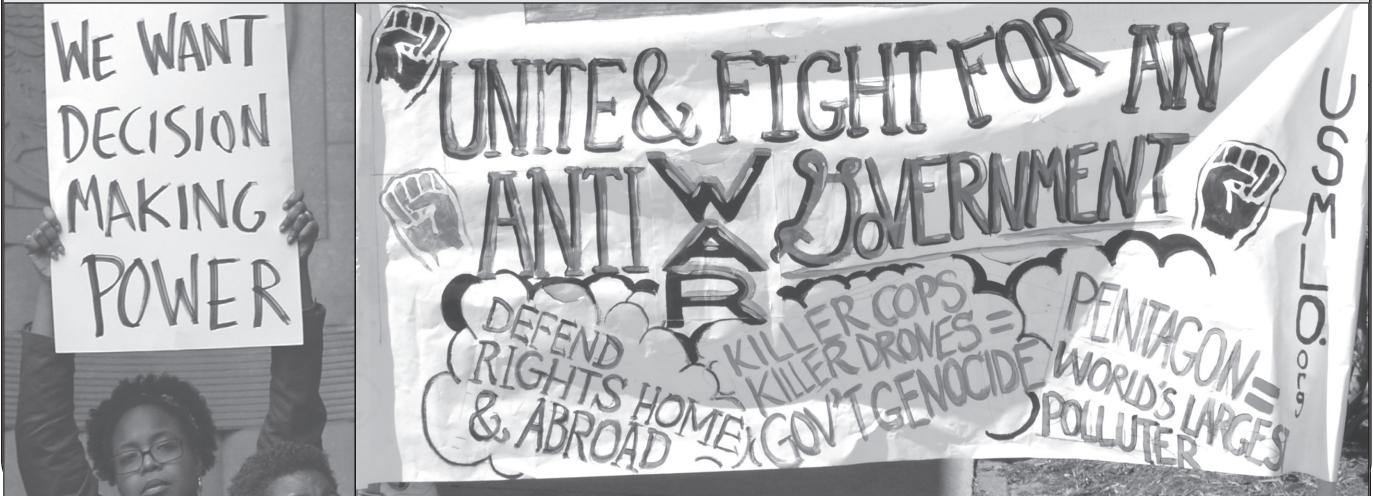




## **For an Anti-War Government, Peace Economy and a Democracy Where We Decide!**



**USMLO Salutes All the Anti-war Activists • SEE PAGES 3-11**



### ONE YEAR AFTER HURRICANE MARIA

## **Cancel Puerto Rico's Debt Reparations Now for 120 Years of U.S. Colonialism**

The one year anniversary of Hurricane María was met with demonstrations and memorials all across Puerto Rico as well as in the U.S. People came together to salute their own efforts in recovery and rebuilding and to condemn the continued

government failure to meet the rights of the people, by the U.S. first and foremost. The U.S. failed to provide the needed assistance and emergency recovery operations at the time of the hurricane and has

**Reparations for Puerto Rico • 12**

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- **WOMEN'S MARCH ON THE PENTAGON:** Schedule, Demands, Peace Treaty for Korea, War Budget: **3-11**
- **ONE YEAR AFTER MARIA, GOVERNMENT FAILURE CONTINUES:** Cancel the Debt, Preventable Deaths, Unelected Control Board: **12-20**

## **Puerto Rico's Teachers Strike to Defend Right to Education**

Puerto Rico's teachers organized a one-day strike at the start of the school year in August. They were demanding that the more than 250 public schools that have been shut down this year, many of them in

excellent condition and with full enrollment, be re-opened. They were joined by parents and students. Many people have rallied and taken action to defend the right to

**Teachers' Strike • 13**

# September-October edition of ***Voice of Revolution***

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## ***Cancel Puerto Rico's Debt and Pay Reparations for Colonialism***

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Publication of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization  
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# Fight for an Anti-War Government, Peace Economy and a Democracy Where We Decide!

A salute to all those participating in the Women's March on the Pentagon in Washington, DC October 20-21 and all the sister demonstrations in cities across the country. Organizing to put the issue of war and peace on the agenda and bring out its relationship to the many fronts of struggle for rights is a vital contribution to building and uniting the pro-social, anti-war movements of the peoples. The demands to *Close All U.S. Foreign Bases* and *Bring*

*All U.S. Troops Home Now* are main ways to contribute to peace and building relations of mutual respect and benefit. This is what the peoples here and abroad want and are fighting for in many different ways.

The U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization (USMLO) joins all those working for the success of the action and for continued efforts in the future. We are putting forward as a unifying call and aim: *Fight for an Anti-War Government, Peace Economy and a Democracy Where We Decide!*

## Political Power Key

We are all contending with conditions of retreat of revolution, where the most reactionary forces have the offensive and are imposing a brutal counter-revolution on the peoples. This is seen in the broadening of U.S. crimes of aggression and interference with no regard for rule of law, as well as the anti-social attacks at home. Defending the so-called national interest is being used to justify U.S. terrorism, whether in the form of drone warfare, sanctions, regime change, the attacks on immigrants and refugees, police killings, mass incarceration, further criminalizing protest and more.

Conditions are now such that public governing institutions, like Congress, the Courts, elections are dysfunctional. They do not sort out conflicts among the rulers, as the many fights between and within the military, presidency and intelligence agencies show. Nor do they serve to perpetuate the notion that there is the consent of the governed. All that is left is a government of police powers, where governments act with impunity and arbitrary violence against the people and their organized resistance. The rulers are no longer concerned with legitimacy, only with preserving their power.

While U.S. rulers are on the offensive, it is also the case that their system has shown itself to be unsustainable and unfit for human existence. The massive human productive powers that exist CAN solve the problems faced by humanity, like poverty, inequality, climate change and nuclear war. The human beings who collectively produced these powers are capable of controlling them and unleashing them in the interests of humanity. But it requires political power in the hands of the people. It requires the power to decide the affairs of society, including providing a new direction for the economy and politics.

Recognizing the significance of these relations and the need for political power, USMLO puts forward as a unifying call and

aim: *Fight for an Anti-War Government, Peace Economy and a Democracy Where We Decide!* All those calling for peace, closing bases, divesting from the war machine and fossil fuels; calling for equality and rights to housing, healthcare, jobs and education; defending Mother Earth and opposing the energy and war oligopolies; all those standing up for rights have an interest in taking up the aim of an anti-war government. We need a government that responds

to the demands of the people, the broad majority, to end U.S. wars and contribute to defending the rights of ALL at home and abroad. We need a peace economy that provides a new direction that stands against

***Demonstrations today are mainly for purposes of uniting people, taking a public stand to rally the public, developing political discussion on aims and strengthening the organized character of resistance.***

war and for rights. Steps in that direction can be taken today. For example, in New York, there is a proposal to close the Niagara Air Base, used for drones and mid-air refueling of jets to bomb Yemen, and instead turn it into a solar farm.

United actions that recognize pro-active aims, like an anti-war government, are needed. Demonstrations today are mainly for purposes of uniting people, taking a public stand for the public, developing political discussion on aims and strengthening the organized character of resistance. In conditions of a government of police powers, the issue is not so much how many are in the streets, but rather how demonstrations, conferences, public forums, independent media, all contribute to elaborating common aims and common thinking.

## Political Discussion from Our Vantage Point

We need political discussion on how to look at problems from our own independent vantage point and organize in such a way that change to our advantage can be brought about. It is necessary to break with the vantage point of the rich, which says our role is limited to appealing to them to do what is right and just. Our role is to organize to be the decision-makers, to decide what is needed to win political power and take steps to get there.

For example, in elections our role is not mainly to vote or not vote. It is to fight to be decision makers every step of the way, from deciding the agenda and the candidates and more generally developing an electoral process that empowers the people to govern and decide. This includes demanding now that all candidates take a stand on issues of war and peace and issues of democracy.

An anti-war government requires a new direction for politics and the economy. It requires a modern democracy, where the rights of all are at the center and the right of the people to govern and decide is advanced. All those demanding peace and justice have an interest in demanding a modern democracy, where we decide!

We welcome debate on this issue and urge all to join the *Fight for an Anti-War Government, Peace Economy and a Democracy Where We Decide!*

# Confront the Bi-Partisan War Machine

## *Women's March on the Pentagon*

In response to the continuing march of military aggression by the U.S. and to put an antiwar agenda on the table of activists, we are calling for a Women's (and allies) March on the Pentagon on the 51st anniversary of the 1967 big anti-war event in Washington D.C. that had 50,000 people and subsequent marches on the Pentagon.

More than 50,000 people marched on the Pentagon on October 21, 1967 in opposition to the escalation of U.S. imperialist aggression in Vietnam. An anti-war rally was held at West Potomac Park near the Lincoln Memorial where 70,000 people had gathered for a concert by musician and peace activist Phil Ochs. Both groups joined together and marched; this action was to be known as the March on the Pentagon. During 1967 there were numerous anti-war marches across the country in all major cities including New York, Boston, San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

These actions and the subsequent protests and demonstrations of the 1968 presidential elections would lead to the call for a general strike which culminated in the mobilization of 500,000 protestors in another march on the Pentagon known as the Vietnam Moratorium which took place on October 15, 1969. A month later, due to the success of the first march, another rally was held.

On October 7th, 2001, the U.S. invaded Afghanistan under the pretext of apprehending those behind the attacks on the Twin Towers in 2001. U.S. forces have remained in active occupation, making the illegal and immoral war in Afghanistan the longest foreign occupation in U.S. history.

In response to the ongoing U.S. military aggression across the globe and the continuing bi-partisan increases in Pentagon funding, we are calling for a 21st century March on the Pentagon on the 51st anniversary of the massive 1967 march and all the subsequent marches. The bloated military budget is draining our communities and families dry of precious blood and treasure while decimating nations and peoples who have done



nothing to us.

The title, "Women's March on the Pentagon" is in direct response to a leader of the recent Women's March who said, "I appreciate that war is *your* issue Cindy [Sheehan, initiator of the Women's March on the Pentagon] but the Women's March will *never* address the war issue as long as women aren't free." It is the belief of many of us that NO woman is free while the U.S. spends trillions of dollars bombing millions and militarily occupying over 150 countries around the world.

Our demands are simple: The complete end to U.S. wars abroad; closure of U.S. foreign bases; dramatically slash the Pentagon budget to fund social programs here at home. The only good empire is a gone empire.

The antiwar/peace, anti-imperialist voice has been shut out and marginalized. We are in solidarity with pro-social and environmental movements, [and urge them] to address war and the preparations for war. War affects us all in one way or another. War destroys the natural environment. This is not, nor will it turn into, a Get Out the Vote Rally for the Democrat half of the War Party. This is a principled call to action: *We Must March for Peace and Against the War Machine.*

**Visit our website: [usmlo.org](http://usmlo.org)**

# 2018 Women's March on the Pentagon

October 20 & 21

Our demands are simple: The complete end to the wars abroad; closure of foreign bases; dramatically slash the Pentagon budget to fund healthy social programs here at home: the only good empire is a gone empire. We must march for peace and against the war machine.

