

## How the United States will STEAL Puerto Rico...a second time

Escrito por Nelson A. Denis

Lunes, 15 de Febrero de 2016 14:24

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The United States is preparing to rule over Puerto Rico through a “Financial Control Board.” U.S. Congressman Jeffrey D. Duncan – Chairman of the House Committee on the Western Hemisphere – is demanding this Financial Control Board right now, immediately, “for the good of the Puerto Rican people.”

Implicit in Duncan’s demand is the unspoken attitude that Puerto Ricans are unfit to manage their own economy, or their own government.

The demand also indicates a fundamental misunderstanding of the relationship between Puerto Rico and the U.S.

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Let's try to correct that.

The U.S. "liberated" Puerto Rico from Spain in 1898. Later that year, Hurricane San Ciriaco demolished thousands of the island's farms and almost the entire year's coffee crop. Of fifty million pounds, only five million were rescued.

American hurricane relief was strange. The U.S. government sent no money. Instead, the following year it outlawed all Puerto Rican currency and announced the island's peso, whose international value was equal to the U.S. dollar, to be worth only sixty American cents. Every Puerto Rican lost 40% of their money overnight.

In 1901, the U.S. passed the Hollander Act, which imposed new taxes on every farmer in Puerto Rico.

With higher taxes, crippled farms, and 40% less cash, the farmers had to seek loans from U.S. banks. But with no usury law restrictions, interest rates were so high that within ten years, the farmers defaulted on their loans and the banks foreclosed on their farms.

The banks aggregated all these farms, and turned a diversified island harvest (coffee, tobacco, sugar, and fruit) into a one-crop, cash-cow economy.

By 1930, all of the island's sugar farms belonged to 41 syndicates. 80% of these were U.S.-owned and the largest five syndicates – Central Guánica, South Puerto Rico, Fajardo Sugar, Aguirre, and East Puerto Rico Sugar – were entirely U.S.-owned and covered over half the island's arable land.

With no money, crops, or land, Puerto Ricans sought work in the cities. When the island legislature enacted a minimum-wage law like the one in America, the U.S. Supreme Court deemed it unconstitutional. This decision was reached despite AFL-CIO President Samuel Gompers' testimony that "the salaries paid to Puerto Ricans are now less than 50% what they received from the Spanish."

To make matters worse, U.S. finished products – from rubber bands to radios – were priced 15% to 20% higher on the island than the mainland, and were often defective. Again, Puerto Rico was powerless to enact any price-fixing legislation.

Today, U.S. federal agencies control Puerto Rico's cabotage rights, trade relations, maritime laws, immigration, customs, postal system, TV, radio, transportation, Social Security, military, banks, commerce, currency and defense. That's without the people of Puerto Rico having a vote in U.S. elections.

The U.S. did give Puerto Rico one gift. Over the objection of the Puerto Rican legislature, Puerto Ricans were declared U.S. citizens in 1917, just in time for military conscription into World War I.

For decades, the extent of military control over the island was particularly striking. You could not

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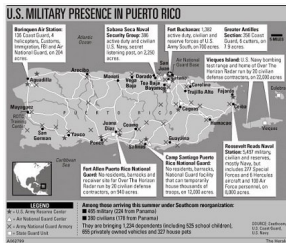
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drive five miles in any direction without running into an Army base, Air Force runway, Navy dock, nuclear site or tracking station. The Pentagon controlled 13% of Puerto Rico's land and operated five atomic missile bases.

After 62 years of relentless bombing, the island of Vieques resembled a pock-marked asteroid more than an island. From 1984 through 1998, over 1,300 warships and 4,200 aircraft used the island for target practice, and pounded it with 80 million pounds of ordnance. In 1998 alone, 23,000 bombs were dropped on Vieques.

At its height, this was the US military presence in Puerto Rico:



In 2014, the U.S. Congress finally recognized the 65th Infantry Regiment – also known as the Borinqueneers – for service in every U.S. conflict since World War I. In Korea, Vietnam and Iraq, this service meant disproportionately high casualties and deaths, since the Borinqueneers were frequently – and sometimes maliciously – assigned to the front lines. The Borinqueneers received the Congressional Gold Medal for defending America, and for spilling their own blood.

Now in 2015, the U.S. wants more blood. They declare Puerto Rico's debt to be a "Junk Bond," they want Puerto Rico to pay \$73 billion, and they want the money NOW.

They are preparing a “Financial Control Board” that will treat every Puerto Rican like a five-year old child, incapable of managing their own affairs. But Puerto Ricans are not an infantile race. They have suffered abuses from the US, and made sacrifices for the US, that the US is not even aware of.

Now after 117 years, a new generation of US citizens, and a new generation of US elected officials, is completely unaware of the 117-year history between the US and Puerto Rico.

Then based on a century of ignorance, they want to establish a Financial Control Board, to “fix” the problems of Puerto Rico.

This Financial Control Board will not solve any problems. It will only deepen the problem. The

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colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the US is rotten to the core, and this relationship must be terminated...as quickly as possible.



Nearly 100 years ago, Don Pedro Albizu Campos expressed his amazement at how “owning a man makes you a scoundrel, yet owning a nation makes you a colonial benefactor.” As always, Don Pedro was right.

The United States is preparing to steal Puerto Rico a second time. They will do it through this “Financial Control Board,” which will sell off and “privatize” pieces of Puerto Rico’s coastline, infrastructure, public utilities, and natural resources.

The island of Puerto Rico will become one huge LBO (leveraged buy out) target: a haven for predatory capitalists and useless celebrities. The Puerto Rican people, of course, will all be evicted to Orlando, Florida.

### PLEASE NOTE:

I wrote an earlier version of this essay in Latino Rebels. Since that time, just four months ago, the economic situation in Puerto Rico has become even worse. A true LEADERSHIP must emerge in Puerto Rico...and quickly.