Roads Naval Station and airfield. Next is the movement of the U.S. Navy’s 4th Fleet from Mayport, Florida, to the same facility.

Ships such as one of the U.S. Navy's new Expeditionary Sea Base ships could be homeported at Roosevelt Roads and would be an ideal traveling resource to engage with like-minded nations throughout the region in conducting training, counter-narcotics support, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief support.

Part of the functions of the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies and related Department of State training efforts could also be co-located at the same site. These would be clear and demonstrative messages of renewed U.S. focus and interest in the region and better place these activities closer to strategic partner nations. Because of good weather and an abundance of a trained labor force, a new Jones Act shipyard could be established to provide additional capacity and specialization for revitalized American shipbuilding.

Unique commercial ventures such as the Puerto Rico Spaceport Initiative should receive special incentives to encourage greater use of the facility as the low Earth orbit satellite business expands. One rapidly developing phenomenon of grave concern is the Chinese focus on long-range hypersonic missiles, possibly leveraging an over-the-pole flight profile to approach the United States from the south. Sensor and defensive capabilities should be planned and implemented to integrate Puerto Rico into the defense of the entire United States from the new missile threat posed by the CCP.

Bring Situation, Opportunities to Center of US Discourse

Yes, the U.S. discourse is crowded, noisy, and confusing already, but the reality is that we have a part that's struggling, and it's unwise to do nothing. Giving statehood status (if the citizens of Puerto Rico want this), or at least immediately incorporating the territory, gist for another article, would bring Puerto Rico to the forefront of the core American news cycle, enabling positive dialogue and action.

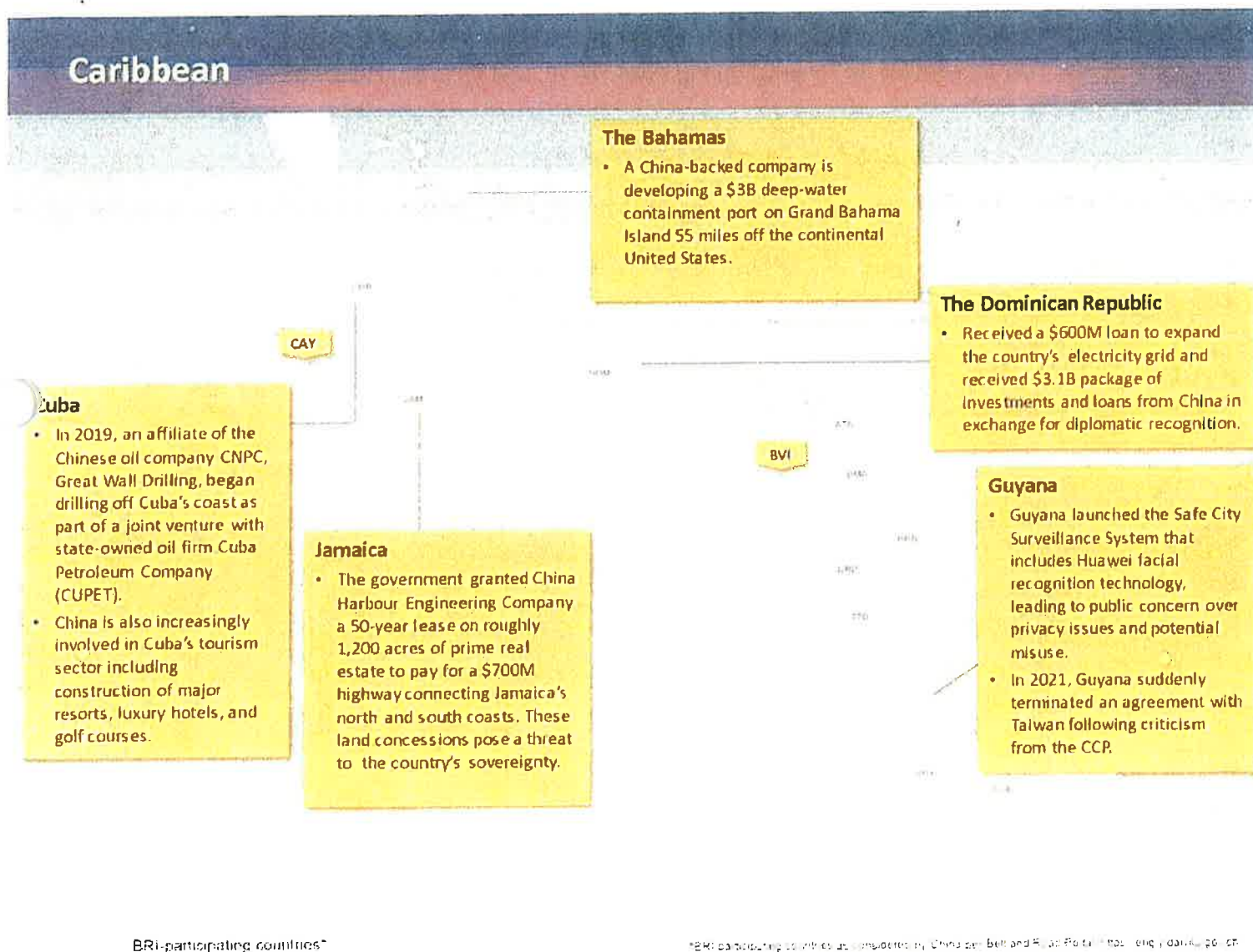
Years of American ambivalence in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America have created opportunities for China. Losing Puerto Rico would be losing the Caribbean. And losing the Caribbean opens the door to losing the Atlantic. We should ensure that Puerto Rico is part of the solution and the beginnings of a firm stand against Chinese or Russian adventurism in the immediate front yard of America.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.