## Schedule of Events

*Saturday, October 20, 12-8pm*

*St. Stephen and the Incarnation Episcopal Church  
1525 Newton St NW, Washington, DC 20010*

### Workshops Noon-4:30pm

#### Workshop on Civil Resistance 101

This workshop will focus on the time-honored strategy of civil resistance. After we chat about the history and significance, we will talk about non-violent actions and what to expect from a police state response.

#### Workshop on Victims No More

Basics of self-defense for women.

#### Workshop on Alternative Media

How to be our own media in the capital of propaganda. Hear from a panel of people working in independent media.

#### Workshop on History of Protest Music and Current Practice

#### Workshop on Civil Assistance

Hear from activists who have engaged in citizen-led disaster relief in Flint, Michigan, Houston, Texas following Hurricane Harvey, Puerto Rico following Hurricane María, and North Carolina following Hurricane Florence.

#### Workshop on What's Really Happening In Yemen

Learn more about what is happening on the ground in Yemen, who is involved in the conflict, and what you can do.

#### Meet & Greet / Open Mic Night 6-8pm

*Sponsored by CODEPINK*

*Sunday, October 21*

**11:00 am to Noon: Gather at Pentagon City Metro Station**

#### Noon to 1:00 pm: March on the Pentagon

(We are asking that people respect the environment and try to use only renewable/recyclable/re-purposed materials for your signs/banners. Banners/flags are preferable to signs. We are PRO-environment and PRO-community.)

#### 1:00 pm until 4:00: Rally with speakers/music/entertainment

Speakers to include: Members of Piscataway Nation, Cindy Sheehan, Bonnie Caracciolo, Emma Fiala, Mnar Muhawesh, Ann Wright, Alison Weir, Deb Della Piana, Chelsea United Against the War, Walter Teague, Jill Stein, Nick Brana, Eleanor Goldfield, Judy Bello, Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers, Medea Benjamin, YahNé Ndgo, F.U.R.I.E., Students and Youth for a New America, WMOP Steering Committee, and the WMOP Advisory Committee

Musical guests to include: Ariel Zevon, the Raging Grannies, the DC Labor Chorus, Pam Parker, Sheri Bauer-Mayorga and Ben Grosscup

*Monday, October 22*

#### Non-violent Civil Assistance: 11:30am-1:30pm, Place TBA

Women's March on the Pentagon will be feeding people who are unconscionably homeless in the wealthiest nation on earth at a local DC park.

For more information or to schedule an interview with a speaker/performer or organizer, please contact  
Cindy Sheehan at: [CindySheehan@MarchonPentagon.com](mailto:CindySheehan@MarchonPentagon.com)  
Emma Fiala at: [Emma@MarchonPentagon.com](mailto:Emma@MarchonPentagon.com)  
Bonnie Caracciolo at: [bosmarch2018@gmail.com](mailto:bosmarch2018@gmail.com)



# To Secure Peace Between the Koreas, U.S. Must Declare an End to the War

*Christine Ahn, Women Cross the DMZ, September 24, 2018*

A historic opportunity to end the seven-decade Korean War is suddenly within reach. The world witnessed world-class peacemaking between North and South Korea last week at the third inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in declared “a Korean Peninsula free of war” and “a nuclear-free Korean peninsula.” But peacemaking between the two Koreas alone is not enough: The success of this process also rests on progress between Washington and Pyongyang, and particularly on the signing of a peace treaty to end the Korean War.

To a packed audience of 150,000 North Koreans wildly cheering on their feet on September 20 at the May Day Stadium in Pyongyang, President Moon affirmed, “We have lived together for 5,000 years and been separated for 70 years. We must live together as one people.”

At their summit, Kim and Moon announced a long list of actionable steps they will take to improve relations, from establishing a reunion center for divided families to reopening the Mt. Kumgang tourism center and the Kaesong industrial zone — two inter-Korean development projects from the previous Sunshine Policy years that were shut down as relations worsened between the two Koreas during the previous two hardline administrations. The defense ministers also agreed in a separate military agreement to reduce military tensions by downsizing the number of guards near the Military Demarcation Line, the border dividing North and South Korea in the De-Militarized Zone (DMZ) established by the Armistice Agreement in 1953. The Korean leaders also agreed to de-mine a village in the DMZ surrounding the border between North Korea and South Korea.

As part of the Pyongyang Declaration by the two Koreas to transform the Korean Peninsula “into a land of peace free from nuclear weapons and nuclear threats,” Kim committed to “permanently dismantle the Dongchang-ri missile engine test site” in the presence of international inspectors, and “the permanent dismantlement of the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon.” But this would depend on “corresponding measures” by the United States “in accordance with the spirit of the June 12 U.S.-DPRK Joint Statement.”

Trump last month canceled Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s trip to North Korea, saying North Korea had not made “sufficient progress” toward denuclearization. [Pompeo has since visited in light of further unity between the Koreas and their fight for reunification — VOR Ed. Note] North Korean leaders, however, say the United States has not honored its end of the Singapore Declaration in which the first two items were to improve relations and establish a peace process. Denuclearization came third, and the repatriation of the remains of U.S. service members was a last added item.

Pyongyang has already made several concessions: It has



halted missile and nuclear tests, begun to dismantle the Sohae missile launch site and destroyed the Punggye-ri nuclear test site in the presence of foreign journalists, released three detained Americans, and repatriated the remains of U.S. service members from the Korean War. The United States, meanwhile, has halted one joint military exercise after Trump’s spontaneous announcement at the press briefing following his meeting with Kim. But these joint exercises could easily be resumed.

## **U.S. Crimes Against Korea**

North Korea has made clear that denuclearization will require a peace process that includes concrete steps toward a Peace Treaty, as promised in the 1953 Armistice Agreement signed by the United States, North Korea and China. James Laney, a former U.S. ambassador to South Korea under Clinton, has argued, “A peace treaty would provide a baseline for relationships, eliminating the question of the other’s legitimacy and its right to exist. Absent such a peace treaty, every dispute presents afresh the question of the other side’s legitimacy.”

But North Korea is unlikely to unilaterally surrender its nuclear weapons without improved relations. We know that the Clinton and Bush administrations were close to waging a pre-emptive strike on Pyongyang, but now Bob Woodward’s book *Fear* has also confirmed that even President Obama weighed a first strike on North Korea. Kim has seen what happened to Iraq, Libya and Iran, not to mention his own country’s experience of a devastating U.S. bombing.

Most Americans have no idea that in just three years, the Korean War claimed over 4 million lives. The U.S. dropped

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## TAKE UP THE AIM OF AN ANTI-WAR GOVERNMENT

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635,000 tons of bombs on Korea, more than it did in the rest of the Asia-Pacific theater in WWII, and it used 33,000 tons of napalm in Korea — more than in Vietnam.

Curtis LeMay, a U.S. Air Force general in the Korean War, testified, “We burned down just about every city in North Korea and South Korea ... we killed off over a million civilian Koreans and drove several million more from their homes.” The U.S.’s indiscriminate bombing campaign leveled 80 percent of North Korean cities, killing one out of every four family members. The bombing of homes was so devastating that the regime urged its citizens to build shelter underground.

On July 27, 1953, the Korean War ended with a ceasefire. Military commanders from the U.S., North Korea and China signed the Armistice Agreement and promised within 90 days to return to negotiate a peace settlement. Sixty-five years later, we are still waiting for that Peace Treaty to end the Korean War.

A peace treaty would end the state of war between the United States and North Korea, taking the threat of a military conflict off the table. [...]

### Sign a Peace Treaty Now

One tangible step that the Trump administration can take that the North Koreans would view as a “corresponding measure” is to declare an end to the Korean War. Joseph Yun, the former State Department envoy to North Korea during the Obama and Trump administrations, has said “the end-of-war declaration has to be done.” In an interview with the Asahi Shimbun, Yun said, “I don’t agree that [the U.S.] would lose any significant item by saying the war has come to an end.” This would demonstrate the U.S. commitment to improve relations and establish trust as a key step toward normalizing relations between the two countries. “I think opening reciprocal liaison offices would be a strong signal to North Korea that the United States is willing to change the relationship and willing to take steps towards normalization,” Yun said.

Henri Féron, a legal scholar at Columbia Law School brought out that several UN organs have called for the replacement of the Korean War Armistice Agreement, “including the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council, the Secretary-General and even the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in [North Korea].”

Despite tremendous progress by the two Koreas toward formally ending the Korean War with tangible steps toward reunification, Vincent Brooks, Commander of the U.S. Forces in Korea, recently blocked an application by South Korea to allow a train to travel across the military demarcation line to test the rail lines from Seoul to Sinuiju. Brooks is also head of the “UN Command which oversees the armistice,” which



many have come to believe is the U.S. Perhaps in an effort to deflect pressure on the UN for blocking progress between the two Koreas, in a September 17 Security Council briefing, Under-Secretary General Rosemary DiCarlo clarified, “Notwithstanding its name, the “United Nations Command” is not a United Nations operation or body, nor does it come under the command and control of the United Nations. Furthermore, it was not established as a subsidiary organ of the Security Council and is not funded through the United Nations budget.”

The U.S. also tried to block the opening of a diplomatic office in Kaesong. According to the Chosun, a

conservative paper in South Korea, an unnamed U.S. official warned, “If the [South] Korean government opens a liaison office in Kaesong, [South] Korea will risk violating sanctions that have drawn North Korea back to the negotiating table.” But the Koreans plowed forward and on September 14 opened the liaison office, which will facilitate year-round communication between Seoul and Pyongyang.

While the prospect of undoing 70 years of mistrust and propaganda may seem daunting and impenetrable, it is not. Enemies to peace are apathy and the belief that we cannot overpower those wanting perpetual war.

It was the Korean War, after all, which inaugurated the Cold War and the military industrial complex. According to Korea historian Bruce Cumings, “The Korean conflict was the occasion for transforming the United States into a very different country than it had been before, one with hundreds of permanent military bases abroad, a large standing army and a permanent national security state at home.”

Korea expert Gregory Elich wrote in the Monthly Review, “As Dean Acheson, Secretary of State under President Truman, put it, the Korean War ‘came along and saved us.’ It made possible the quadrupling of the defense budget under Truman, and brought about final approval of National Security Council Report 68, which triggered the Cold War and militarized American policy.” The Korean War also cemented the idea of the U.S. as the world’s police officer.

We must help bring closure to the longest-standing U.S. conflict now. President Moon is in office for just over three years, and South Koreans’ desire for a formal end to the Korean War is our greatest asset. Eight of 10 South Koreans support the Pyongyang Summit. [...]

Americans should stand with Koreans to help end the war with a Korea Peace Treaty and to unite the Korean peninsula. It is the just and moral thing to do.

