

# Volcanic Islands

**A century after the United States overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy, a movement to grant sovereignty to the islands' native people has erupted into view.**

**BY DAVID C. MORRISON**

**H**ONOLULU—In 1970, Hayden F. Burgess, a lawyer of Hawaiian extraction, was in the midst of a four-year stint in the Air Force. "I was a very proud American, one of the flag-wavers," he said.

Then Burgess read a book by Hawaii's last monarch, Queen Liliuokalani. *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* (Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1964) describes how, on Jan. 17, 1893, a cabal of American businessmen, aided by U.S. Minister Plenipotentiary John L. Stevens and 162 marines, toppled her throne, setting up a "provisional" government in thrall to sugar planters.

That account is hardly in dispute. In a December 1893 speech to Congress, President Grover Cleveland, who took office two months after the sugar coup, declared that "by an act of war, committed with the participation of a diplomatic representative of the United States and without authority of Congress, the government of a feeble but friendly and confiding people has been overthrown."

But, Burgess said, "it was a story I had never known. I came to understand that there had been a conspiracy in Hawaii that was not taught in our schools here." He has since "recovered" a Hawaiian name, Poka La'enui. He "corrects" his passport to indicate Hawaiian, not U.S. citizenship. He says he has not filed a federal income tax return since 1979. "My personal feeling is that the Americans must leave," he said.

In urging independence from the United States—which formally annexed Hawaii in 1898 under the expansionist McKinley Administration and incorporated the territory as a state in 1959—Burgess may orbit the fringes of the mounting Hawaiian sovereignty movement. But his reawakening to Hawaiian culture and national feeling is an evermore common journey for the 220,000 or so people here who boast Hawaiian ancestry. (Fewer than 1 per cent of the state's 1.2 million citizens are full-blooded Hawaiians.)

In a joint resolution approved two



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**Land is a big issue: Native Hawaiians want restitution for land taken from them and are fighting to protect ancient sites.**



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**John D. Waihee, the first native Hawaiian governor. He took down U.S. flags to mark the monarchy's ouster.**

years ago, the state Legislature, hardly a radical body, declared that it "encourages the promotion of debate revolving around the future of Hawaii as a Pacific Island society, within or without the United States of America."

And last June, a group of Hawaiians set out to stage a 24-hour "prayer and healing" vigil at the historic Iolani Palace in Honolulu. After revoking their protest permit, local police arrested 32 activists on the very steps where Liliuokalani had surrendered her government a century before.

With this year marking the 100th anniversary of the overthrow, the sovereignty drive has gained powerful momentum. In mid-January, Democratic Gov. John D. Waihee III, Hawaii's first governor of Hawaiian extraction, ordered that the American flags over the state capitol complex be taken down during a five-day commemoration and reenactment of Liliuokalani's unseating. Only the Hawaiian state flag—and the monarchy's old standard—were kept flying.

"It had nothing to do with the American flag, really, but with flying the Hawaiian flag alone," Waihee said in an interview. "There was no ceremony, like hauling down the American flag. There was no disrespect."

Nonetheless, veterans' groups raised a hue and cry. Two Army troopers from

Schofield Barracks in central Oahu marched downtown brandishing a large American flag. Hawaii's lawmakers in Washington—including Democrat Daniel K. Akaka, Hawaii's first Senator with Hawaiian blood—questioned Waihee's order.

As that reaction suggests, the sovereignty movement is stirring some disquiet among local haoles, as people not of native Hawaiian extraction are called. "Some extremists," John Griffin, a former *Honolulu Advertiser* editor, wrote recently, "sound as if they want not just justice but a jihad or holy war against non-Hawaiians."

### Lost Lands

The sovereignty movement, in fact, embraces dozens of organizations espousing a wide range of tactics and desired outcomes. At the more anachronistic end of the spectrum, a group gathered last June at the palace, now a museum, to crown "King Kamehameha VI" of a restored "Kingdom of Hawai'i"—using the traditional spelling of the kingdom's name.

"Viewpoints are so disparate and emotions so highly charged around these issues," said Carl M. Varady, an American Civil Liberties Union attorney who has represented Hawaiian activists, that "it's tough to form any coalitions."

Hawaii's much-huckstered "spirit of aloha" broke down during a round of speeches delivered after about 15,000 people marched to the palace to mark the overthrow centennial on Jan. 17. Mililani B. Trask, the leader of the pro-sovereignty Ka Lahui Hawai'i (Hawaiian Nation), bitterly denounced Hawaii's "Democratic boys' club" and ripped up a proclamation from the moderate 'Ohana (Family) Councils praising Waihee and Sen. Daniel K. Inouye, D-Hawaii, for supporting a limited brand of sovereignty.

Kawehi Kanui Gill, a member of La Ea O Hawai'i Nei, another centrist group, then took to the stage to denounce Trask for doing "an un-Hawaiian thing by criticizing other Hawaiians in public."