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<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJVikYTQUC-F3JLTGWG9BMG>

Territory Status Weakens Puerto Rico and the United States



In the last decade America has seen a sharp increase in aggressive gestures from other global powers who seek to undermine our position and role as the leading nation of the free world. With an increasingly aggressive China (<https://gop-foreignaffairs.house.gov/china-snapshot-project-the-caribbean/>), an unstable and unpredictable Russia, and a resurgence of authoritarian governments across the globe, the U.S. must reconsider how we use and project power at home and abroad. Yet, Puerto Rico, a historically critical asset to America's defense, remains underdeveloped and underutilized because of its unequal and undemocratic status as a U.S. territory. Now is the time to end

Puerto Rico's weak territory status and extend an offer of statehood as a means to strengthen the island as well as America's global strategic position. The best way to do that is to support and pass H.R. 1522, the Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act, which is currently being considered in the House Natural Resources Committee.

Importance of Puerto Rico to America's Defense

The U.S. acquired Puerto Rico in 1898 based mostly on the island's geostrategic location in the center of the Caribbean, which was critical to the defense of America's military and economic interests in the Atlantic when confronting threats from Europe, in the Panama Canal and in Latin America when confronting threats from communism. For over 70 years Puerto Rico served as one of America's principal military outposts in the Western Hemisphere, and an important base for scientific research (<https://www.naic.edu/ao/legacy-discoveries>) and manufacturing (<https://www.ddec.pr.gov/en/industries/>). Important bases and facilities were located there included Ramey Air Force Base, Roosevelt Roads Naval Base, Vieques Naval Training Facility, and the still operational Fort Buchanan (<https://home.army.mil/buchanan/index.php>), which served as the home of U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) for several years. This was critical for America during WWI, WWII, and up to the Cold War.



Puerto Rico has a proud tradition of military service

18,000



in World War I



65,000

in World War II



48,000

in the Vietnam War



61,000

in the Korean War



10,000

in the Gulf War



More than **25,000**
PUERTO RICANS
are currently in active service,



38,000

deployments in Operation Enduring
Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom



5,000
are in the Reserves,

and more than
8,400
are in the National Guard.



Source: U.S. Dept. of Defense



Territorial Weakness and Federal Negligence Opened Space for Rival Influences

As the post-Cold War global order has shaken out over the last 30 years the unequal territory status, which limits Puerto Rico's economic growth potential, drained the island of its vitality, much of its talent pool, and its military capabilities. And while Congress has so far failed to act on multiple local votes against the territory status and for state-

hood for Puerto Rico (<https://www.pr51st.com/puerto-ricos-six-status-votes/>), America's great power rivals have recognized a vacuum of power in the Caribbean and Latin America and wasted no time to increase their state-led investments and military influence in the region.

Indeed SOUTHCOM is very concerned that China continues to increase its activities across all domains in the region (<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10982>): cyber, space, extractive and energy industries, transportation hubs, roads, infrastructure, telecommunications, legal and illegal fishing, agriculture, and military training. They warn that China is "seeking to establish global logistics and basing infrastructure in our hemisphere in order to project and sustain military power at greater distances." Just a few months ago the Commander of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), warned that Beijing is looking to establish a large navy port capable of hosting submarines or aircraft carriers on the African continent's western coast (<https://thenewamerican.com/enter-the-dragon-china-is-seeking-to-dominate-the-atlantic-with-naval-bases-in-africa/>) with the goal of projecting power into the Atlantic.