*(Christine Ahn is the international coordinator of Women Cross DMZ, a global movement of women mobilizing for peace on the Korean Peninsula.)*

# War: A Community Issue

Lynn Marie Petrovich

*(U.S. wars and aggression are crimes and serve today not for political purposes but to destroy the human productive forces worldwide. The greatest cost is to the human and natural environment and to the relations among humans and humans and nature. The issues raised here of funding are related to Who Decides? And speak to the need for a new direction for the economy and political affairs, one that is anti-war and pro-social. Stop Funding War and Fund Our Rights!— VOR Ed. Note)*

\* \* \*

War affects everyone. While some are adversely affected more than others, there is no one that escapes the war machine's reach. One example in the United States is war funding. The defense budget is mind boggling. The U.S.'s 2019 pentagon budget supports 883 overseas bases and is lethal to humanity. Instead of terrorizing our brothers and sisters abroad, the billions of dollars spent on war could be used for a host of issues at home including almost every one that people take to the streets about. From education to health care and from infrastructure to the environment — the war machine strips money, time, and attention from all of it. In some cases, U.S. imperialism not only prevents these issues from receiving the time, energy and money they need, but it also exacerbates the problems.

## The U.S.'s Toxic 2019 "Defense" Budget

[...] More than one hundred years after World War I, we are engaged in endless wars, expensive, costly endless wars. In addition to the vast human toll, how much does endless war — and a growing number of U.S. bases around the world — cost financially each year? This is an attempt to do a reasonable calculation of the cost in public taxpayer dollars of our hundreds of bases stationed around the world (those which are mostly outside the theater of war), commencing with the end of The Great War. I undertook this exercise using my decades-long background in accounting, available public reports, articles, research papers, books (to connect the dots), interviews with current and former military personnel, and common sense. Well, as much common sense as possible given the U.S. military budget is the largest of any country in the world, as much as the next 10 country's military budgets combined.

Among the many resources used in this analysis was the 116 page "Defense Budget Overview, US Department of Defense [DoD], Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Request" (The Report), in which the 2019 request was \$686.1 Billion, an increase of 13% or \$74 billion, over 2018.

The Report is less a "defense" budget; rather it is more a document oozing threats to worldwide lethal annihilation:

"The strategic goals for Fiscal Years 2018-FY 2023 reflect the Secretary's priorities:

- (1) Increase the lethality of the Joint Force;
- (2) Strengthen US alliances and build new partnerships;
- (3) Reform the Department to reinvest resources in warfighter priorities"

(The Report, page 9-3)

If the planet is our community, the U.S. is the bully in the neighborhood. Reference to the word "lethal" is sprinkled no less than 3 dozen times throughout The Report ("more lethal force" p. 2-6, "technology innovation for increased lethality" p.1-1, "increasing the lethality of new and existing weapons systems" p. 3-2).

Among the DoD's goals is the Orwellian "preserving peace through strength" and "protecting the American way of life" (a way of life in which every minute four people are served with eviction judgments, 30 million have no access to health care, \$1.5 trillion is owed in suffocating student loan debt, and 63% of the population cannot afford a \$500 emergency repair.)

Were it not for The Report's dire (yet, fully funded) predictions for world domination, one would think this budget request was satire. From page 2-4, the foreign affairs Strategic Approach for the upcoming year states: "To succeed in the emerging security environment, the Department and Joint Force will have to out-think, out-maneuver, out-partner, and out-innovate revisionist powers, rogue regimes, terrorists, and other threat actors."

And again, the number one goal is to "Build a more lethal force."

In a world where money is no object, The Report specifically details the following purchasing priorities for 2019:

- Increasing the strength of the Army, Navy, and Air Force by almost 26,000;
- Buying ten combat ships (\$18.4 Billion);
- Increasing production of the F-35 aircraft and F/A-18 aircraft (\$12.7 Billion);
- Enhancing deterrence by modernizing the nuclear triad;
- Increasing the emphasis on technology innovation for increased lethality.

Additionally, The Report states "The DoD has expended more munitions than planned over the last few years, primarily to defeat Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), leading to higher demand to replenish munition inventories" (3-6). Addressing these needs, the 2019 budget request increases by over 28,300 in the amount of production for the following munitions:

- Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems;
- Advanced Precision Kill Weapon Systems;
- Joint Direct Attack Munition;
- Small Diameter Bomb 1 (includes spares);
- Hellfire rockets;
- Army Tactical Missile Systems

Total increased cost in the 2019 budget for these munitions is \$8.1 Billion (p.3-7)

In a surprise (yet not really) admission, The Report states that "major power competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security" (p. 2-1).

But let us back up a minute. More historical perspective is relative at this point, if only to grasp the enormity of U.S. spending over the last 18 years on endless wars around the globe.



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## TAKE UP THE AIM OF AN ANTI-WAR GOVERNMENT

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### War Funding

One hundred years ago, World War I financial costs for the U.S. was about \$22.6 billion, which today is \$328 billion, adjusted for inflation. The 2019 DoD budget request is \$686.1 Billion, or twice what it cost the U.S. during WWI in today's dollars.

Included in the DoD 2019 Budget request of \$686.1 billion, is \$89 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO), which predominantly funds the wars (operations, in-theatre support, classified programs, coalition forces, counter-ISIS training, security, etc.) Specifically stated areas include Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and "other mobilization" sites.

According to The Report, *OCO funding alone* for the 18 year period beginning in 2001 through 2018 totaled \$1.8 Trillion (p. 1-3), or almost \$101 Billion per year – an amount which approximates the annual combined budgets of the U.S. Department of Education (\$60 Billion) Department of Health & Human Services (\$18 Billion), the Department of Transportation (\$15.6 Billion), and Department of Labor (\$9.4 Billion.) [...]

### 883 Military Bases Around the World and Growing

Pouring through various documents, publications, books, and research papers, I developed a list of countries with U.S. military bases outside the U.S. This list includes U.S. territories (Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands, Mariana Islands, American Samoa, and Puerto Rico) and includes bases in 183 countries, on 7 continents and 7 bodies of water. This number does not include U.S. Embassies and may or may not include other sites such as lily pads (smaller, temporary, and/or not authorized sites) and special operations sites.

Some publicly available documents, from the U.S. government, contradict one other. For example, the Army's most recent average cost per person is just under \$100K (\$94.3K). However, other defense documents calculate average cost per person at \$55K. I could not find a single, comprehensive document which

accounted for the total cost of overseas bases (additionally, many excluded the cost of bases on U.S. Territories), so I took data available, from a number of resources to calculate the costs contained herein. Where contradictions occur, I so note.

### Buildings and Structures

I started with the Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Request which acknowledges \$2.6 Trillion in assets on the balance sheet of the Department's books (6-2). Of these assets, another report – The Base Structure Report Fiscal Year 2017 states:

"The DoD manages a worldwide real property portfolio that spans all 50 states, eight U.S. territories with outlying areas, and 41 foreign countries. The majority of the foreign sites are located in Germany (120 sites), Japan (121 sites) and South Korea (78 sites.)" Base Structure Report page DoD-6.

The Base Structure Report identifies a total of 4,793 sites worldwide, at a value of \$1.046 Trillion, covering 27.2 million acres of land. Of the 883 sites identified, The Base Structure Report verifies 110 sites located in U.S. Territories and another 517 sites overseas, for a total of 627 sites outside the U.S. with a 09/30/16 value of approximately \$200 Billion.

This worldwide portfolio of 4,793 sites on over 27 million acres includes:

(1) Buildings: "The DoD occupies a reported 275,504 buildings throughout the world, valued at over \$705 billion and comprising over 2.2 billion square feet (DoD-8)." The buildings include administrative, community facilities, family housing, hospitals and medical, maintenance, production, operation and training, research and development, testing, supply, troop housing, mess facilities and utility and ground improvements.

(2) Structures: DoD structures throughout the world are valued at over \$162 Billion.

(3) Linear Structures: DoD manages over 112,931 linear



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## STOP FUNDING WAR AND FUND OUR RIGHTS

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structures throughout the world at a value over \$178 Billion. Linear structures are facilities whose functions require that it traverse land (examples include runways, roads, rail lines, pipelines, fences, pavement, and electrical distribution lines.)

The difference between my estimate of overseas bases of 883 and the 627 mentioned in the baseline report may be reconciled as follows:

(1) The DoD will be undergoing one of the largest consolidated DoD-wide financial statement audits in Fiscal Year 2018, which will involve both general funds and working capital funds. A focus of the audit will be “the discovery of Real Property and General Equipment not being recorded in the proper system (6-3).” (It is anticipated, based on prior audits, that not all overseas sites assets – i.e. buildings, roads, structures – are recorded on the books of the DoD.)

(2) The 883 includes 95 sites which are smaller sites and may or may not be in the Base Structure Report.

(3) The Base Structure Report identifies 517 sites worldwide (exclusive of U.S. Territories), but a count of the detail in the same report (pages DoD 70 thru DoD 85) resulted in a total of almost 600 sites.

### **Combatant Command Exercise and Engagement**

The Report identifies ten Combatant Command Exercise and Engagement programs and lists the following nine:

- USAFRICOM (Africa);
- USCENTCOM (Kingdom of Jordan);
- USCYBERCOM (virtual environment);
- USEUCOM (Europe);
- USNORTHCOM (Homeland defense);
- USPACOM (Korea);
- USSOUTHCOM (Latin America);
- USSTRATCOM (nuclear deterrence);
- USTRANSCOM (Full spectrum global mobility)

This report’s costs include:

(1) Fixed costs which are costs which do not change if a particular site is not occupied. Examples include: rent/mortgage payments, property taxes, insurance, maintenance.

(2) Variable costs which do change based on occupancy. Examples include utility consumption, repair and maintenance, cleanup, trash removal, increased costs due to surrounding neighborhood activity.

A Rand Corporation research report from 2013, acknowledged that overall costs are higher overseas even when taking host-nation support into account. I took a conservative approach in the following calculations.

### Personnel

Of the roughly 2 million military personnel, including reserves and National Guard, approximately 12%, or 238,000 are deployed to overseas bases (outside of OCO.) Personnel includes base pay, payroll taxes, bonuses (sign on and incentive), pension, uniforms, transportation, basic training/boot camp, life insurance, education, weapon assignment, annual allowances for uniform and weapon upkeep. In order to calculate this cost, I



started with the daily basic pay for military personnel, and built upon that cost with the aforementioned burdens, and pro-rated amounts for overseas costs.

Annual Cost of Personnel \$22.9 Billion

### Transportation

Transportation costs include Army, Air Force, Marine, Navy and National Guard and represent costs to move personnel to overseas locations and back. According to the report, “Overseas Basing of U.S. Military Forces, 2011,” average annual cost for overseas transportation per person was \$5,200, and varied depending on place of deployment.

Annual Cost of Transportation \$1.3 Billion

### Maintenance of Facilities

The DoD occupies or maintains buildings, facilities, and linear structures worth over \$1 Trillion worldwide. The value of the overseas portfolio is about \$200 Billion, covering about 50,000 structures. Applying a standard no-less-than-one-percent-per-value of the asset, plus insurance, plus capital improvements, and contingency, I came up with annual cost of maintenance of overseas (including U.S. Territories) bases.

Annual Cost of Maintenance of Facilities \$7.5 billion

### Construction

The 2019 DoD budget request includes an increase in the OCO budget of an additional \$17 Billion for facilities construction overseas.