Ka Lahui Hawai'i, the largest and most vocal of the independent sovereignty outfits, staged the first of three constitutional conventions in 1987. Declaring itself a "nation within a nation," the group has demanded the same rights held by other

Native American nations that Washington recognizes. Alone among America's major native peoples, Hawaiians do not enjoy that status. The organization, which says it has 17,000 "citizens," has received a \$172,000 federal grant for "self-governance training."

Another major player in the drama is the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), a state agency created in 1978 whose nine trustees are elected by state residents of Hawaiian ancestry. Its purpose is to receive reparations for lost lands and to provide education and other aid to Hawaiians of at least 50 per cent native blood. (That criterion has caused friction with those having less than 50 per cent Hawaiian blood.)

On April 19, Waihee signed legislation to pay the OHA \$136 million in "back rent" on 1.2 million acres once held by the Hawaiian crown but ceded to the United States after the overthrow of Queen Liliuokalani. The federal government, in turn, ceded those lands back to the new state of Hawaii in 1959. But they were never returned to the Hawaiian people.

At issue, too, are 200,000 acres of "homelands" set aside under the 1921 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act for homesteading by native Hawaiians. The state's Hawaiian Homelands Department has drawn fire for leasing the bulk of the real estate to businesses.

As always in nationalist conflicts, land is a major bone of contention. An OHA official has termed the \$136 million payout merely "a start toward reimbursing Hawaiians for land taken from them." (Other government agencies have said, in effect, "That's it: take it or leave it.") Meanwhile, Ka Lahui Hawai'i wants a say in the disposition of the ceded lands, the homelands and trust properties held by successors to royal and planter families—as well as 231,000 acres occupied by U.S. military installations.

After tourism, which accounts for a third of Hawaii's economy, the U.S. military is the state's second-largest income generator. It controls a fourth of the land on Oahu, where 80 per cent of the state's population resides.

That role would be reduced only marginally by the latest Pentagon base-closure proposal, released in mid-March. If, as proposed, the Barbers Point Naval Air Station is closed and six aircraft squadrons are shifted from Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station to California, Hawaii would lose 2,420 military and 1,162 civilian jobs.

The military's looming presence has put it on a collision course with the more determined sovereignty activists.

In mid-April, three dozen members of the 'Ohana Council of the Hawaiian

Kingdom occupied an unused coast guard navigation station on Hawaii, the so-called Big Island. "We're letting people know we can be independent and practice our laws," council spokesman Albert Kaho'opi'i said.

Kahoolawe, a 45-square-mile uninhabited island lying off Maui, has the dubious distinction of being the only site listed on the National Register of Historic Places that is regularly bombed by Navy jets on practice runs. A drive begun in the mid-1960s to reclaim the island, which hosts a wealth of ancient ritual sites, culminated recently in a commission's recommendation that Kahoolawe be turned over to the state as a Hawaiian cultural preserve. Removing unexploded ordnance from the island will run at least \$120 million, though, and it is unclear who will supply the money and how long the cleanup might take.

The Army's application last year for permission to dump as many as 1,600 tons of inoperable munitions every year in Oahu's Makua Valley has also generated environmental and cultural sparks. "Greater attention must be paid to the present use of lands that may in the future be returned to the state or the Hawaiian people," two state House panels urged in a recent joint report on Makua Valley.

### EMOTIONAL FLASHPOINTS

The hottest current battle rages over construction of the \$1 billion H-3 highway. Running through the Halawa Valley, and connecting the marine air station at Kaneohe with Pearl Harbor Naval Base, the H-3 has been a brawling point since the mid-1960s. In March 1992, an archeologist at Honolulu's Bishop Museum announced that the road would pave over the remnants of two rare *heiau*, or ancient stone temples.

Hawaiian activists by the hundreds have since descended on the valley to mount demonstrations, vigils and religious rites. Last August, 13 women were arrested and evicted as they attempted to place offerings at the *heiau* when the state was planning a major cement pour. The next month, the state Transportation Department agreed not to arrest Hawaiians visiting the *heiau* and said it would realign the H-3 to bypass the contested sites. Activists are unappealed.

"The valley is very important to understanding our culture," said Kamakahuilani von Oelhoffen, a director of the Halawa Coalition, a group that has battled the highway project. "There are ancient sites at the narrowest part of the valley. I don't see how they could avoid these things."

The disturbance of burial sites by

developers and military operations is always an emotional flashpoint. The dunes surrounding the Pacific Missile Range Facility at Barking Sands on Kauai hold ancient burial fields, for instance, and there has been heated local resistance to Pentagon plans to fire Polaris missiles from there to prove out Strategic

easy. Debate over the measure has pitted the OHA, which favors a convention, against Ka Lahui Hawai'i, which contends that it has already initiated this process and formed a nation.

"What we have to do is get all of these factions together and try to achieve consensus on some of these issues," Gov.



