Senator Daniel K. Inouye: How Senator Inouye's Advocacy Helped Native Hawaiians Reclaim Kaho'olawe

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<u>"Senator Inouye has Stood as the Key Congressional Representative in Seeking a</u> Solution to the Kaho'olawe Issue.."¹

From 1941 throughout 1990, the U.S Navy used the island of Kaho'olawe for its bombing practices. In 1975, an organization called the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana (PKO) formed with the goal to put an end to the military occupation on the island. Their efforts sparked a growth in Hawaiian identity and sovereignty generating a 20-year debate about the use of the island for military exercises. Senator Daniel K. Inouye, who used his diplomatic strategies to mediate between his colleagues, the US Navy, and the Native Hawaiian community from 1970 to the 1990s, aided these activists in gaining political support. This partnership eventually resulted in the reclamation of Kaho'olawe.

Historical Background

Kahoʻolawe is the smallest island in the Hawaiian archipelago. It holds great cultural and historical significance to Native Hawaiians. The island played as a landmark in ancient Polynesian voyages² and was a place where Kahuna, or priests, were trained.³ Prior to western contact, Kahoʻolawe, also known as Kohe Mālamalama o Kanaloa, was a fishing hotspot. The island was established as a penal colony in 1824, after Captain Cook's arrival ,when Queen Kaʻahumanu declared it as a place of exile. The land was then leased to R.C Wyllie in 1858, and

 ¹ <u>Kaho 'olawe: Aloha No: A Legislative Study of the Island of Kaho 'olawe</u>. Committee on Kahoolawe, 1978.
² MacDonald, Peter. "Fixed in Time: A Brief History of Kahoolawe." *EVols at University of Hawaii at Manoa: Home*, Honolulu, Hawaiian Historical Society, 1 Jan. 1972, https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10524/446.

³ Kaho 'olawe: Aloha No: A Legislative Study of the Island of Kaho 'olawe. Committee on Kahoolawe, 1978.

in 1918 it was leased to Angus MacPhee for ranching purposes.⁴ Ranching contributed to environmental degradation that rendered the island nearly barren. As a result, by the time of World War II, its "emptiness" made it a practical place for military targets through air, artillery, and shore bombardment.⁵

After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, the U.S declared martial law in the Territory of Hawai'i and claimed Kaho'olawe for bombing exercises. This gave the Navy full control over Kaho'olawe, ending all ranching practices on the island. Despite World War II ending in 1945, the United States Military continued to target Kaho'olawe for military practice in the Cold War and throughout the Vietnam War.

Following the overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy in 1893, U.S control had caused a massive repression of Hawaiian culture with many losses including the ban of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language) in schools, decreased land rights, and a decrease in Native Hawaiian political representation.

The 1970s brought the resurgence of Hawaiian cultural identity and became known as the Hawaiian Renaissance. Native Hawaiians took part in movements such as the Kālama Valley eviction, Waiāhole-Waikāne protests, Hilo Airport protests, and, most importantly, the Kahoʻolawe protests, and began to politically address issues concerning land rights and native

⁴ MacDonald, Peter. "Fixed in Time: A Brief History of Kahoolawe." *EVols at University of Hawaii at Manoa: Home*, Honolulu, Hawaiian Historical Society, 1 Jan. 1972,

https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10524/446.

⁵ Kahoʻolawe Target Complex. January 1977. Vertical File Hawaiian. Hawaiʻi Pacific Collection, Midkiff Library Kamehameha Schools.

sovereignty.⁶ The Kaho'olawe protests are regarded as an empowering modern Hawaiian movement that paved the way for Native Hawaiian advancement. Senator Daniel K. Inouye was a prominent player in assisting Native Hawaiian activists in reclaiming the island.