Previous and current year construction projects include:

The Kaiserslautern Military Community Center in Germany, an 8 story, 844,000 square foot Air Force facility which includes a 350-room visiting quarters, a four-plex movie theatre, Power Zone, Outdoor Living, Toyland/Four Seasons, food court, new car sales and other vendors in a U.S.-Style mall layout, and a two-story climbing wall. It is intended to house about 50,000 military members and their families. Construction costs are difficult to ascertain (because the Air Force is not tracking the total cost of this facility, which has experienced multiple construction-related delays, deficiencies, and overruns.) Total cost

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## TAKE UP THE AIM OF AN ANTI-WAR GOVERNMENT

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is expected to exceed \$215 million.

New construction of Landstuhl Military Hospital in Germany is expected to be slightly less than \$1 Billion (\$990 Million) and is expected to be completed in 2021. This hospital is expected to replace the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center as the military's main European medical facility.

New construction of medical material warehouse at Kadena Air Base in Japan. Cost for this building is expected to be more than \$20 million.

Total cost of construction for the 3 aforementioned facilities is over \$1.2 Billion.

Taking into account the cost of overseas construction, the DoD 2019 budget request for overseas construction and applying a multiplier factor, I came up with a conservative estimate of the annual cost of construction (because not all money will be spent in one year's time.)

Annual Cost of Construction \$4.8 Billion

### Health Care

The DoD 2019 budget request acknowledges health care costs run about 9% of the DoD budget (excluding long-term care or disability-related or permanent injuries.) Health care costs include use of VA facilities, Tricare, and combat casualty care for members and their families.

Annual Cost of Health Care \$5.9 Billion

### Training

Estimated cost of training for overseas personnel takes into effect (a) direct equipment parts (b) fuel costs (c) post production software costs and (d) indirect support costs. Calculating training costs for Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine, and others, and considering total historical costs per year for NORTHCOM, AFRICOM, and SOUTHCOM of \$980 million in 2012 costs, I applied annual cost of inflation increases, and with contingency, came up with an annual cost for ongoing training exercises for military personnel.

Annual Cost of Training \$1.0 Billion

### Environmental Remediation

Environmental contamination is a by-product of weapons and ballistic testing and training for all divisions of the military. Add to that burn pits, depleted uranium, destroyed species on both land and water, poisoned water supplies, and ongoing cleanup of nuclear testing fallout, to name a few.

As an example, Guam, at 210 square miles, is home to dozens of U.S. military bases. Its ecosystem suffered tremendously when brown snakes were introduced to the island, entering the island, over the decades, with U.S. military equipment. These 2 million brown snakes have shorted out electrical systems, devastated new tree growth, and knocked out entire species of birds.

According to Science Alert, "10 of 12 bird species native to Guam had vanished, including a kingfisher that cannot be found anywhere else on Earth." The military has spent no less than \$12 million alone trying to eradicate this problem.

Annual Cost of Environmental Remediation \$1.3 Billion

### Allowances and Site Costs

Allowances and site costs for Army, Air Force, Marines, and Navy include base allowance for housing, overseas housing allowances, cost of living allowances, and family separation allowances. Average annual cost per person is \$25,900.

Annual Cost of Allowances and Site Costs \$3.3 Billion

### Military Family Support

The 2019 DoD budget request for military family support totals \$8.1 Billion and includes (1) child care and youth programs (2) morale, welfare, and recreation (3) warfighter and family services (4) commissary (5) Department of Defense overseas schools and (6) Military spouse employment.

Annual Cost of Military Family Support \$2.4 Billion

*Total Annual Cost of Military Overseas Bases \$50.4 Billion*

The above cost estimate does not include:

- Extended medical and long-term care of partially and permanently disabled veterans;
- Legal costs of criminal activity committed by military personnel at permanent base sites;
- Payments to communities for reimbursement of base-related neighborhood costs;
- Negotiation, legal, and otherwise for land protection, remediation, and extraction of resources.

### RECAP:

Cost of Personnel \$22.9 Billion

Transportation \$1.3 Billion

Maintenance of Facilities \$7.5 Billion

Construction \$4.8 Billion

Health Care \$5.9 Billion

Training \$1.0 Billion

Environmental Remediation \$1.3 Billion

Allowances & Site Costs \$3.3 Billion

Military Family Support \$2.4 Billion

Add Overseas Contingency Operations (funding the wars) \$89.0 Billion included in The Report

***Total Estimated Annual Cost of overseas operations \$139.4 Billion***

War is not normal activity. The DoD 2019 budget clearly articulates the ramp up of military forces, the expansion of military "solutions" worldwide. Conversation is desperately needed about the U.S.'s lethal role in the destruction of our planet.



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**I • Cancel Puerto Rico's Debt**

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since refused to fully fund the recovery. As a result there were thousands of unnecessary deaths — something the U.S. denies. And continuing problems with healthcare, education, electricity, clean water and more. What has been done, such as privatizing the power authority and hundreds of public schools has been dictated by the U.S. imposed unelected Control Board. The Board continues to make paying the debt to the Wall Street loan sharks the priority. This insistence on paying the debt and imposing brutal attacks on the people, their jobs, pensions, schools and hospitals, ensured that Puerto Rico was not prepared for a hurricane of Maria's magnitude and that recovery remains far from complete.

Planning, for evacuations, back up generators and supplies for hospitals, alternate sources of energy like solar, as well as for recovery was not done. Instead people were left to fend for themselves. While many thousands of needless deaths occurred as a result of government failure, people refused to accept the situation. Instead they rose to the occasion, made repairs themselves, organized to rebuild and to resist the on-going attacks. While conditions are still difficult and dangerous for many, the spirit and culture of resistance Puerto Ricans are known for has stood out.

This includes two one-day strikes by teachers, one in March and another at the start of the school year in August. School closures began before the hurricane and have intensified since. Government officials in Puerto Rico and facts on the ground are making clear that the closures are to undermine the teachers' resistance while also securing the best buildings for privatization, for charter schools or other purposes. As Puerto Rico's Secretary of Education Julia Keleher put it, commenting on the more than \$500 million in public dollars for privatization, "No one wanted the storm. But I am not going to misspend the opportunity, pardon the pun, that I have to redirect these things that would have never been available to Puerto Rico. [Without the storm], I would have been short \$300 million."

## **Rebel Diaz Releases Unapologetic Music for Puerto Rican Independence**

*Marlena Fitzpatrick, Latino Rebels*

Tributes and rallies across Puerto Rico made headlines this past September 20, as the nation honored the lives lost as a result of Hurricane Maria's savage punishment on Puerto Rico last year and the lack of government response. Three days later, on September 23, many Puerto Ricans and allies commemorated the 150th anniversary of El Grito De Lares, also known as the Lares Revolution. In 1868, frustrated by the lack of political and economic freedom, and enraged by the continuing repression on the island, Puerto Rico's pro-independence movement staged an armed rebellion. The government response to Hurricane Maria's (and lack thereof) echoes the same sentiments that led to the rebellion — a continuous repression and economic depression that has triggered a massive exodus.

These historic moments bring forth the continued debate of the colonial relationship between the United States and the Caribbean

Teachers, parents and students have continued their resistance, including occupying one of the schools that served a large number of special needs children. Puerto Rico only has one charter school at present, but, like New Orleans, the hurricane is being used as justification to greatly increase that number. The closure of hundreds of public schools that are in good condition and well-staffed is an indication of how far government officials intend to go. This direction was instigated and fully supported by the unelected Control Board, whose hedge fund enforcers directly benefit from privatization.

In addition to actions on the anniversary of Maria, there were also many actions a few days later on September 23, the 150th anniversary of El Grito De Lares, also known as the Lares Revolution. In 1868, enraged by the continuing colonial repression on the island, Puerto Rico's pro-independence movement organized an armed rebellion. This firm stand against colonialism, then against the Spanish, today against the U.S., runs through Puerto Rico's long culture of resistance.

U.S. colonialism is the main source of Puerto Rico's difficulties and includes crimes of genocide, sterilization of women, terrorizing resistance, massive damage to the human and natural environments, undemocratic dictate, including the Control Board, and military occupation. This included the Navy using Vieques as a bombing range, which was defeated and the Navy driven out by sustained organized resistance. The same is true of the fight to free Puerto Rico's political prisoners. Both are examples of the resistance to colonialism and the demand in Puerto Rico and the U.S. for independence now!

In salute to Grito de Lares and the fight today for independence, let all stand as one against U.S. colonialism and for Puerto Rico Libre!

*Cancel the Debt! Eliminate the Control Board!  
Reparations Now for 120 years of U.S. colonialism!*

Commonwealth (or Colony), that still today has not been settled. While statehood is a viable option for many (even though President Trump said "no" to it this week), for others, the only way out is through sovereignty. Far from an ideology exclusive to a core group of Puerto Ricans on the island, the independence movement has supporters and allies from all over the Americas, from Canada to Chile. This sentiment has been reflected not only in political movements, social activism, and legislation, but also in art.

Speaking of Chile and art, one of those outspoken artists unapologetically supporting independence for Puerto Rico is the award-winning political hip-hop duo, Rebel Diaz. Recently, cultural workers and political activists RodStarz and G1 dropped a Puerto Rican history-inspired playlist titled Viva Puerto Rico Libre!

The three tracks feature a myriad of high-profile collaborators: Ghetto Brothers, Divine RBG, Flaco Navaja, Nitty Scott, Tato

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## CANCEL THE DEBT AND ELIMINATE THE CONTROL BOARD

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Torres, Yerbabuena, Lester Rey and Rosa Clemente. The three songs (“Viva Puerto Rico Libre!,” “Campo” and “Pa’lante”) evoke liberation vibes, questioning PROMESA’s intent, calling to cancel the debt, and shedding light on U.S. colonialism.

Gonzalo “G1” Venegas and Rodrigo “RodStarz” Venegas explained to Latino Rebels their inspiration behind the playlist.

**LR:** What inspired you to release a three-track playlist calling for Puerto Rico’s independence?

**RodStarz:** We want Puerto Rico to be “libre,” to be independent. We see that Hurricane America is really the disaster that hit Puerto Rico. Since 1898, Puerto Rico has been colonized by the United States. We hold the struggle of Puerto Rico close to our hearts. We grew up in Chicago, in an international struggle, a community with El Paseo Boricua. For a lot of us growing up in Chicago, it’s very important in the sense of revolutionary politics, and then moving to

South Bronx and the legacy of the Young Lords. The Ghetto Brothers sang the original version of “Viva Puerto Rico Libre!” back in the 70s, because of the Young Lords and community organizers. Here we are almost 45 years later, and that music is still relevant because Puerto Rico is still under colonial rule and Puerto Ricans are still treated like second-class citizens.

**G1:** For us it is an honor to build with the Meléndez family, the Ghetto Brothers, who represent being at the intersection of street culture, politics and music, at a time when hip-hop was emerging in the South Bronx. For us to be able to reinterpret that song, and feature Divine RBG, in defense of Puerto Rico, is a blessing. We wanted to make a connection between the struggles of the 70s in hip-hop and the Puerto Rican liberation movement. We’re calling for a revolutionary culture that we’re able to support and be in conversation with political and social movements.

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### I • Teachers’ Strike

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education, as the Control Board, imposed by the U.S. demands school closings, layoffs, cuts to pensions and other attacks on rights. While public dollars are used to continue paying the debt to the Wall Street loan sharks, public schools and hospitals are being wrecked.

