

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2725

To establish a commission to address the fundamental repercussions of a misguided intervention, by the United States on the Dominican Republic between 1916–1924 and 1965–1966, including to study and consider an apology and proposals for the repair of relations and reconciliation with the people of the Dominican Republic, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 21, 2021

Mr. ESPAILLAT introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To establish a commission to address the fundamental repercussions of a misguided intervention, by the United States on the Dominican Republic between 1916–1924 and 1965–1966, including to study and consider an apology and proposals for the repair of relations and reconciliation with the people of the Dominican Republic, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Commission on United
3 States Occupations Act” or the “La Comisión de las
4 ocupaciones norteamericanas Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

6 Congress finds the following:

7 (1) The United States established diplomatic
8 relations with the Dominican Republic in 1884 fol-
9 lowing its independence. Ever since, the country has
10 witnessed periods of dictatorship, austerity, interven-
11 tions, and political insurrection, along with an in-
12 creasing national debt that led to two occupations by
13 the United States in the Dominican Republic.

14 (2) After the Civil War, much of America’s at-
15 tention turned to rebuilding itself during the Recon-
16 struction Era. For various years, the United States
17 Navy had wanted a naval base in the Caribbean to
18 conduct its naval operations. The Dominican Repub-
19 lic had a suitable bay (the Samaná Bay). In 1869,
20 President Ulysses S. Grant attempted the annex-
21 ation of Santo Domingo with the promise of even-
22 tual statehood. The annexation treaty failed to reach
23 the two-thirds vote needed (the vote was a tie) in the
24 Senate, falling one vote short and thus preventing
25 the Dominican Republic from becoming a United
26 States Territory.

1 (3) By 1916, the national debt had swollen to
2 well over \$30 million, and the United States Govern-
3 ment stepped in to control the various custom
4 houses in the major ports.

5 (4) On May 13, 1916, a contingent of the
6 United States Marine Corps landed and within two
7 months took control of the nation, imposing a mili-
8 tary government under the command of Rear Admi-
9 ral Harry Shepard Knapp, which resulted in eight
10 years of strong United States military presence and
11 of great resentment from Dominican nationals who
12 lost their sovereignty at the hands of United States
13 forces.

14 (5) Upon withdrawal in 1924, by orders of
15 President Warren Harding, the United States came
16 to an agreement with the Dominican Republic which
17 guaranteed customs duties to continue paying off its
18 national long-standing debts. In the same year, when
19 United States forces withdrew, 144 marines were
20 dead and 50 were injured. The Dominicans suffered
21 950 casualties between dead and injured.

22 (6) The occupation sequel had its effect in the
23 years to come, through the rise in power of Rafael
24 Leonidas Trujillo. Trujillo, a member of the Na-
25 tional Guard created in the early 1919 by the

1 United States, and despite being a person of ques-
2 tionable moral character, received support from the
3 United States Government. During his 31 years of
4 dictatorship, Trujillo ruled the Dominican Republic
5 with an iron fist and diverted funds for his army
6 and to suppress internal dissent.

7 (7) The second intervention and occupation of
8 the Dominican Republic by the United States Armed
9 Forces, called “Operation Power Pack”, took place
10 between 1965–1966, after a period of political insta-
11 bility and military coup following the assassination
12 of dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo in 1961.

13 (8) In 1962, Juan Bosch became the first elect-
14 ed president of the Dominican Republic, after 31
15 years of tyranny. Bosch tried to establish a demo-
16 cratic, secular constitution, but on September 25,
17 1963, a military coup overthrew Bosch and replaced
18 him with a junta led by Donald Reid Cabral.

19 (9) President Lyndon Johnson sent a total of
20 42,000 American troops, supplemented by an Inter-
21 American Peace Force (2,000 troops) to the island
22 to support “La Junta” led by Donald Reid Cabral.
23 Shortly after the 1965 Civil War or “La Revolución
24 del 65”, questionable elections were held, and these

1 resulted in the election of Joaquin Balaguer to the
2 Presidency of the Dominican Republic.

3 (10) Balaguer, a previous member of the Tru-
4 jillo-led government, ruled the Dominican Republic
5 for the following 12 years. This period was charac-
6 terized by turmoil, alleged disappearances, and
7 deaths of hundreds of young political men and social
8 activists.

9 (11) The injustice that flourished in the Domin-
10 ican Republic during this era constituted an immoral
11 and tyrannic regime, depriving its citizens from a
12 free and sovereign government for 12 more years.