For their part Russia has made no secret of its support for Venezuelan dictator Nicolas Maduro (<https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/482276-putins-russia-is-propping-up-the-maduro-dictatorship-in>), whose failed narco-state has led to a massive refugee crisis which threatens to destabilize the region (<https://huntsman.upenn.edu/news/ripple-effect-how-the-venezuelan-crisis-is-impacting-colombias-economy-and-foreign-relations/>). Just a couple of years ago Russia even deployed two nuclear capable bombers to Venezuela (<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/russia-sends-2-nuclear-capable-bombers-venezuela-n946246#:~:text=MOSCOW%20%E2%80%94%20Two%20Russian%20nuclear-capable%20strategic%20bombers%20arrived,outside%20Caracas%20on%20Monday%20following%20a%206%2C200-mile%20flight>.) as a provocative warning sign directed at the U.S.

America Cannot Afford to Keep Puerto Rico in Outdated Territory Status

As global threats to America continue to evolve closer to home, we cannot afford to keep Puerto Rico under an outdated and failed territory status. And while some members of Congress float the idea of Puerto Rican independence (<https://www.rt.com/op-ed/464337-puerto-rico-aoc-independence/>), the fact that the Chinese and Russian proxy states of Cuba and Venezuela are the most ardent supporters of independence for Puerto Rico (<https://themilitant.com/2021/07/03/calls-for-puerto-rico-independence-fill-un-hearing/>) should make it clear that is not in the best interest of either Puerto Rico or the U.S. as a whole. In fact, for decades the Cuban regime has actively trained and propped up the Puerto Rico independence movement (<https://www.plenglish.com/news/2021/09/24/puerto-rican-pro-independence-champions-celebrate-celacs-support/>) as a way to undermine America's standing on the world stage.

The inherent inequality of Puerto Rico's current territory status limits economic development, creates a lower quality of life and has pushed hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico to relocate stateside weakening the territory further. Meanwhile lack of consistent federal attention and investment has led to some of Puerto Rico's scientific assets to literally crumble (<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3154486/china-has-worlds-biggest-radio-telescope-focusing-more>) while Chinese double down their investments seeking technological dominance in the coming decades. This has to stop.

Statehood will Strengthen Puerto Rico and America's Defense

Statehood for Puerto Rico would strengthen the island, and America's strategic presence in the Caribbean, Latin America and the Atlantic. The value proposition is clear.

- **STEM Talent:** Puerto Rico's colleges and universities graduate more than 20,000 degrees in science, engineering and technology each year, with island talent feeding federal agencies from DOD, NASA

- (https://nasa.fandom.com/wiki/List_of_Puerto_Ricans_in_the_United_States_Space_Program), and NSA to leading defense contractors like Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Northrup Grumman.
- **Aerospace Capacity:** Puerto Rico has quietly been growing its aerospace sector (<https://theamericanonews.com/2021/07/27/ceiba-aerospace-industry-spaceport-puerto-rico/>) in significant ways that are of strategic value to the U.S. as the commercial space economy is projected to grow by billions per year in the coming decades.
 - **Regional Visibility:** Puerto Rico is also home to parts of the nationwide “Over the Horizon” (<https://fas.org/nuke/guide/usa/airdef/an-tps-71.htm>) radar system, which helps the U.S. maintain control over vast aerial and marine areas of the Western Hemisphere. It also aids U.S. efforts to stop incoming drugs (<http://www.beanerbanner.org/bb/ussouthcom.htm>) trafficked from South America.
 - **Made in Puerto Rico is Made in USA:** As a U.S. jurisdiction, Puerto Rico complies with federal ITAR regulations which require that defense and military-related technologies may only be manufactured and accessed by U.S. citizens, eliminating outsourcing to foreign countries with low operating costs.
 - **Maintenance, Repair & Overhaul:** Puerto Rico boasts multiple suitable runway and facilities for airplane maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), training and other services.
 - **Medical Supply Chain:** Puerto Rico has 49 FDA-approved pharmaceutical plants in operation. Government contracts and other federal support of manufacturing could allow Puerto Rico, which is in a strong position (<http://www.pridco.com/industries/Pages/Pharmaceutical.aspx>) to provide competitive products, to be included as an important part of strengthening the U.S. medical supply chain vis a vis China and other leading global exporters to the U.S.
 - **Puerto Rico can Become a Bridge to Latin America and the Caribbean:** Unleashing Puerto Rico’s full economic potential under statehood can enable the island to serve as a more powerful bridge to increase commerce and trade with other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, a critical counterbalance to other great power influences in the region.