Fully functioning schools with intact campuses and experienced teachers and staff have been closed and their students reassigned to new schools that often still need repairs and do not have the space and supplies needed.

One school in Mayagüez, La Escuela Manel A. Barreto, opened on August 15 with a section of the school still without a roof, debris and garbage in the corridors, and classrooms without chairs, teachers or teaching materials. The school received students from three closed schools that were all in good condition and had been fully staffed with qualified teachers. The irrational closings are a means both to attack the teachers and their organized resistance; to eliminate schools that are organizing centers in their community; and secure the schools in the best condition for privatization, including private charter schools. More than \$500 million in public funds are being used for this privatization, where private interests decide educational matters.

About 2700 teachers were not assigned to a school at the start of the school year, despite vacant positions at hundreds of schools. The schools that are opening are overcrowded and without sufficient supplies. Hundreds of teachers reassigned to new schools did not have any classroom space to work with the students.

In addition, in the week before schools opened, thousands of nontenured teachers were subjected to humiliation and abuse, forced to wait for hours in the heat to take a required drug test. Nontenured teachers, no matter what level of experience they have, essentially have to be rehired every year. Many still have not been assigned a school, though many open schools are short-staffed.

As well, students with special needs have basically been abandoned. They have been left without school assignments in some cases, and without transportation to schools when they have been reassigned. Educators and parents from schools slated for closure,

like Lorencita Ramírez School, are furious and demanding that the rights of their children, and all children, be met.

#### FEMA Trailers While Schools Sit Empty

Far from acting to assist in the situation, Puerto Rico’s Department of Education has purchased FEMA trailers to be used as classrooms. According to a document obtained by the Federación de Maestros de Puerto Rico (Teachers Federation of Puerto Rico), each trailer costs the department \$42,050. Officials have announced they will need about 200 trailers — this while schools in good condition remain closed.

FEMA trailers were notorious for being toxic and causing health problems when they were used after Katrina in New Orleans. There is no evidence that students and teachers in Puerto Rico will not also be harmed.

The irrational actions by the unelected Control Board, imposed by the U.S., are being met with resistance, with the one-day strike an example. The justifications given for closures — that there was a drop in enrollment as a result of Hurricane Maria — have also been refuted. It is clear the Control Board — as has occurred wherever they have power in U.S. cities, like Buffalo, NY — is acting against the public good and for private interests. The problem is not the hurricane, but the fact that parents, teachers and students do not have power to decide these matters. This fight for empowerment is integral to the fight for rights and independence.

Many are taking matters into their own hands. The Luis Muñoz Rivera elementary school in Dorado was closed down despite having a full enrollment, experienced staff and being in excellent condition. There was little damage from Hurricane María, and, located less than half a mile from the Atlantic Ocean, it is certified as tsunami-ready. Teachers were reassigned and scattered to schools all over the island. Teachers, parents and students together petitioned and sent letters demanding the school remain open. Then on June 28, parents began occupying Muñoz Rivera, along with teachers, staff and students. As one mother put it: “We are not objects. We are not furniture that can be moved from place to place. We are not boxes to be consolidated. We are human beings.”

**U.S. GOVERNMENT CRIMES**

# The Preventable Deaths of Hurricane María

*Center for Investigative Journalism (Centro de Periodismo Investigativo)*

Four hundred and eighty seven stories of extreme and inhuman suffering, each one with its own name, prove that many of the deaths caused by Hurricane María could have been avoided, while revealing the causes that led to this historic rise in mortality in Puerto Rico.

The latter is evidenced by the only comprehensive record available of the deaths related to the hurricane, documented by a joint investigation of the Center for Investigative Journalism (CPI), Quartz (QZ) and Associated Press (AP). The existing list is that of the government of Puerto Rico which still includes only 64 deaths.

Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump — who has downplayed the magnitude of the catastrophe since the beginning and glorified his response level said recently that the estimate of deaths of more than 3,000 validated by the government of Puerto Rico and produced by George Washington University (GWU) is yet another fabrication from Democrats to make him look bad. [...]

“3000 people did not die in the two hurricanes that hit Puerto Rico. When I left the Island, AFTER the storm had hit, they had anywhere from 6 to 18 deaths. As time went by it did not go up by much. Then, a long time later, they started to report really large numbers, like 3000...” he tweeted.

For about four hours, President Trump visited Puerto Rico on October 3, almost two weeks after the storm. According to the mortality statistics of the Puerto Rico Demographic Registry, from September 6 to the time of Trump’s departure, 640 people had died in excess of the average number of deaths during that same period in the previous three years.

One year after Hurricane María, the risk of seeing this tragedy repeat itself is real as systemic failures in access to health services and infrastructure — which caused the majority of deaths — have not been corrected, according to experts interviewed, and also admitted by Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló. [...]

The investigation showed that the debacle in the three months that followed the hurricane was of such magnitude that it changed the face of death in Puerto Rico, modifying the island’s demographics and main causes of death. The investigation also included an analysis of the Demographic Registry’s mortality databases and thousands of death certificates obtained following a lawsuit filed by the CPI to obtain access to that information.



According to the data, the segment in which most deaths were recorded for the entire population, during the three months following the hurricane, was that of young adults of productive age, 30 to 44, with a percentage increase between 23% to 39%, compared to the average of the previous three years. This contrasts to the widely believed, government-backed perception that elderly people and those with pre-existing medical conditions were the ones who mostly died. Deaths among people over age 70, although more in net numbers, as they usually are, increased between 8% to 10%.

## **Many Deaths Preventable**

Sepsis, which has never been among the 10 leading causes of death in Puerto Rico — according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) — was the eighth leading cause of death during the period examined. Dozens of stories of victims’ relatives tell how people bedridden and with diseases not related to the hurricane, such as bedsores or even a cavity, ended up dying of sepsis due to the unsafe and unhealthy temperatures and conditions that prevailed in hospitals, as well as the lack of treatment.

Among them is Ramona González Muñoz, who died in her home of bedsores at age 59 after being denied treatment in three hospitals, according to her relatives. The woman, who was bedridden two years ago with a degenerative brain disease, developed bedsores following Hurricane María, when she could not turn on the air conditioning in her room due to lack of power. She was taken twice to hospitals in San Juan, but in both instances she was discharged without being treated because the institutions could not handle the amount of patients. [...]

Other causes of death that saw significant increases, from 20% to 45%, were pneumonitis due to solids and liquids, primary hypertension and kidney disease, pneumonia and influenza, and respiratory, Alzheimer’s and heart diseases. Suicides, which are grouped under a category called “other causes,” registered an increase of 43.9%.

Among young adults ages 30 to 44, the causes suggest accidents and heart attacks, according to a review of death certificates and the CPI-QZ-AP registry. A fifth of these deaths are still under investigation. “These are deaths that could have been avoided,” said Dr. Cruz María Nazario, an epidemiologist and professor at

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## CANCEL THE DEBT AND ELIMINATE THE CONTROL BOARD

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the Medical Sciences Campus of the University of Puerto Rico. She is also one of the researchers of the GWU mortality study.

Dr. Irwin Redlener, director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University in New York, agreed that the deaths could have been prevented with better preparedness and response to the emergency. He argued that the response to the disaster by the Puerto Rico and U.S. governments was extremely unsuccessful, although in many cases there were pre-existing conditions that affect mortality and resilience, such as a high level of poverty, lack of access to health services in Puerto Rico and no adequate preparation to face the storm.

Nazario explained the increases in the sepsis and pneumonia and influenza categories are particularly interesting as they do not correspond to diseases or diagnoses that people had before the hurricane, but rather to circumstances that arose due to the total collapse of the health system of Puerto Rico and that, in essence, are preventable. “These two diseases have served as sentinel death causes that we must continue using in future events because they give us a very quick idea that there is a problem that must be addressed urgently,” she said.

In the case of chronic diseases, such as respiratory and kidney diseases, Nazario emphasized that most patients live if they receive their medications and treatments, which ceased to occur for weeks and months after the storm, victims’ family members told the CPI-QZ-AP alliance. In dozens of cases, victims’ relatives attribute the death to the lack of dialysis, insulin or oxygen. In total, 300 people in the sample died of chronic diseases, such as diabetes, cancer and Alzheimer’s.

That was the case of Orlando López Martínez, 48. He has received dialysis treatment since 2014 as a result of diabetes, which he developed at age 11. In the aftermath of María, he lost at least four treatments because the Atlantis center in Aguadilla — where he received dialysis treatment four and a half hours a day, three times a week — was shut down. When it reopened, it did so by rationing services because it lacked enough fuel and water, so López started receiving only two hours of dialysis in each session.

He died on October 10. The official cause of death listed on his death certificate was a heart attack caused by kidney disease. It says nothing about Hurricane María or the lack of adequate treatment. [...]

The qualitative and detailed information provided by the victims’ relatives to the CPI, QZ.com and AP — known as “verbal autopsies”— is of great importance, Nazario said. It is the only source of information that exists about the mechanisms that triggered the clinical causes of death documented by the Demographic Registry and that go to the heart of the relationship between the increase in deaths and the hurricane, as the case of López demonstrates.

Among them are the lack of oxygen, electricity and water in hospitals and treatment clinics such as those for dialysis and chemotherapy; problems with communications and emergency transportation; anxiety and depression; and all kinds of accidents linked to disaster management efforts and deficiencies of basic services such as lack of power in homes and traffic lights



on the roads. In the CPI-QZ-AP registry, death reports due to accidents are twice the number of those registered among the general population. [...]

Three weeks after Hurricane, Saúl Pabey Martínez, 27, died in Peñuelas trying to connect a friend’s home to the power grid. Martínez was electrocuted and fell. A week later, Juan Gabriel Valentín Fuentes went to the house of his boss, Ramón Edwin Colón, to cut down a tree that María had knocked down onto the patio. One of the branches fell on him and went through his heart, killing him.

Valentín was 32 years old. On November 5, Kenny Huertas, 30, suffered a fall while helping his neighbors clean up debris. He died that day as a result of the accident.

“That is very valuable because those are possibly the causes of death that the Demographic Registry will never record as related to the hurricane. The value of the sample is precisely in these stories that detail the circumstances that triggered or aggravated the health problem that ended in the clinical death, which is what shows up in the Registry,” said Nazario about the increase recorded in the sample of deaths from accidents.

The systemic failures that sparked the deaths respond to negligent acts by both the Puerto Rico and federal governments, as well as the hospital industry, which at the time of María’s landfall, did not meet the standards of planning and preparation to adequately deal with the disaster. All these factors are among the reasons for the high mortality. [...]

### Government Failures Responsible

Six months before the hurricane, the commonwealth government consolidated all the emergency response agencies within the newly created Department of Public Security (DSP), led by Secretary Héctor Pesquera. It merged under a single leadership important dependencies that historically have had autonomy, such as the Puerto Rico Police, the Medical Emergency Corps, the Institute of Forensic Sciences (now the Bureau of Forensic Sciences), the State Agency for Emergency & Disaster Management (now NMEAD) and the Fire Department. Puerto Rico’s Health Department was not part of the merger, yet it was also subject to Pesquera’s command during the emergency. Former directors of NMEAD, such as Epifanio Jiménez and Ángel

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## DEMAND REPARATIONS TO PUERTO RICO FOR U.S. COLONIALISM

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Crespo, have strongly criticized the change, saying that the move affected the government's response capacity in the face of the crisis.