13 (12) Upon withdrawal in 1966 when United
14 States forces withdrew, the United States suffered
15 239 casualties, with 27 killed in action, 189 wound-
16 ed in action, and 21 noncombat deaths. The Domini-
17 can Republic suffered over 7,000 (civilians and
18 Armed Forces) casualties, with 4,275 killed in action
19 and 3,000 wounded

20 (13) Approximately 5,225 Dominicans and 192
21 Americans lost their lives during the United States
22 occupations of the Dominican Republic. During
23 these occupations and interventions 239 Americans
24 and over 3,000 Dominicans were injured.

1 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT AND DUTIES.**

2 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established the Com-
3 mission to Study and Develop Reconciliation Proposals for
4 Dominican Republic (in this Act referred to as the “Com-
5 mission”).

6 (b) DUTIES.—The Commission shall perform the fol-
7 lowing duties:

8 (1) Identifying, documenting, examining, com-
9 piling, and synthesizing the relevant corpus of evi-
10 dentiary documentation relating to the United
11 States interest to incorporate the Dominican Repub-
12 lic as United States territory in 1869 in the “Annex-
13 ation for Santo Domingo Treaty”.

14 (2) Identifying, documenting, examining, com-
15 piling, and synthesizing the relevant corpus of evi-
16 dentiary documentation relating to the United
17 States military occupations in the Dominican Repub-
18 lic between 1916–1924, including facts related to
19 the following:

20 (A) United States involvement in the Do-
21 minican Republic’s affairs, and its financial and
22 military support to the Trujillo dictatorship.

23 (B) The treatment of the Dominican peo-
24 ple under the Trujillo dictatorship, including
25 violent repression of basic rights and freedoms,
26 with the tacit support of the United States.

1 (C) The lingering negative effects of dicta-
2 torship and the matters described in subpara-
3 graphs (A) and (B) on current Dominican Re-
4 public citizens and society.

5 (3) Identifying, documenting, examining, com-
6 piling, and synthesizing the relevant corpus of evi-
7 dentiary documentation relating to the United
8 States military occupations in the Dominican Repub-
9 lic between 1965–1966, including facts related to
10 the lingering negative effects of Balaguer’s 12 years
11 in power on current Dominican Republic citizens
12 and society.

13 (4) Identifying, documenting, examining, and
14 compiling an accurate number of casualties, includ-
15 ing deaths and injuries during all United States oc-
16 cupations and interventions in the Dominican Re-
17 public.

18 (5) Identifying, documenting, examining, and
19 compiling accurate cost of damage or destruction of
20 private property during all United States occupa-
21 tions and interventions in the Dominican Republic.

22 (6) Recommending appropriate ways to educate
23 the United States public of the Commission’s find-
24 ings.

1 (7) Recommending appropriate remedies in con-
2 sideration of the Commission's findings on the mat-
3 ters described in subparagraphs (A), (B), and (C) of
4 paragraph (2). In making such recommendations,
5 the Commission shall address among other issues,
6 the following questions:

7 (A) How such recommendations comport
8 with international standards of remedy for
9 wrongs and injuries caused by the United
10 States Government, including repair and rec-
11 onciliation efforts, as understood by various rel-
12 evant international protocols, laws, and find-
13 ings.

14 (B) How the United States Government
15 may offer a formal apology on behalf of the
16 people of the United States for the invasions
17 and occupations of the Dominican Republic.

18 (C) How the repercussions resulting from
19 matters described in subparagraphs (A), (B),
20 and (C) of paragraph (2) may be reversed and
21 provide appropriate policies, programs, projects,
22 and recommendations for the purpose of revers-
23 ing the effects of the invasions and occupations.

24 (D) How the role played by the Organiza-
25 tion of American States (OAS) during the

1 1965–66 United States Occupation in the Do-
2 minican Republic to legitimize the North Amer-
3 ican Intervention of April 28, 1965, may have
4 had tremendous repercussions on current Do-
5 minican Republic citizens and society.

6 (E) How the OAS settled a “historic griev-
7 ance” with the Dominican Republic when its
8 member nations voted to publicly apologize for
9 approving the military occupation of the coun-
10 try during the Revolution of April 1965.

11 (c) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 24
12 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
13 Commission shall submit to Congress a written report of
14 its findings and recommendations under this section.

15 (d) MEMBERSHIP.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—

17 (A) STATED MEMBERS.—The following
18 shall be members of the Commission:

19 (i) The Under Secretary for Western
20 Hemisphere Affairs of the Department of
21 State.

22 (ii) The United States Ambassador to
23 the Dominican Republic.

