

## EXPANDED ANSWER 29 & 49:

It is not legally required that PR grant us “permission” since ultimately territories aren’t sovereign. According to the “Territorial Clause” (Article IV, Section 3) of the U.S. Constitution:

*“The Congress shall have Power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States; and nothing in this Constitution shall be so construed as to Prejudice any Claims of the United States, or of any particular State.”*

Nonetheless, it would be prudent to assume that Congress would seek consensus with PR on the issue.

## HOW PUERTO RICO BENEFITS FROM AN INDEPENDENT VIEQUES AND STIMULATES THE EASTERN ECONOMY

While the “loss” of Vieques (including Roosevelt Roads) might seem like a mortal blow to PR and the neighboring communities of Ceiba, Naguabo, Fajardo, and Culebra, it can better be thought of as a clever tactical move to improve the economy (and the economic future) of Puerto Rico in a manner impossible without the secession of Vieques.

First, secession would save PR money. That shouldn’t be too hard to envision considering that Vieques is the poorest of the 78 municipalities with very few on the island actually paying taxes. At the same time, the cost to the central government to support Vieques is millions per year in services and subsidies. The ATM ferry system alone represents \$20 million or more in annual losses. Despite the inferior quality of our schools, healthcare, public works, etc. they still cost an estimated \$40,000,000 per year.

Second, Independent Vieques would assume all of the debt PR acquired from their purchase of the Navy base from the US government.

Third, Vieques would develop Roosevelt Roads in a manner benefiting Puerto Rico and the neighboring communities of Ceiba, Naguabo, Fajardo, and Culebra that is not possible by PR under the current crisis and ongoing fallout during the next decade or more. The overwhelming debt and the absolute loss of government credibility have resulted in an environment of instability, political chaos, and an absence of trust by developers critical to secure investment.

Fourth, the existing master plan for the base is predicated on an expired and faulty model of a high end golf community mixed with industrial development, a major airport, and a commercial port. There are several golf communities in the region, but given that golf courses are not environmentally sound, suffer from declining popularity, and are closing due to overdevelopment, this is no longer a viable concept. With a huge inventory of unsold and empty residential units, this market is dead for the next decade or two. Furthermore, high end residential is NOT normally compatible with a significant airport and a commercial port.

Fifth, commercial/industrial development of the base will offer higher quality and higher skilled job opportunities for the surrounding communities than residential or tourist related employment. The majority of the workers at Roosevelt Roads will be Puerto Rican residents, not Vieques citizens. They will live in PR and pay their taxes to PR.

**Sixth, PR can finally extricate itself from the burden of the Jones Act for some shipping. Through the indirect access to the Port of Vieques, PR could export/import via international shippers, thus obviating the restrictions of the Jones Act. Savings could range from \$100,000,000 to a billion dollars per year (depending upon whose figures one uses) without combating the special interests that have been milking PR forever.**

Puerto Rico and the neighboring communities of Ceiba, Naguabo, Fajardo, and Culebra will not lose the draw of Vieques, but will lose the expense and liability. This will transpire while simultaneously gaining the employment and tax benefits of economic development without needing to raise capital or make infrastructure investments – which in the foreseeable future will be impossible. This classic win-win.