Nazario argued this was negligent from a public health point of view, changing everything at once without having an alternative plan. "The problem was systemic, it is not that it failed here and there, it is that everything failed at once. Why? In part because everything was overturned and deconstructed at the same time," she said.

NMEAD announced on September 1 that it has a new emergency operational plan ready, but refused to provide a copy of the document on the grounds that it is "confidential." The emergency plans of all the states devastated by natural disasters during the past decade—Florida, Texas, New York, California and Louisiana—are all public and available on the Internet.

"I have not seen the plan. I believe that if there is a plan, the first thing that must be done is to disclose it and, above all, to circle it in those agencies that can provide feedback and improve it or correct it. It is not to keep it in a drawer of Pesquera's office so that he can say there is a plan," said Nazario, the epidemiologist.

The Department of Health also did not have a public health emergency response plan to tell health institutions and patients how to respond to a disaster and where to go. Waddy González, a FEMA official in charge of the health component in Puerto Rico, said in an interview that Health Secretary Rafael Rodríguez Mercado has prepared such a plan, but that it has not been made public to the hospital industry and citizens. Rodríguez Mercado refused to be interviewed for this story and did not respond to multiple requests to provide a copy of this plan.

The consequence of dismantling emergency response institutions and lacking adequate response plans was that, after the storm, local and federal agencies did not react with the agility and forcefulness needed to protect citizens, who died by the hundreds, usually for preventable causes.

Most of these deaths occurred in hospitals, which experienced an increase in mortality of 32.3% and were practically inoperative, without electric service, without generators or with deficient ones, and without fuel reserves to operate, according to several testimonies and visits made. The Department of Health, the agency that inspects hospitals and licenses on behalf of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS), acknowledged that it does not have the resources to timely perform this function and has refused to provide evidence of visits to the facilities after Hurricane María. CMS also failed to provide the documents despite multiple requests for this information.

"Maybe in the future we would need a policy that requires that in order to obtain a certification or license to operate [a hospital], you have to be able to mitigate a Category-5 hurricane. For example, you have to have generators, ready, with several days



of supplies," said Alexis Santos, a demographer from the Pennsylvania State University who has extensively analyzed death statistics after Hurricane María. He noted that the data serves to identify failures and create public policy that corrects them and prevents deaths during the next emergency.

Jaime Plá, executive president of the Puerto Rico Hospital Association, minimized the faults of these health facilities during an interview, as he attributed the increase in deaths to the idea that people with chronic conditions—desperate for the lack of power in their homes, nursing homes or dialysis clinics—practically "came to die in hospitals." Although the evidence proves that, in effect, all the components of the health system failed, from pharmacies to Puerto Rico's Medical Center, it also demonstrates fatal flaws in the operation of hospitals.

### U.S. Government Crimes

While he acknowledged that the mistakes made by the Puerto Rico government in preparing and responding to the emergency were enormous, Redlener, director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University, placed the greatest weight of responsibility on the U.S. government, which having the resources to respond in time and with the strength needed to avoid deaths, failed to do so.

Redlener added that the U.S. government was "negligent" in not sending to Puerto Rico the resources and aid that the scale of the disaster called for. He argued that although the U.S. Army has the ability to reestablish communications, establish temporary electrical systems, rebuild bridges and ensure medical transportation better than any other agency, "it was not activated and deployed on time or at the level that should have been done. This was an inexcusable failure of the U.S. Army," Redlener stressed. [...]

Redlener added that, now in the recovery phase, he sees the same inconsistency between the real scale of the catastrophe and the resources that are being allocated for reconstruction, as well as the way in which Congress is setting budgetary priorities well below what is required. Congress has approved more than \$140



billion in recovery funds for areas hit by natural disasters in 2017. To access them, Puerto Rico has to compete with other affected jurisdictions, including Texas, Florida and California. Federal funds that have been allocated directly to the island, about \$16 billion, represent a fraction of what the Rosselló government says it needs. For example, according to his calculations, repairing Puerto Rico's electricity system would cost \$17 billion. So far, Puerto Rico has only secured \$2 billion from the federal government for this.

The increase in mortality in Puerto Rico after Hurricane María and the denial of this reality by the government of Puerto Rico were first revealed by the CPI on September 28, 2017. Ever since that publication, the CPI, international media and academics have continued to investigate the situation, producing estimates of excess mortality that greatly exceeded the government's official number of certified deaths. Death toll estimates range from 800 to 8,500 deaths, the range determined by a Harvard University study published in May, which sparked a massive protest by citizens, many of whom left empty shoes in front of the Capitol in San Juan in honor of their loved ones who died because of the hurricane.

Three weeks before María's one-year anniversary, the government of Puerto Rico finally adopted the 2,975 figure of the

GWU study it commissioned as its "official estimate" of victims. However, this estimate, as well as the other excess mortality figures that have been published to date, are only mathematical computations that do not correspond to real victims of the disaster, do not list the names of the deceased nor talk about the reasons that led to the deaths.

In contrast, the CPI-QZ-AP alliance documented the stories of 487 people who died during the emergency, told by their families and corroborated with interviews, documents and data from the Puerto Rico Demographic Registry. This puts a face to the victims. The deaths listed in the registry verified by the three media outlets would be linked to the hurricane under CDC parameters. These include deaths due to the physical forces of the hurricane, such as landslides or floods; they also take into account those associated with the consequences of the storm, such as the lack of medical services, unhealthy conditions and stress. [...]

When it comes to saving lives, disaster preparedness plans for the short, medium and long term and developed with the input and participation of the communities are key, said Dr. Jennifer Horney, director of the epidemiology program at University of Delaware.

A year after María, the conditions for health care, clean water and more remain dangerous for many.

# One Year After Hurricane María, Childhood Poverty Hits All-Time High in Puerto Rico

*Youth Development Institute of Puerto Rico (Instituto del Desarrollo de la Juventud)*

Before Hurricane María, Puerto Rico had the highest level of childhood poverty at 57 percent. A new study finds that increased economic hardship and uncertainty, combined with inadequate access to health and education, threatens the ability of children (already traumatized by the hurricane) to thrive. Economic insecurity will also hinder the Puerto Rico's ability to recover for the foreseeable future.

The study, commissioned by the Youth Development Institute of Puerto Rico, finds that several months after the hurricane swept through the island, Puerto Rico's most impoverished children are living in conditions not seen in the country or the United States in over half a century.

"This study shows that families with children, who were facing significant challenges before the hurricane, are facing even more bleak conditions today. This economic insecurity is what has led families to leave in droves over the last decade, and will continue to drive it if comprehensive policies are not put into place immediately," said Anitza Cox, Director of Analysis and Social Policy, Estudios Técnicos. [...]

After the hurricane, one-third of households had reduced monthly incomes due to loss of employment and fewer work hours. This loss of income disproportionately impacted low-income families. According to the study, as a result of the economic impact of the hurricane, low-income families in Puerto Rico had difficulty with meeting the most basic needs,

including paying utilities (40%), purchasing food (38%), buying clothing (24%) and securing school materials for children's education (21%).

"Our initial findings indicate that Puerto Rico's poorest families will not have the financial resources to recover. Not addressing the needs of vulnerable households will have negative repercussions not only on the individual children who live in them but also for the country's long-term economic recovery," said Amanda Rivera, Executive Director of the Youth Development Institute.

This issue of poverty combined with a rapidly shrinking population of children — Puerto Rico's child population was reduced by 35% between 2007 and 2017— already poses a threat to Puerto Rico's economic development. [...]

The findings were based on interviews of more than 700 families throughout Puerto Rico during July, August, and September of this year. The study is not yet final, but authors of the study were compelled to release preliminary findings to sound the alarm about the conditions faced by Puerto Rico's neediest children.

*(Instituto del Desarrollo de la Juventud (IDJ) is a nonprofit organization working to advance public policies at the federal and local level to improve the lives of children and youth in Puerto Rico, with a focus on the 56% of children in Puerto Rico who live in poverty.)*

PUERTO RICO'S FISCAL CONTROL BOARD:

# A Parallel Government Full of Lawyers and Consultants

*Center for Investigative Journalism*

Martin Bienenstock sits in the audience, looking at his tablet. As the twelfth public meeting of Puerto Rico's Fiscal Control Board takes place, he raises his eyes, adjusts his glasses, frowns and pays attention to the discussion. Nothing seems to happen and his eyes go back to the electronic device.

Bienenstock, a partner at New York-based Proskauer Rose, is a well-known lawyer in the corporate restructuring industry. With almost 40 years of experience, he has participated in many of the largest bankruptcies in the U.S., including a key role in the restructuring of General Motors and Chrysler, and representing now-defunct Enron in its Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

His biography highlights how Bienenstock has been a staple for the past decade on the National Law Journal's list of the 100 Most Influential Bankruptcy Lawyers, as well as an "MVP" among bankruptcy lawyers, according to Law 360.

Since late 2016, Bienenstock leads the legal counsel of Puerto Rico's federally appointed board, particularly in the bankruptcy cases filed under Title III of PROMESA. From May 2017 to June 2018, he dedicated more than 1,500 hours to Puerto Rico's bankruptcy. Each minute of Bienenstock costs \$12.65, and for his work, he has invoiced more than \$1.3 million for the one-year period.

Bienenstock and the Proskauer team are part of a web that comprises hundreds of contractors who provide professional services to the Board. More than 200 lawyers, consultants and other contractors (Puerto Rico's bankruptcy executives) make up the workforce of the unelected entity imposed by the U.S. federal government on Puerto Rico through the PROMESA law, according to contracts and billing examined by the CPI. To date, Puerto Rico taxpayers have paid at least \$80 million in expenses related to the Board. The entity's budget for this fiscal year would add more than \$60 million to the bill.

The Board's executive director, Natalie Jaresko, argued that the entity is "very select, very careful" in controlling spending on "world-class" professional services.

"Puerto Rico's problems are very complex. They are unique. They require the best-in-class solutions. When you look at that fiscal plan, you see it wasn't written by somebody that had a couple of ideas," she said during an interview with the CPI, justifying the spending in professional services, while underlining that the Board is a "temporary organization."

Jaresko, nevertheless, "can't say" how long the Control Board will remain in place and with it, the use of taxpayers' money in spending related to the fiscal panel. "Well, we need four years of



People in Puerto Rico demand elimination of Control Board

fiscal balance. We haven't gotten there yet. So, minimum, four [more years]," she said.

As with many of the companies and law firms working in the bankruptcy of Puerto Rico, Proskauer knows its client well. In 2014, then Governor Alejandro García Padilla retained Bienenstock and the New York-based law firm to draft a local bankruptcy law, a legislative attempt by the commonwealth government to have access to a court-ordered municipal bankruptcy regime. It failed. In the summer of 2016, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the local government and struck down the controversial legislation. It said federal law preempts this field, even if Puerto Rico had no access to Chapter 9 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court. Congress then moved to approve PROMESA and establish the unelected Control Board.