24 (B) APPOINTED MEMBERS.—

1 (i) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90
2 days after the date of the enactment of
3 this Act, the following shall be members of
4 the Commission, appointed as follows:

5 (I) One member shall be ap-
6 pointed by the President of the
7 United States.

8 (II) Two members shall be ap-
9 pointed by the Speaker of the House
10 of Representatives, in consultation
11 with the minority leader.

12 (III) Two members shall be ap-
13 pointed by the majority leader of the
14 Senate, in consultation with the mi-
15 nority leader.

16 (ii) UNDER INTERNATIONAL CO-
17 OPERATION.—The President shall seek to
18 negotiate with the Dominican Republic to
19 seek, to the extent practicable, the fol-
20 lowing as members of the Commission:

21 (I) The Dominican Republic Am-
22 bassador to the United States.

23 (II) The Ambassador permanent
24 representative of the Dominican Re-

1 public to the Organization of Amer-
2 ican States (OAS).

3 (2) QUALIFICATIONS.—All members of the
4 Commission shall be persons who are especially
5 qualified to serve on the Commission by virtue of
6 their education, training, activism, or experience,
7 particularly in the fields of Dominican Republic rela-
8 tions or reparatory justice.

9 (3) TERMS.—The term of office for members
10 shall be for the life of the Commission. A vacancy
11 in the Commission shall not affect the powers of the
12 Commission and shall be filled in the same manner
13 in which the original appointment was made.

14 (4) MEETINGS.—The Commission shall conduct
15 its initial meeting not later than 120 days after the
16 date of the enactment of this Act. The Commission
17 shall establish rules of procedure at such meeting.
18 All meetings of the Commission shall be public. The
19 Commission should meet not less often than once a
20 month, including virtual meetings by either the en-
21 tire Commission or any member thereof.

22 (5) QUORUM.—Seven members of the Commis-
23 sion shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number
24 may hold hearings.

1 (6) CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR.—The Commission
2 shall elect a Chair and Vice Chair from among its
3 members. The term of office of each shall be for the
4 life of the Commission.

5 (7) COMPENSATION.—Each member of the
6 Commission who is not an officer or employee of the
7 Federal Government shall be compensated at a rate
8 equal to the daily equivalent of the annual rate of
9 basic pay prescribed for level IV of the Executive
10 Schedule under section 5315 of title 5, United
11 States Code, for each day (including travel time)
12 during which such member is engaged in the per-
13 formance of the duties of the Commission. All mem-
14 bers of the Commission who are officers or employ-
15 ees of the United States shall serve without com-
16 pensation in addition to that received for their serv-
17 ices as officers or employees of the United States.

18 (8) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—The members of the
19 Commission shall be allowed travel expenses, includ-
20 ing per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates author-
21 ized for employees of agencies under subchapter I of
22 chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while
23 away from their homes or regular places of business
24 in the performance of the duties of the Commission.

25 (e) POWERS OF THE COMMISSION.—

1 (1) HEARINGS AND SESSIONS.—The Commis-
2 sion may, for the purpose of carrying out the provi-
3 sions of this section, hold such hearings and sit and
4 act at such times and at such places in the United
5 States, and request the attendance and testimony of
6 such witnesses and the production of such books,
7 records, correspondence, memoranda, papers, and
8 documents, as the Commission considers appro-
9 priate. The Commission may invoke the aid of an
10 appropriate United States district court to require,
11 by subpoena or otherwise, such attendance, testi-
12 mony, or production.

13 (2) POWERS OF MEMBERS.—Any member of
14 the Commission may, if authorized by the Commis-
15 sion, take any action which the Commission is au-
16 thorized to take by this subsection.

17 (3) OBTAINING OFFICIAL DATA.—The Commis-
18 sion may acquire directly from the head of any de-
19 partment, agency, or instrumentality of the executive
20 branch of the United States Government, available
21 information which the Commission considers useful
22 in the discharge of its duties. All departments, agen-
23 cies, and instrumentalities of the executive branch of
24 the United States Government shall cooperate with
25 the Commission with respect to such information

1 and shall furnish all information requested by the
2 Commission to the extent permitted by law.

3 (f) TERMINATION.—The Commission shall terminate
4 90 days after the date on which the Commission submits
5 its report to the Congress under subsection (c).

6 (g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be
8 appropriated \$10,000,000 to carry out this section.

9 (2) AVAILABILITY.—Amounts appropriated pur-
10 suant to the authorization under paragraph (1) are
11 authorized to remain available until the termination
12 of the Commission in accordance with subsection (f).

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