Puerto Ricans Have Already Earned the Right to Full Equality & Democracy

U.S. citizens from Puerto Rico have proudly served in all U.S. wars since World War I (<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/974518/puerto-ricans-represented-throughout-us-military-history/>), and as part of all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. Historically, Puerto Rico has ranked alongside the top states in terms of per capita military service. Over 1,900 U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico have been casualties of war paying the ultimate price in defense of America’s freedom, while lacking full voting rights and equality. Estimated contributions by conflict include:

- 18,000 during World War I
- 65,000 during World War II
- 61,000 during the Korean War
- 48,000 during the Vietnam War
- 10,000 during the Gulf War
- 25,000 during Operations Enduring Freedom & Iraqi Freedom

Tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans serve on active-duty and reserves across all the branches of the U.S. Armed Forces today. Approximately 8,400 currently serve in the Puerto Rico Army and Air National Guard, and since 9/11 they have carried out over 16,500 deployments, more than 34 states in the Union.

According to the latest data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs well over 90,000 American veterans call Puerto Rico home. Statehood would provide veterans in Puerto Rico with a permanent and dignified political status, equal representation in the U.S. Congress, the right to vote for President, and equal treatment under federal laws,



COMMANDER, U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND
ON BEHALF OF MULTIPLE COMBATANT COMMANDERS
DORAL, FLORIDA 33172

16 September 2021

General Glen D. VanHerck
Commander, USNORTHCOM
250 Vandenberg Street, Suite 8016
Peterson Space Force Base CO 80914-3801

Admiral Craig S. Faller
Commander, USSOUTHCOM
9301 NW 33rd Street
Doral, FL 33172

Department of the Air Force
Headquarters, US Air Force
Washington DC 20330-7050

Dear General Charles Q. Brown, Jr.

We request your support to continue flight line/ramp operations at the 156th Wing, Muñiz Air National Guard Base (MANGB), PR. MANGB is the southernmost point on US soil with Department of Defense support assets and is less than three hours by air to more than 20 nations. Your support of and advocacy for continued flight ramp operations at MANGB will be key to US strategic and tactical goals in this hemisphere.

The Puerto Rico Air National Guard (PRANG) is undergoing a transition to a new mission set consisting of Contingency Response, Combat Communications, Air Advisors, and Host Nation Rider. Funding for sustainment of the ramp, and the associated ground equipment, was tied to the assignment of airplanes and an active flying mission. With the removal of aircraft associated with the mission conversion, the funding authorization was lost. This loss jeopardizes the base's capability to support transient aircraft from USNORTHCOM, USSOUTHCOM, and other federal entities. More specifically, it will negatively impact Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response, Noncombatant Evacuation, and Enhanced Counter Narcotics operations in the Caribbean and Central/South America, as MANGB provides an ideal location for staging, refueling, cargo, and passenger movement. In addition, a US location means that no special permissions or Status of Forces Agreement is required for use.

PRANG currently supports transient aircraft from USNORTHCOM, Joint Interagency Task Force South, USSTRATCOM, USSOUTHCOM, and the Department of Homeland Security, among other agencies on a regular basis. To continue this support, the PRANG must maintain critical aircraft support vehicles, as well as trained personnel and equipment to sustain aircraft ground operations. In addition to being a strategic and geographical asset, PRANG's ramp provides an unsurpassed cost to benefit ratio. For a small yearly investment in flight ramp sustainment, training and equipment dollars, the US gains a considerable enabler capability.

We assess the requirement for the National Guard Bureau to continue the active status of the PRANG flight line/ramp is critical. We respectfully request your approval to maintain the operational military transient support capability.

Sincerely,


GLEN D. VANHERCK
General, USAF
Commander, USNORTHCOM


CRAIG S. FALLER
Admiral, USN
Commander, USSOUTHCOM



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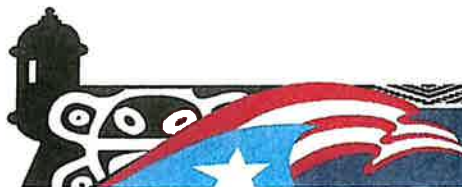
General VanHerck and General Richardson,

I received your letter dated September 16, 2021, supporting the continuation of flight line and ramp support operations at the 156th Wing, Puerto Rico Air National Guard (ANG). I agree that the geographic location of Puerto Rico provides strategic value, proven through numerous disaster response, counterdrug, and regional military operations.

The National Guard Bureau (NGB) is working with your deputy commanders on formalizing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between your commands, the Puerto Rico ANG, and NGB. This MOU will identify the required capabilities that should be retained at the 156th Wing. I understand this could include both the physical ramp infrastructure, and some level of aircraft support as determined through coordination with the respective Geographic Combatant Commands. We must balance this requirement with on-going efforts maximizing efficiencies given the resource demands on all components of the Air Force and monumental modernization challenges.