"Kaho'olawe is Kaput"²

Kahoʻolawe became essential during the Cold War but the target practices worsened the island's environmental state. In 1965, the Naval operation, Sailor's Hat⁸, set off an atomic simulation test blast that was so horrific a crater on the island cracked and lost a portion of the island's groundwater.⁹ Maui residents were becoming increasingly concerned about the danger and noise posed by the Navy's activities. During a town hall meeting in Maui, in 1968, Lieutenant Commander King told concerned citizens that Kahoʻolawe was critical in Vietnam War preparation. Subsequently in 1969, a 500-pound unexploded bomb was found in Maʻalaea, Maui.¹⁰ Although Naval officials assured the public that they would be more cautious, it was clear that they had a pattern of being careless and oblivious to Maui residents' safety.

⁶ "5 Major Events of the 1970s Hawaiian Renaissance Movement." Ka Aina Momona,

www.kaainamomona.org/post/5-major-events-of-the-1970s-hawaiian-renaissance-movement. Accessed 3 May 2022. ⁷MacDonald, Peter. "Fixed in Time: A Brief History of Kahoolawe." *EVols at University of Hawaii at Manoa: Home*, Honolulu, Hawaiian Historical Society, 1 Jan. 1972,

https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10524/446.

⁸ "KN-10831 Operation." History.Navy,

www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nara-series/kn-series/KN-10000/KN-10 831.html. Accessed 7 May 2022.

⁹ "Lessons from the World War II Bombings of the Island of Kaho'olawe | Penn Program in Environmental Humanities." *Ppeh.Sas.Upenn.Edu*, ppeh.sas.upenn.edu/lessons-world-war-ii-bombings-island-kahoolawe. Accessed 7 May 2022.

¹⁰ A Modern History of Kaho 'olawe, 1 May 1991, pp. 6–6,

https://www.papakilodatabase.com/pdnupepa/?a=d&d=KWO19910501-01.2.17&srpos=1&e=----en-20--1--txt-txI N%7ctxNU%7ctxTR-%22Hui+Alaloa%22------. Accessed 20 Jan. 2022.

Because of this incident, several Hawai'i political officials and organizations raised their issues of concern about the Navy's violation of environmental protection laws and demanded the Navy stop bombing Kaho'olawe, including Mayor Cravalho of Maui, Representative Matsunaga, Senator Fong, and Representative Patsy Mink.¹¹ Despite their efforts, little progress was made in reclaiming Kaho'olawe, and it appeared that the U.S Department of Defense had many excuses to remain on the island.

Inouye Emerges in Empathy for Native Hawaiians

Senator Inouye had proved himself diplomatic from his early days in Hawai'i's state government. He was known for his modesty, leadership, and diligent service to the United States Senate.¹² He first spoke out in concern for Native Hawaiians in 1954 as a leader in the Territorial House of Representatives. At this time, the throne room of the deposed monarchy in 'Iolani Palace was used for territorial legislature meetings. Inouye believed that having meetings here was an insult to the Hawaiian people and urged that they be held somewhere else.¹³

Daniel Inouye was elected as a U.S Senator for the State of Hawai'i in 1962.¹⁴ Inouye was born in Hawai'i and enlisted in the Military after Pearl Harbor. He returned from World War

¹¹ Kaho 'olawe: Aloha No: A Legislative Study of the Island of Kaho 'olawe. Committee on Kahoolawe, 1978.

¹² "A Warrior Chief Among Warriors: Remembering U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye." *NMAI Magazine*, www.americanindianmagazine.org/story/warrior-chief-among-warriors-remembering-us-senator-daniel-k-inouye.

Accessed 7 June 2022.

¹³ Inouye. Daniel K. News from Senator Daniel K. Inouye. October 23, 1975.

https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10524/61053. Accessed 2 Feb. 2022. ¹⁴ "U.S. Senate: Daniel K. Inouye: A Featured Biography." Www.Senate.Gov, 20 July 2020,

www.senate.gov/senators/FeaturedBios/Featured Bio Inouye.htm.

II as a decorated war hero receiving many honors.¹⁵ As a former member of the Military and one of Hawai'i's first Representatives after statehood, Inouye was in a unique position to address the Kaho'olawe debates.