For Gerardo Carlo Altieri, a former federal bankruptcy judge, the restructuring of Puerto Rico's debt is unique in U.S. history; a "megacase" alongside the likes of Detroit, Argentina, Greece, Jefferson County (Alabama), Orange County and San Bernardino (California). It also shares many of the lawyers and consultants who worked these debt restructurings.

"This is a group of extremely specialized lawyers who go around the world to deal with these government insolvency cases and they charge a lot of money. This was already known," Carlo Altieri said.

### **Fees Exceed Initial Projections**

What turned out to be unexpected, according to the former bankruptcy judge, was the duplicity seen in consulting and legal

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## CANCEL THE DEBT AND ELIMINATE THE CONTROL BOARD

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services. Far from sharing lawyers and consultants, the Control Board and the Puerto Rican government retain their own firms to work on each fiscal task.

“I can’t speak to what the government does with its consultants and whether it uses civil servants or employees,” said Jaresko, when asked what the Board is doing to control spending by the Ricardo Rosselló Nevares administration for these services. She noted that in some cases, the federal court has required the government to have its own lawyers and consultants. PROMESA states that the Control Board is the sole representative for Puerto Rico in the court-ordered bankruptcy process.

Jaresko continued: “The Board is created to be independent and you do need an independent view. I don’t think that those who in the past, I’m not naming an institution, have been responsible for underfunding the pension systems ought to be writing the plan on the pension systems. That would not be sensible. You do need different perspectives....”

So, should the Board stay away from hiring the same advisers who participated in the government’s past fiscal decisions?

“No, I can’t say that. What I’m saying is you don’t want simply those people to tell you. You want people with experience at the table. You don’t want only people that have never seen Puerto Rico and come from somewhere else. It’s the mixture of ideas. It’s the combination of experiences, both within and outside Puerto Rico, that will bring us to the best possible solutions,” Jaresko said.

### Stop Paying the Rich and Fund Social Programs

The Control Board has about a dozen law firms under contract, in addition to 12 other consulting firms. Hourly rates for these professionals mostly hover around \$700. In Puerto Rico, a bankrupt jurisdiction, the average weekly salary barely exceeds \$500, according to recent data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

For economist and professor Heriberto Martínez Otero, there is a duplicity “or triplicity, if that word exists,” in lawyers and consultants, with the majority of these salaries leaving the Island and not staying within the local private sector. “The Board cuts down on payroll and social services, but the procurement of [professional] services has taken off,” said Martínez Otero.

As part of PROMESA’s legislative process, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated related expenditures at \$370 million during a 10-year period, until 2026. Yet actual spending would be very far from the CBO’s figure.

Both the Puerto Rican government and the Board project that spending related to Puerto Rico’s debt restructuring will top roughly \$1.4 billion within the next six years. This amount exceeds the entire budget of the local Health Department, which is \$935 million.

The CPI questioned the CBO whether it is concerned with the gap between its projections and expenses paid so far, to which the

federal agency replied it had no further comment in addition to the 2016 report it published about PROMESA.

### **A Parallel Government**

In conjunction with Proskauer, consulting firms McKinsey & Co., Ernst & Young and Citi Global Markets directly influence the Control Board’s most important decisions. They provide, develop and execute the “solutions” to the island’s fiscal crisis and debt restructuring. They advise on macroeconomic projections and cash management to infrastructure projects, budgets and fiscal plans.

For these four firms, the people of Puerto Rico will pay more than \$60 million in a one-year period.

The tasks for McKinsey, a consulting firm based in New York, include the review of economic and financial projections for Puerto Rico; development and execution of fiscal plans; liquidity management before and after Hurricane María; bankruptcy cases in federal court; coordination of the Board’s public hearings; compliance with fiscal measures; conversations with creditors and federal agencies, such as the U.S. Treasury and the evaluation of the Government’s tax proposals, among other tasks.

The firm also coordinates the Board’s work schedule and advises on proposed cuts to the Department of Corrections and the Police Bureau, as well as the consolidation of government agencies and the restructuring of the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA). In the post-Irma and María days, McKinsey interviewed travelers at Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport to obtain information about the number of people leaving the island after the September hurricanes.

In education, McKinsey worked on the closure plan for public schools. Billing reviewed by the CPI also shows similar work to the Board regarding the consolidation of government agencies and changes to the public health system promoted by Governor Rosselló Nevares.

As for Citi Global Markets — a subsidiary of the bank that served as underwriter for the Puerto Rican government in several debt transactions — it advises on the debt-restructuring process and leads the PREPA’s privatization efforts. The financial institution would receive \$24 million once the private sector takes over the distribution and transmission systems, as well as generation assets of the troubled utility.

When CPI asked whether consultants such as McKinsey and Citi work directly in the operation of public entities such as PREPA, Jaresko insisted that they are “working on the fiscal plan, period,” while conceding later that the document does include operational aspects of Puerto Rico’s entities.

### **Increasing Its Size, Expenses**

The Board will spend more money according to this fiscal year

*Visit our website: [usmlo.org](http://usmlo.org)*

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## DEMAND REPARATIONS TO PUERTO RICO FOR U.S. COLONIALISM

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budget, which began July 1. Its budget now totals \$64.5 million, an increase of 8% compared to the previous year, when it stood at \$60 million. Transportation expenses, for instance, will triple, as well as equipment purchases.

“This is the beginning of the first full year of monitoring and implementation of the fiscal measures, the structural reforms, and yes, we are adding staff. With the completion of the new fiscal plan, which reflects the post-María environment, we are much more actively engaging in the debt negotiations. When you say ‘travel,’ much of the debt negotiations, unfortunately or fortunately, happens in New York,” argued Jaresko, during the interview at the Board’s offices at 288 Muñoz Rivera in the financial district of Hato Rey.

On the building’s 11th floor, there are still empty spaces and signs of remodeling. Some equipment and furniture are still in boxes. A stand-up banner in front of one of the offices reads, “Puerto Rico Will Shine Again.” The entity rents the space to the Puerto Rican government. The Board also has offices at 26 Federal Plaza, at the Jacob Javits Federal Building in Manhattan.

The Board has a total of 18 employees, a spokesperson for the entity confirmed in writing. He added that an office slated to open in Washington, D.C., was not part of the Board’s immediate future.

Yet the entity’s current budget does include the opening of the Washington office, as well as 11 new positions, for a total of 29 full-time employees. Payroll expenses would total about \$4.1 million this fiscal year, 40% more than the previous year (\$2.9 million). Jaresko (\$625,000 annually), Revitalization Coordinator Noel Zamot (\$325,000) and in-house counsel Jaime El Koury (\$225,000) sit atop the Board’s payroll list. [...]

### Familiar Faces

Bienenstock, Proskauer’s lawyer, is not the only familiar face at the Board’s twelfth public meeting. In the back of the room, in the last rows, is Pierluisi, Puerto Rico’s former resident commissioner who currently works at O’Neill & Borges, a local law firm

retained by the Board.

According to the invoices filed by the San Juan-based law firm, the former Secretary of Justice and Resident Commissioner, a key player in the legislative approval of PROMESA, actively participates in negotiations with Puerto Rico creditors. He also advises on the fiscal plan, including the labor reform that the Board requested, as well as on the “transformation” of power utility PREPA. Pierluisi has passed judgment on some of Governor Rosselló Nevares’ fiscal measures, such as the tax reform, which has yet to be approved amid various delays since it was first announced by the administration.

As a member of O’Neill & Borges, Pierluisi charges \$390 per hour. The CPI tried to contact Pierluisi for comment, but he did not respond.

Also working closely with the island’s fiscal crisis since before the enactment of PROMESA and the commonwealth’s bankruptcy process is Adam Chepenik, a partner at Ernst & Young. Roughly four years ago, Chepenik served as one of the main federal officials in the U.S. Treasury who worked on the Puerto Rico fiscal issue, under the direction of then Secretary Jacob Lew and President Barack Obama. Now, as an Ernst & Young employee, he is one of the Board’s top consultants, billing more than \$500,000 over a one-year period. Kent Hiteshow, another former employee of the U.S. Treasury and key player on the approval of PROMESA, also works at Ernst & Young.

The Board’s lead economist, Andrew Wolfe, is a former employee of the International Monetary Fund who worked with economist Anne Krueger on the famous Krueger Report, a road map for many of the public policy decisions made by the García Padilla and Rosselló Nevares administration, as well as the Board. The release of the document in the summer of 2016 was one of the first instances in which the Puerto Rican government admitted its insolvency and sought to draw a fiscal and economic future for the island, mainly anchored in austerity policies.



Teachers demonstrating for right to education and against cuts and privatization imposed by Control Board.

# Buffalo Forum



Local Publication of the  
U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

Workers of all countries, unite!

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August-October, 2018 Vol. 22 #8-10

## WOMEN'S MARCH ON THE PENTAGON

### Buffalo Joins Anti-War Actions



Buffalo will have a sister demonstration to the Women's March on the Pentagon taking place in Washington DC October 20-21. The Buffalo action will be on October 21, 1pm at the Naval Park, downtown near Canalside. Participants are joining in demanding an end to all U.S. wars of aggression and to close all U.S. foreign bases, which number almost 900. A main purpose of the actions in DC and Buffalo is to put the issue of war and peace on the agenda for the elections. It is to take a public stand and rally the public

to join in opposing U.S. wars and standing with the peoples abroad. Security can be found in defending rights abroad and at home, not in more bombings, sanctions and interference.

An important demand being raised is to close the Niagara Air Base, which is used for drone warfare, which is criminal and designed to terrorize the peoples of the many countries targeted, not only in the Middle East but Africa as well. The base is also used for an attack squadron

**Buffalo Anti-War Action • 22**

### Candidates Meeting Organized in Buffalo

Green Party candidate for Governor, Howie Hawkins, and for comptroller, Mark Dunlea, were in Buffalo October 5 for a candidates meeting. Local Green candidates also participated. The event was well-attended with teachers,

anti-war activists, rights organizers and Green supporters participating. All were joined by former Green Party candidate for President, Jill Stein. Dunlea spoke to his campaign to divest the New York

**Candidates Meeting • 23**

### A Role Beyond Voting

As election campaigns go into full gear, there is increasing pressure on everyone to accept the role of voter. That is to be the limit. Or perhaps to participate in registering people to vote and organizing Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaigns. We are to ignore the fact that we, the people,

the majority, have no role in deciding the candidates or in determining the agenda — in deciding the key issues to address and their solutions. Why not? Why should candidates be decided by the rich and campaigns run by those only interested in getting their can-

**Role Beyond Voting • 23**

## ENSURES INDEPENDENT VOICE IS HEARD

### Buffalo Teachers Federation Endorses Howie Hawkins for Governor

At its September Delegate Council meeting, the Buffalo Teachers Federation (BTF) voted overwhelmingly to endorse Green Party candidate Howie Hawkins for Governor.

