

Over the last 13 years, I have written numerous articles and letters to the editor describing how the ATM systematically chokes commerce in Vieques through inadequate cargo service and self-serving operational policies that favor Fajardo employees and businesses over their customers. I have emphasized that Culebra, with a population one fourth the size of ours, has almost the exact same cargo service as we are allocated. Look at the schedules to see the intentional, persistent inequities. Nothing changes.

The PR Tourism Company taxes us and uses our beaches to attract tourists to Puerto Rico, but it's a bait and switch to get people to come to San Juan venues because it is made so difficult to visit our island. Our local airlines are horribly overpriced and offer inadequate scheduling. The ferry terminal in Fajardo is a cross between a refugee camp and a third world ghetto – and that was before the hurricanes!

Business development is a pipe dream given that business restoration is impossible due to cargo ferry constraints. Is it reasonable that:

- One can't make a reservation for a car or truck?
- One can't get a round-trip cargo ticket?
- One can't call to secure passage and must visit the terminal of departure in person?
- Standby lines begin forming at 10:00 PM for a 6:00 AM one-way trip?

For over 15 years we have been promised better service and the implementation of the short route. Every administration agrees it will cost less to run more boats utilizing Roosevelt Roads and Mosquito Pier. Everyone agrees that bringing fuel and other heavy trucks across the weakened bridge next to the Vieques ferry dock is illegal and dangerous. We all know the cost to fix the Fajardo terminal is far greater than the cost to provide the required improvements for the short route. Nothing changes.

Our plight is obviously intended. This is not rocket science; it's politics. We are treated as inmates and are denied power to combat the paternal, self-serving masters of Puerto Rico. We are but a colony of a colony. We need to bow our heads, say yes master, and plod back into our holes. Or maybe it's time to say "Basta Ya!" and go it on our own. Maybe we make the changes.