Inouye Questions the Military

He first began to question the U.S Department of Defense's credibility in 1970. Inouye received a letter from Frank Sanders, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Installations and Logistics, arguing that it would be nearly impossible to return Kaho'olawe to the state of Hawai'i. Senator Inouye then issued a press release stating, "with all the know how the Department of Defense has accumulated on explosives and detection, I just cannot believe that this is an impossible task".¹⁶ This prompted Inouye to become more involved in the Kaho'olawe issue, and in 1971 he collaborated with Representatives Mink and Matsunaga to introduce a bill in Congress requiring the Navy to return the island.¹⁷

In retaliation, the Navy emphasized the fact that clean-up would be very costly. In fear of disrupting the local economy, the Chamber of Commerce of Hawai'i voted against Inouye's appeal. Although Inouye assured Maui residents that he would continue his efforts to end the bombing practices.¹⁸

¹⁵ "Medal of Honor Recipient Daniel Inouye Led a Life of Service to His Country: The National WWII Museum: New Orleans." *The National WWII Museum* | *New Orleans*,

https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/medal-of-honor-recipient-daniel-inouye. ¹⁶ "Dan Raps Navy on Kahoolawe," HA, Jan. 7, 1970, Sect. A, p. 4.

¹⁷ Frank Hewlett, "Inouve Asks Surrender of Kahoolawe," HSB, April 5, 1971, Sect. A, p. 17.

¹⁸ "State Chamber Endorses Navy U se of Kahoolawe," HSB, June 30, 1971, Sect.C.p. 13.

In 1975, Senator Inouve proposed a bill to the Senate Appropriations Committee that would require the United States Military to return the island of Kaho'olawe to the State of Hawai'i.¹⁹ This bill was signed by President Ford, directing the Department of Defense to study the possibility of returning Kaho'olawe.²⁰ As a result of Inouve's diplomatic initiatives, the Navy released a report that investigated the possibilities. Navy officials claimed it could be done, but at a cost of more than \$100 million.²¹

The Kaho'olawe Nine: The Formation of the PKO and their efforts to reclaim Kaho'olawe

The bombings of Kaho'olawe symbolized a continued disrespect towards Native Hawaiians as it brought environmental damage and destruction to historically significant sites.

In 1973, Charles Maxwell, a Maui fisherman, sought to reclaim Kaho'olawe and started

the A.L.O.H.A association.²² Then in 1975, Hui Alaloa, the group of long trails, joined the

A.L.O.H.A association, creating the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana (PKO) and played a key role in the Kaho'olawe movement.²³

The PKO hoped to ensure the correct use of Hawai'i's natural resources, and sustain the cultural and historical significance of Kaho'olawe. They devised several methods to put an end to the bombings, including excursions on the island, lawsuits against the U.S Department of

¹⁹ Senator Daniel K. Inouve. News from Senator Daniel K. Inouve. October 23, 1975. https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10524/61053. Accessed 2 Feb. 2022.

²⁰ Kaho 'olawe: Aloha No: A Legislative Study of the Island of Kaho 'olawe. Committee on Kahoolawe, 1978.

²¹ Bennett, John J. Department of Navy. Department of Navy Correspondance. 1976.

https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10524/61184. Accessed 2 Feb. 2022.

²² "About Uncle Charlie Kauluwehi Maxwell." *Moolel*, www.moolelo.com/about.html. Accessed 7 May 2022.

²³ Ritte, Walter, and Richard Sawyer. *Na Mana 'o Aloha O Kaho 'olawe*. Aloha 'Āina O Na Kūpuna, Inc. 1978.

Defense, and bringing the issue to the attention of political officials such as the House of Representatives²⁴, the President of the United States and Hawai'i Senators.

On January 3, 1976, nine members of the PKO landed on Kaho'olawe for the first time. The purpose of these landings was to bring immediate attention to the military bombing.²⁵ Their main goal was to stop the bombing on the island with their presence. When they landed, these Hawaiian activists felt obligated to use this opportunity to relearn aspects of the Hawaiian culture.²⁶ Throughout 1976, they continued to illegally land on the island, carrying out cultural practices and replanting native plants.