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**Activist Kamakahuilani von Oelhoffen**  
She's battling a highway project in a valley containing historic temple sites.

Defense Initiative hardware. A Polaris was launched on Feb. 25, an Air Force spokesman said, "and future launches are programmed, dates to be determined."

"We say to developers, 'How would you like us to go build a hotel in the Punchbowl?' " an extinct volcanic crater in Honolulu where 25,000 American war dead are interred, said Phyllis (Coochie) Cayan, who chairs the Oahu Burial Council. "They say, 'You can't do that.' Well, we don't want you building on *our* ancestors."

With most of Hawaii's wealth invested in real estate and tourism, the escalating furor over Hawaiian rights is starting to make business folk here nervous. Atlantic Richfield Co., the petroleum giant, canceled a planned convention in Honolulu to protest January's flag lowering. "Dealing with the sovereignty issue in a non-sensitive way could blow up in our faces," David McClain, acting dean of the University of Hawaii's School of Business Administration and an expert on the Hawaiian economy, cautioned.

There's no question that sensitivity, and lots of it, will be needed. Both chambers of the Legislature have passed bills calling for a referendum on sovereignty among native Hawaiians, to be followed by a constitutional convention to hammer out an agreement on what form a Hawaiian nation might take. That will not be

Waihee said. "We have to get started."

Inouye, an influential lawmaker who chairs the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, has also argued that the Hawaiians must reach consensus before he can act.

Bill Clinton's installation in the White House has stirred hope here. The Democratic platform last year supported limited sovereignty for native Hawaiians. On the eve of Clinton's inauguration, the Bush Administration's Justice Department ruled that Hawaiians had no native status or "trust" relationship with the U.S. government. Clinton promptly rescinded the ruling but has yet to implement an alternative policy.

The more-militant activists, however, are placing their bets on the unpredictable tides of history. "If we're stubborn for long enough, we'll win," insisted Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa, an associate professor of Hawaiian studies at the University of Hawaii, member of Ka Lahui Hawai'i and author of *Native Land and Foreign Desires* (Bishop Museum Press, 1992). "Nobody thought that the Soviet Union would break up. But one day, America will break up. And when it does, Hawaii will be ready."

The United States is not the Soviet Union, of course, and it isn't likely to disappear soon. But, then, neither will the struggle over Hawaiian sovereignty. ■

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## CONGRESS

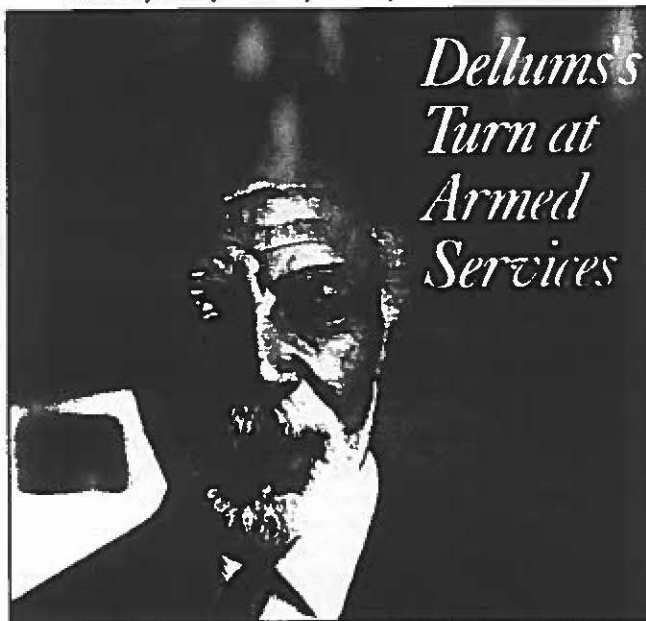
### Dellums's Turn

1220  
When Ronald V. Dellums joined the House Armed Services Committee in 1973, he was one of Congress's leading doves. Now the California Democrat, still a dove, is the chairman of that panel and will play a key role in shaping the size and responsibilities of the post-Cold War Pentagon.  
Graeme Browning

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

### Volcanic Islands

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A century after the United States overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy, a movement to grant sovereignty to Hawaii's native people is gaining momentum. Bill Clinton's election on a platform that supported limited sovereignty for native Hawaiians stirred hope within the movement.  
David C. Morrison



Cover photo: Richard A. Bloom



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## TRANSPORTATION

### The Fire Fighter

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During his first few months at the helm of the Transportation Department, Secretary Federico F. Peña has had to handle more than his fair share of political hot potatoes. So far, he's shown no reluctance to make the tough calls, even at the risk of angering some powerful business interests.  
Kirk Victor

## ENVIRONMENT

### Turf Wars

1232  
When Clinton, under pressure from some western Senators, backed away from his plan to use his budget to rewrite federal mining, grazing and timber laws, he angered lawmakers and environmentalists who saw the budget as the best route to reform. Now he's being pressed to act in other ways.  
Margaret Kriz