The BTF stood against the notion that the union should remain neutral in the Governor's contest. It is known for its independent stands, which

**BTF Endorses Hawkins • 24**

## RAFAEL RIVERA KILLED

### Police Killings are a Crime

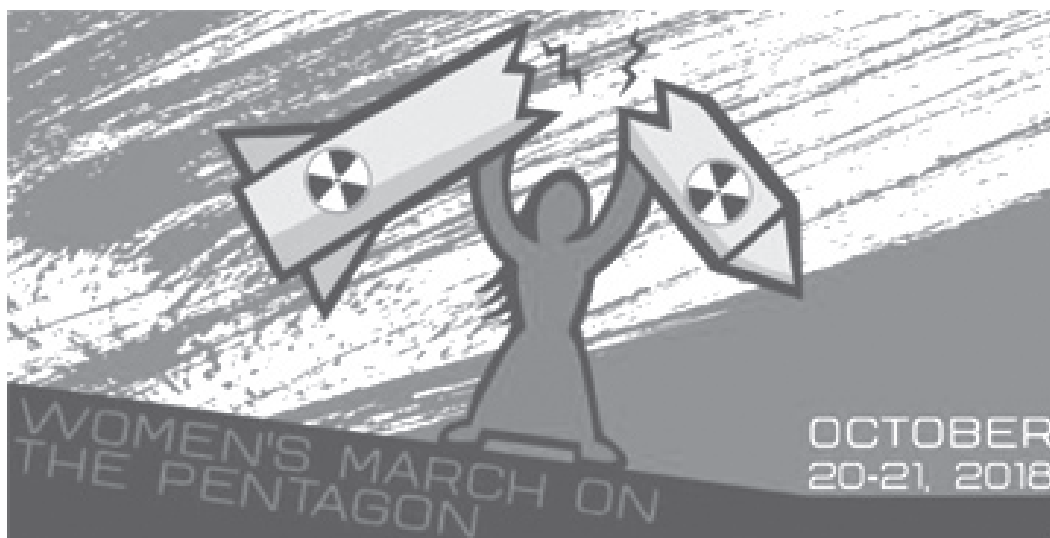
In September, Rafael "Pito" Rivera was shot and killed by a two-year veteran of the Buffalo Police Department, Elnur Karadzhaev. Rivera was shot in a parking lot on Plymouth Avenue at around 3:15am. Limited video footage, which initially was not released, indicates that Rivera was run-

ning away from Karadzhaev at the time. Family and lawyers were initially not allowed to see the body, as Rivera was shot in the back at least once. Rivera's is the third police killing of a young man of color in the last 18 months, the others being Wardel Davis and Jose

**Police Killings a Crime • 24**

21 • Buffalo Anti-War Action

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responsible for mid-air refueling of bombers. It is likely that these missions include refueling the U.S.-backed Saudi bombers for their brutal attacks on Yemen. These attacks include bombing weddings, a school bus and many other civilian targets. A contribution to peace would be to close the base and then turn it into a solar farm, capable of providing more jobs and contributing to the health and well being of the human and natural environment.

The action also serves as a means to show the inter-relationships between war, a war economy and war government and its negative consequences on the people here and abroad. It brings to the fore the need to consider a new direction for the economy and politics, an anti-war government and peace economy. Demonstrating contributes to uniting the various forces engaged in battles while also posing the need to take things further. To join in taking up a common aim that advances the fight of the people for empowerment. Organizing for an anti-war government is such an aim, one that advances the fight for the new and rejects the notion that we limit ourselves to reacting to the old, to the rulers. A pro-active stand is one that advances our own agenda and our own democracy. Buffalo Forum urges all to debate our call for an *Anti-War Government, Peace Economy and a Democracy Where We Decide*. An anti-war government is a concrete aim and organizing for it is in our hands!

SOLIDARITY ACTION  
**HERE IN BUFFALO**  
**SUNDAY**  
**OCTOBER 21st**  
**1:00 PM**  
at the  
**BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY**  
**NAVAL & MILITARY PARK**

**OUR DEMANDS ARE SIMPLE:**  
**The complete end to wars abroad.**  
**Closure of foreign bases.**  
**Slashing the Pentagon budget.**  
**Funding healthy social programs at home.**  
**An end to violence--from beds to bombs.**

#WomenMarch4Peace  
MarchOnPentagon.com  
BuffaloAntiWar@gmail.com

## 21 • A Role Beyond Voting

didate elected — not in the concerns of the people, not in finding solutions.

Teachers, healthcare workers, students, all have very definite views as to the existing problems and a strong desire to debate the issues and work out what can be done. Yet the current set up completely blocks such activity.

The opposite is needed.

It is the people, at their places of work, schools, senior homes, that should gather to identify the most pressing problems, for their collectives, their city, state and country — and solutions to begin solving them. Then candidates who can represent that agenda can be chosen by their peers. Steps in this direction can be taken now. Platform hearings, for example, can be demanded and organized, with all concerned called on to express their views. Candidates then are duty-bound not only to listen, but to uphold what the majority determines should be the platform.

For example, in campaigns here in the Buffalo region, efforts are being made to do surveys door-to-door. The call for *An Anti-War Government, Peace Economy and a Democracy Where We Decide* is being

raised. People are encouraged to express their views on issues of war and peace, the economy and democracy and join in debating how to move forward in a manner that favors the people. One pressure being contended with is this notion that the only role is as a voter. This is expressed with comments like “I agree and you’ve got my vote,” ending discussion. Instead it is important to join in debate and consider alternatives to the current electoral set up that silences the voice of the people and diverts from the problems at hand.

As well, thought should be given to identifying potential candidates, worker politicians, who represent the interests of the people and join in developing a democracy where we decide. Fellow teachers, or students, or seniors or organizers, could be potential candidates. Playing a role both in deciding the agenda and choosing candidates from among our peers is important. And success is based mainly on how far political discussion was raised and common thinking and collective action stemming from that common analysis achieved.

In terms of voting itself, it is important

to consider how to use the vote to express the rejection of the existing set up and to undermine the power of the existing politicians of the rich. In New York, one means to do this is to vote Green Party, expressing an independent stand from those now in power and contributing to having an independent voice on the ballot. Voting Green for Governor contributes to the possibility for working people to run for office without having to contend with the very difficult and time-consuming requirements for signatures just to get on the ballot. As well, a stronger vote for candidates independent of the existing cartel party system provides greater possibilities for breaking with the old and developing a new electoral set-up that empowers the people. To do so requires forces like the Green Party and independents to themselves break with the old, to not replicate the old and their campaign styles but to advance the new. This includes organizing campaigns so that the people themselves choose the candidates and determine the platform and organize to engage people in political discussion.

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## 21 • Candidates Meeting



State Pension fund from the big energy and war oligopolies. He is working to make this an issue and keep it on the agenda after the elections. Hawkins spoke to a wide

range of issues, including the right to education, protecting the environment, immediately raising the minimum wage to \$15, which is not the case now, and more. Participants were impressed both by their knowledge of the issues and their stands that favor the people.

One aim of the meeting was to provide an opportunity to those attending to give their views as to platform and campaigning. As one candidate brought out, it is important to recognize the people’s role in

determining the agenda and making sure issues like war and peace, poverty and inequality are on it. These critical matters are generally absent from the campaigns of the rich and it is up to the people, and candidates like the Greens, to bring them to the fore. Similarly, the role of those attending was not simply to listen to the candidates, but also to raise their concerns and speak to their organizing efforts. These included door-to-door work and organizing to have

the independent voice of the people heard. Candidates are considering organizing a platform hearing bringing together people from the different districts to express their concerns.

Overall participants left giving thought to how to strengthen the organizing work and further develop the campaigns to ensure they assist in building resistance and engaging people in discussion about their concerns.



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**21 • Police Killings a Crime**

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Hernandez-Rossy, who were both unarmed when they were killed. Rivera's is the only one of the three to be documented on video. Rivera was shot to death in the parking lot of former School 77, which was recently reopened as a community center and housing project.

The interaction between Rivera and Karadzhaev takes only about ten seconds. The brief video then shows three other police approaching from the shadows as Rivera lies on the ground dieing. None appear to have their weapons drawn. Karadzhaev handcuffs Rivera, who lifts his head slightly, then drops it again. The video ends there.

According to various sources, paramedics did not arrive for another five minutes and no one — not police, not the ambulance, and not fire — administered first aid or any other life-saving measure to Rivera.

Police are claiming Rivera had a gun, which the video does not verify. What is clear is that he was running away and posed no immediate threat. Few have forgotten that in the aftermath of Hernandez-Rossy's shooting death, police initially claimed that Hernandez-Rossy had shot off Officer Joseph Acquino's



ear. When they did not find any gun, the explanation shifted: The airbag in Hernandez-Rossy's car had deployed and severed Acquino's ear.

Police in Buffalo, including NFTA police, and those across the country are known for claiming their lives were threatened, that the people killed had a gun, etc. all to justify their brutality and use of force. It is not an accident that such killings takes place in cities all across the country. It is the character of police forces to be racist and use force as a first resort. Many of the police killings that have taken place, including of young children,

involve interactions that are over within a few seconds. This makes clear that there is not effort to find non-violent solutions and a culture of impunity which says people, especially African Americans, can be gunned down and killed. There is no accountability, with police very rarely charged and even more rarely convicted — although one recent Chicago case did convict the officer for second-degree murder.

Police killings are crimes that need to be punished, from the top down. That is the district attorneys have responsibility to level charges and mount serious cases that address the culture of racism and impunity inherent to the police forces. The top Chiefs also have responsibility, as well as the individuals involved. Those directly responsible must be held accountable, but so too must those at the top that foster and encourage use of force and violence.

*Buffalo Forum* condemns the killing of Rivera and demands justice for all those facing police brutality and violence. And justice means charges from the top down and more generally disarming the police and empowering the people themselves to defend their communities.

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**21 • BTF Endorses Hawkins for Governor**

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carry weight in the region and statewide. Members who stood to speak brought out the importance of having the BTF voice heard and that remaining neutral was not an option. Indeed remaining silent could be seen as support for Cuomo, when what was needed was a strong stand for a candidate that defends the right to education. Hawkins is known for joining actions by teachers and taking their concerns seriously. He rejects the many attacks, such as through Common Core testing used to justify state takeover using receivership. He calls for a major \$4 billion increase in funding, improving teachers' working conditions which are learning conditions for students, including by desegregating

the schools.

Members also spoke to Cuomo's long history of supporting and funding privatization of public schools, using private charter schools, as well as efforts to undermine the teaching profession. Those attending were reminded of various rallies, where the BTF opposed Cuomo. These included a mock trial at Klienmans, where Cuomo was indicted, with substantial evidence, on five charges: Depriving students of the funding necessary to provide them with their NYS constitutional right to a sound basic education; underfunding Erie Community College, UB and Buffalo State College; brutalizing students by forcing them to take

standardized tests; falsely labeling schools and teachers as failing by, in addition to forcing them to take the standardized test, ignoring the fact that these tests penalize schools and teachers with large numbers of students speaking little or no English; attempting to undermine local control of schools by promoting state takeovers using receivership.

Speakers reiterated that given Cuomo's record and given Hawkins represents an alternative consistent with the demands of teachers for their rights and those of their students, the BTF needed to endorse Hawkins. And that is what the delegates did, ensuring the voice of BTF was heard loud and clear.