"Where does Inouye stand on this?"27

While Senator Inouye and the PKO shared the goal of ending the military occupation, they did not always agree. Inouye initially disagreed with the PKO's landing strategy. He suggested legal strategies for the PKO in a press release and stated that he had never opposed their movement. PKO members Francis Ka'uhane and George Helm, on the other hand, claimed that everyone they approached for help initially directed them to Inouye, who was inadequate. In February of 1977, the two traveled to Washington D.C in hopes that with the help of Senator Inouye, they would be able to bring their concerns to President Carter. Sadly, they were not given the time of day. They were disappointed because they expected Senator Inouye to assist them at

²⁴ Kaho 'olawe: Aloha No: A Legislative Study of the Island of Kaho 'olawe. Committee on Kahoolawe, 1978.

²⁵ Ritte, Walter, and Richard Sawyer. *Na Mana 'o Aloha O Kaho 'olawe*. Aloha 'Āina O Na Kūpuna, 1978.

 ²⁶ "Uncle Walter Ritte, on Reclaiming Kaho'olawe." *Https://Www.Hawaiinewsnow.Com*, uploaded by Hawaii News
Now, 24 Feb. 2018, www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/37580583/listen-uncle-walter-ritte-on-reclaiming-kahoolawe.
²⁷ Haugen, Keith. "Sen. Inouye Chastised On Kahoolawe" *The Honolulu Star Bulletin*. 19. February 1977.

the time, but instead he seemed to ignore the Kaho'olawe cause.²⁸ Although he pushed for a study of the cost of the Kaho'olawe clean-up, the PKO claimed that his efforts were futile.

Inouye's Advocacy for the PKO

The PKO was struck by tragedy on March 5, 1977, when members George Helm and Kimo Mitchell were lost at sea.²⁹ Following this tragedy, Senator Inouye finally met with PKO members to prepare for a meeting with President Carter by listening to their views. He promised the 'Ohana that he would stress the issue through a cultural lens.³⁰ Inouye supported the PKO during this time by planning with the Military to halt bombing practices temporarily to continue the search for missing PKO members, Helm and Mitchell.³¹ Inouye then succeeded in getting President Carter's support for a study of non-explosive use on Kaho'olawe.³²

Inouye also communicated with Naval Officials to negotiate solutions to the Kaho'olawe issues. Following Inouye's meeting with President Carter, the Secretary of the Navy sent him a letter outlining the practical steps the Navy would take to accommodate Native Hawaiians while also meeting the Military's training requirements.³³ In 1978, the Navy produced a Memorandum

³¹ Haugen, Kieth. "Inouye, Carter to Confer Kahoolawe" *The Honolulu Star Bulletin. 15, March 1977.*

²⁸ Haugen, Keith. "Sen. Inouye Chastised On Kahoolawe" *The Honolulu Star Bulletin*. 19. February 1977.

²⁹ Ritte, Walter, and Richard Sawyer. <u>Na Mana'o Aloha O Kaho'olawe</u>. Aloha 'Āina O Na Kūpuna, Inc. 1978

³⁰ "Kahoolawe Case to Carter" [Honolulu, Hawaii]. *The Honolulu Advertiser*, 15 Mar. 1977, p. 1.

³² <u>Kaho 'olawe: Aloha No: A Legislative Study of the Island of Kaho 'olawe</u>. Committee on Kahoolawe, 1978. PekeIo, Lehua.

