

Puerto Rico Prepares To Rid Airport Runways Of Basking Iguanas
Associated Press, 2 June 2006

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico - Green iguanas basking on runways at Puerto Rico's largest international airport have become such a hazard that this U.S. Caribbean territory plans to rid the area of the invasive reptile species, an official said Friday.

Javier Velez Arocho, secretary of the island's Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, said he hopes that teams can begin killing or capturing the iguanas, which he described as "a plague," in roughly two weeks at the Luis Munoz Marin International Airport near the capital of San Juan.

An effort to capture the iguanas alive was under consideration, Velez said at a news conference. But authorities also were discussing other options: flooding burrows where the iguana's lay their eggs or sending teams armed with .22-calibre rifles to shoot the adult reptiles, which can grow to be more than a metre long.

Flight landings and takeoffs have been delayed because of the reptiles, which are sold in Puerto Rico as exotic pets. The cold-blooded lizards also create traffic hazards as they soak up the sun on roads near the airport.

Carla Capalli, of the Humane Society of Puerto Rico, said she recognized that the iguanas posed safety problems but questioned some of the methods Velez suggested to eradicate them.

"I understand that they have become a plague, a danger and a threat and that they must be removed from the area, but . . . 22-calibre rifles are also a public security danger," Capalli said.