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The Alaska - Hawaii connection

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(Editors note: Part five concludes this special report, first published in the Fall 2003 edition of Native Americas, the journal of hemispheric indigenous issues published by First Nations Development Institute.)

A request for an interview with Jade Danner yielded a phone call asking to have the questions emailed to her.

Question: Are you or have you ever been a paid lobbyist for Arctic Power or any other Alaska corporation, specifically with interests in oil development?

Answer: "I've never been a 'lobbyist,' paid or unpaid, for Arctic Power or any other Alaska corporation with an interest in oil development. Two years ago, I was contracted by Arctic Power for six weeks to assist the Inupiat people in their efforts to set the record straight and educate the Hawaii public about their position in the ANWR debate ? I was not paid to 'lobby' government officials or people in positions of power who could influence the outcome of the ANWR debate in Congress, nor have I ever written a letter or spoken to anyone in Congress about this issue. I was not and am not presently a paid lobbyist."

State of Alaska public records include a copy of a contract, with no date of termination, between Danner and Associates and Arctic Power, signed by Jade Danner on Feb. 15, 2002. It is an agreement to pay Danner and Associates, "A flat monthly fee of \$5,000 for services." Included in the "Scope of Work" section is: "Development of a Strategic Plan in conjunction with Arctic Power for Hawaii, Monitor and respond to opposing editorials/stories in local news media, Provide periodic updates to Arctic Power about activities and progress in Hawaii, Communicate with Hawaii's Senators' staff to determine how to be most effective in

assisting with educating the Hawaiian populace about the facts of ANWR, other projects as may be assigned by Arctic Power," and more.

Staff members from both Senators Inouye and Akaka say they have no knowledge of Jade Danner being paid to represent drilling in the Refuge. "I have met with both Jade and Robin Danner," said Patricia Zell, aide to Senator Inouye and Chief Counsel to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, "and we've never discussed ANWR. I have no knowledge of either of them being paid lobbyists."

Paul Cardus, Senator Akaka's press secretary, similarly said that Jade Danner never met with the senator or anyone on his staff about drilling in the Refuge. "No one was aware of her role as a lobbyist, no one met with her to discuss ANWR." He continued, "Jade Danner never met with or spoke to the Senator."

Yet, payment from Arctic Power to Danner and Associates, for specifically deflecting Native Hawaiian criticism of Senator Akaka on the matter of drilling in the ANWR, is stated in such a way as to suggest Senator Akaka is aware of business arrangement between Danner and Associates and Arctic Power. A Danner and Associates ANWR Activity Log lists eight activities undertaken on behalf of Arctic Power. Number 7 reads: "? Worked to defeat local attempts to use Hawaiian forums as an avenue to pass resolutions opposing Senator Akaka's position on ANWR. Provide appropriate follow-up in communicating action to Senator Akaka's office."

Robin Danner's connection to Arctic Power has yet to be fully explained. When asked if she has ever been financially compensated for efforts on behalf of drilling in the Refuge done by her through the Council she responded, "The answer is clearly no; I have not done any lobbying through CNHA."

Robin Danner did, however, in her position with the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement, bill Arctic Power to reimburse travel expenses for attendance at a Teamster's Honolulu Convention. If any of that money was reimbursed directly to the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement that would mean Alaska oil lobbying money went directly into the Council's bank account. If the travel expenses were not reimbursed to the Council, then Robin Danner used Council money to represent

Arctic Power at the Teamster's Convention. When asked about this, she explained that the Council's reimbursement form was a matter of reverse invoicing for airline coupons that were "used to attend a regional conference of the Teamsters ? I was invited to speak at their conference, accepted and did so. Jade did not attend, she did not accompany me, she was not invited."

There are numerous contradictions in this statement, the substance of which point to Robin Danner receiving payment from Arctic Power. Robin's insistence that her sister Jade was not present and did not give a speech at the Teamster's Convention means that money paid to Danner and Associates from Arctic Power was for the speech Robin delivered at the Teamster's Convention. Number 2 on the Danner and Associates ANWR Activity Log reads: "Prepare and deliver speech to the Teamsters with Presentation of Bowhead Ear Drum to Senator Daniel Akaka ? Provide appropriate feedback to Senator Akaka's office and Arctic Power." This activity log, along with a request for travel reimbursement that was signed by Robin Danner on Feb. 27, 2002, became part of a \$7,500 Danner and Associates invoice submitted to Arctic Power in March 2002.

As it stands, two politically powerful Hawaiians, with ties to Alaska oil money and two U.S. Senators, have garnered tremendous support for the Akaka Bill and inspired a dearth of support for the Gwich'in and their efforts to keep drilling out the Refuge. Their economic dealings shine an explanatory light on the political relationship between the Hawaiian people and Hawaii's Congressional delegation, and a few unsettling similarities between Hawaiians and Alaska Natives. In addition to the struggle to survive physically, economically, and culturally, the Gwich'in and the Inupiat have a valuable lesson for Hawaiians.

If federal recognition can lead to Hawaiians relinquishing claims to any part of Hawaii, they could end up in a situation like that between the Inupiat and the Gwich'in, which tends to define as corporate Natives versus cultural Natives. Right now, the acreage of Hawaiian Homestead land, which is part of the nearly two million acres of "Crown and Government land" renamed "ceded lands" when the United States took control, is virtually the same amount of land the Alaska Natives ended up with after their settlement: just 10 percent of what was once all theirs.

In late-May 2003, the state agency of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, now lobbying harder than anyone for passage of the Akaka Bill, authorized \$450,000 for the services of international law firm Patton Boggs, LLP. Also on the Patton Boggs' client list is, indeed, Arctic Power.

It's been reported that Thomas Boggs Jr., has taken a personal interest in the Hawaiian Federal Recognition bill. A small bit of history about who Thomas Boggs Jr., is: son of the late Senator Hale Boggs whose plane went down in Alaska and was never found. (Senator Boggs is portrayed by Walter Mathau as the senator who didn't believe the Warren Commission in Oliver Stone's film, JFK). When Boggs Jr.'s firm was known as Patton Boggs & Blow, Boggs lobbied the hill during the Carter Administration against restrictions on the sale of weapons to Guatemala. The firm represented the Guatemalan General turned President, Romeo Lucas Garcia.

Boggs personally represented Amigos del Pais, a group of landowners in Guatemala that helped fund Garcia's death squads, supported throughout the 1980s by the Reagan Administration's CIA, and responsible for the deaths of over 200,000 of Guatemala's indigenous peoples, workers, and human rights activists. That the Office of Hawaiian Affairs would put themselves into business - and by proxy, all the indigenous people of Hawaii - with a firm that has a history of representing the interests of systemic murderers of indigenous peoples is indeed troublesome.

Even beyond the uncertainties of Hawaiian political identity, Alaska's Native and corporate conflicts, and the strange bedfellows of a Hawaii State agency that is supposed to represent the Hawaiian people, there remain questions about power and political process. Is it ethical for the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement to use Alaska Native oil money to sell the Hawaiian community on the Akaka Bill, or for its CEO to receive payment from the oil industry and the State of Alaska for influencing Hawaiians and Senator Akaka on the issue of drilling in the Refuge? If Alaska's oil industry can reach into the Hawaiian community and make its will known, what other influence does it have in determining the future of Hawaiians?