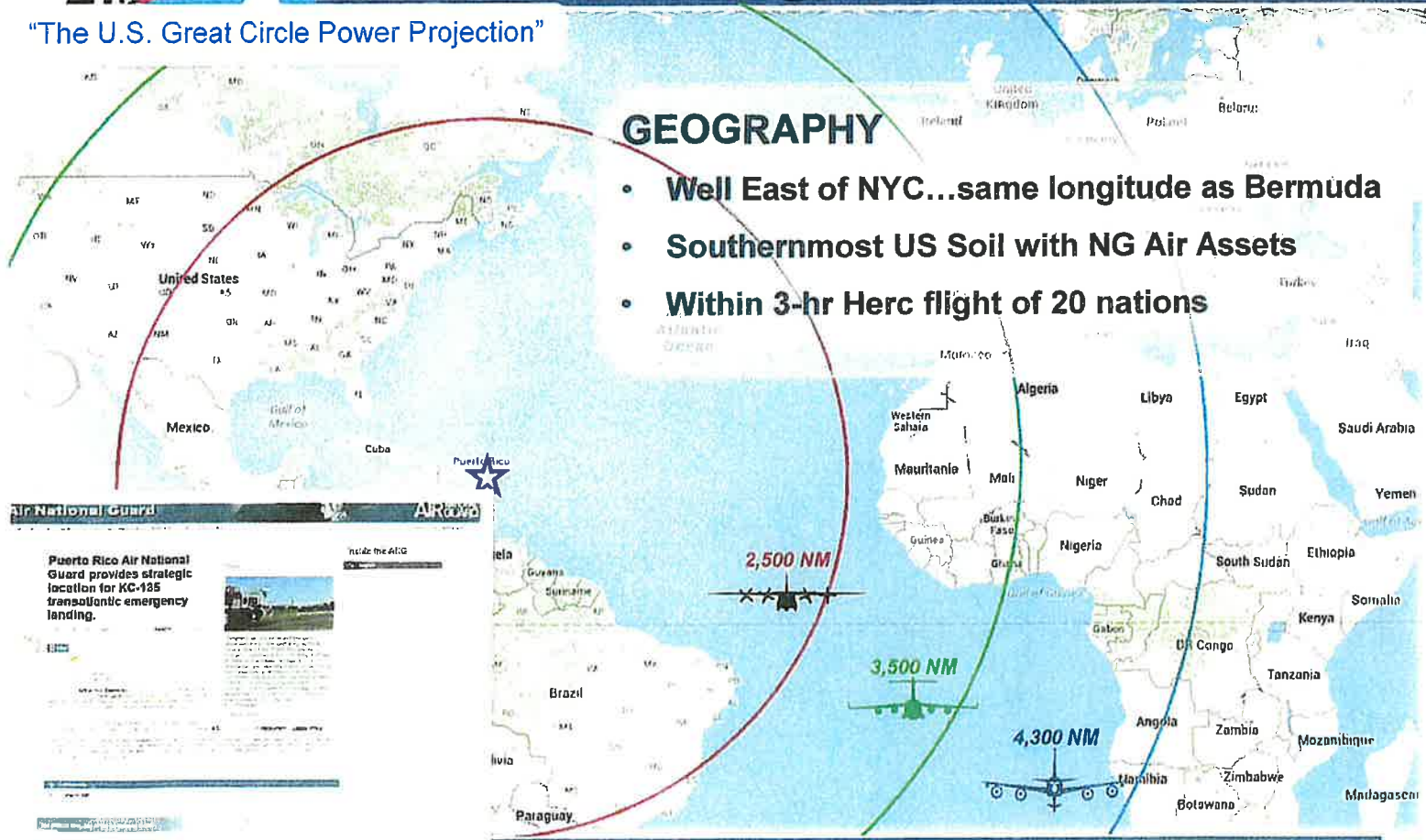
I ask that you direct your teams to work with Col Matt Groves, Deputy Director NGB/A8, matthew.groves@us.af.mil to complete coordination of the MOU and preserve the strategic flexibility that Puerto Rico provides. As always, my sincere thanks to you and all of our service members at USNORTHCOM and USSOUTHCOM for your vigilance, professionalism, and unwavering commitment to national security.

CHARLES Q. BROWN, JR.
General, USAF
Chief of Staff



Our Strategic Framework

"The U.S. Great Circle Power Projection"



"Familia, Responsabilidad, Respeto"

