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1972 Treaty Grants the United Nations Control Over American Historical Landmarks

by Melissa Wiedbrauk

When our Founding Fathers sparked the American Revolution and signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776, they sought self-government for the American colonies and an escape from the dominance of England.

The Founding Fathers would be shocked to learn that some of their successors have given control of key American sovereign territory to other nations.

Through an international treaty, the United States is allowing the United Nations and its member countries access to and control of American soil - in particular, our historic buildings and treasured wilderness.

In 1972, our government signed the United Nations' World Heritage Treaty, a treaty that creates "World Heritage Sites" and Biosphere Reserves." Selected for their cultural, historical or natural significance, national governments are obligated to protect these landmarks under U.N. mandate.1 Since 1972, 68 percent of all U.S. national parks, monuments and preserves have been designated as World Heritage Sites.2

Twenty important symbols of national pride, along with 51 million acres of our wilderness, are World Heritage Sites or Biosphere

Reserves now falling under the control of the U.N. This includes the Statue of Liberty, Thomas Jefferson's home at Monticello, the Washington Monument, the Brooklyn Bridge, Yellowstone National Park, Yosemite, the Florida Everglades and the Grand Canyon - to name just a few.

Most ironic of all is the listing of Philadelphia's Independence Hall. The birthplace of our Republic is now an official World Heritage Site. The very place where our Founding Fathers signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution - the documents that set America apart from other nations and created the world's longest-standing democracy - is no longer fully under the control of our government and the American people.

Protection of our treasured places is a sound undertaking, but doing so by ceding control of our sovereign territory to a foreign power is wrong and threatens our rights and freedoms.

In 1995, Crown Butte Mines in the New World Mining District in Montana was forced to abandon a mine development project after the U.N. listed Yellowstone National Park as a "World Heritage Site in Danger."3 Crown Butte proposed to mine a medium-size underground operation on private property three miles from the boundary of Yellowstone. The project would have employed 280 people and generated $230 million in revenue.4

This mining project was not unique. The area had been mined for 150 years before Yellowstone National Park was established. Crown Butte had worked along with the U.S. Forest Service to ensure that all of the necessary precautions were being taken to ensure that the project would be environmentally responsible. Crown Butte had won an award for excellence in 1992 and was considered to be a "showcase operation."5

None of these factors mattered to the U.N.'s World Heritage Committee. Citing the project as a potential threat, the U.N. exerted its authority to force the abandonment of the project. It did not matter to the U.N. that this violated Crown Butte's exercise of its private property rights under the U.S. Constitution. Nor did the U.N. care that its action also went against U.S. federal law prohibiting the inclusion of non-federal property within a U.S. World Heritage Site without the consent of the property owner.6

Although it has not happened yet, under the World Heritage Treaty the U.N. has the legal right to someday restrict us, as American citizens, from visiting our national treasures.

Many environmentalists believe that the mere presence of humans disturbs the environment. As such, it is not farfetched to wonder when the politically-correct U.N. will ban the American public from Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, the Florida Everglades and other precious natural wonders now visited annually by millions of tourists.

Ironically, banning generations of young people from visiting our natural wonders would undermine the public's appreciation for the spectacular gifts of nature, and undercut support for environmental protection.

Unfortunately, the World Heritage Treaty is just one of a series of government actions that is stripping away the gift of freedom we received from our Founding Fathers.

To stop this erosion of sovereign rights, federal legislation has been introduced to restore the rights of Americans against this threat to freedom. The American Land Sovereignty Protection Act seeks to preserve the sovereignty of the United States over public lands and preserve the private property rights of private citizens. It would require congressional oversight of U.N. land designations within the U.S.7

We should not turn our backs on the Founding Fathers by surrendering the precious gift of sovereignty. We should treasure and protect it.

Footnotes:

1 "World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves Fact Sheet," United States House or Representatives Committee on Resources.
2 "American Land Should Be Controlled By Americans," press release, The National Center for Public Policy Research, Washington, D.C., February 24, 1999, available on the Internet at http://www.nationalcenter.org/PRLandSov299.html.
3 Kathleen Benedetto, National Wilderness Institute, testimony before the United States Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources,

Washington, D.C., May 26, 1999.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 "American Land Should Be Controlled By Americans."

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