³³Bennett, John J. Department of the Navy. Installations & Logistics. Assistant Secretary. "Department of the Navy: Correspondence." *eVols at University of Hawaii at Manoa*, 14 June 2019, evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10524/61184.

of Understanding establishing a conservation program, allowing the PKO access to the island, that the Navy agreed to not interfere with.³⁴

In late 1977, Inouye demonstrated sympathy for PKO members, Walter Ritte and Richard Sawyer, who were found guilty for trespassing on Military property, by advocating on their behalf. In a letter to President Carter, Inouye argued that Ritte and Sawyer's actions on Kaho'olawe were justified, "given the spiritual and political needs which prompted their actions, I do not believe that justice has been fully served by the decision to incarcerate these two men".³⁵

Negotiating the Clean-Up:

By 1980, Senator Inouye had been active in the Kaho'olawe debates for almost a decade. He succeeded in gaining the support of both President Ford and President Carter, and was able to reach an agreement with the Navy to produce the Memorandum of 1978. However, it appeared that the PKO received little justice and the Kaho'olawe protests continued.

The PKO continued to protest with the growing concern about the Kaho'olawe RIMPAC exercises, a U.S Military training event that invited several allied nations to the island for bombing practice.³⁶ From 1982 throughout 1986, the PKO wrote numerous letters to Senator Inouye concerning this training arguing that the Navy violated the 1980 consent decree.

³⁴ Inouye, Daniel, K. USS. Hawaii. *Department of Navy: Memorandum of Understanding*. 1978. https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10524/61177. Accessed 2 Feb. 2022.

³⁵ Ritte, Walter. <u>Na Mana 'o Aloha O Kaho 'olawe</u>. Aloha 'Āina O Na Kūpuna, 1978.

³⁶ Miller, Ken."Navy and Hawaiians Still Argue Their Case". Honolulu Star Bulletin. 16, May 1988.

Although the Navy kept arguing that these exercises were necessary. Inouye continued to work with the Navy on behalf of the PKO.³⁷

Finally in 1990, President George Bush halted the bombings.³⁸ In addition, Senator Inouye, with support from his colleagues, passed a military appropriation that made sure all funding for Kaho'olawe would be used only for the clean up on the island and not for ordnance-related exercises. They also established the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission and appointed officials to oversee the clean-up project. Senator Inouye continued his work to ensure the restoration of Kaho'olawe and in 1994, he secured \$400 million to sponsor the Kaho'olawe Cleanup.³⁹

Conclusion

Despite the fact that it took more than two decades of debate, Inouye was ultimately successful in negotiating the end of the military occupation. Senator Inouye's technique of compromising between his colleagues, the PKO and the Navy demonstrated his diplomatic abilities. Although, his most notable actions were his advocacy for the PKO, Senator Inouye's aid strengthened the Kaho'olawe Movement and his empathy for the PKO has earned him recognition as a prominent political supporter of Native Hawaiians. As former Kaho'olawe

³⁷Kaho'Olawe, Protect. "eVols at University of Hawaii at Manoa: Casework: Correspondence, 1974–2003: Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, 1987–1990." *Casework: Correspondence, 1974–2003: Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, 1987–1990,* 14 June 2019, evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10524/61187.

³⁸ "Lessons from the World War II Bombings of the Island of Kaho'olawe | Penn Program in Environmental Humanities." *Ppeh.Sas.Upenn.Edu*, ppeh.sas.upenn.edu/lessons-world-war-ii-bombings-island-kahoolawe. Accessed 7 May 2022.

³⁹ "Category:" Protect Kaho 'olawe 'Ohana,

www.protectkahoolaweohana.org/blog/category/kahoolawe%20island%20reserve. Accessed 7 May 2022.

activist, Frenchy Desoto, put it, "Senator Inouye was a man of principle". The PKO also honored Inouye with a Mele Kupuna, or ancestral chant, during the healing of Kaho'olawe ceremony in 1992.⁴⁰

After years of environmental damage, Kaho'olawe continues to be restored by the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission. Although Native Hawaiians were successful in reclaiming Kaho'olawe, the U.S Military still engages in similar practices on other bases in Hawai'i. While Senator Inouye played a vital role in the Kaho'olawe movement, he still continued to advocate for the U.S Department of Defense. In 2001, despite protests, he was in favor of the resumption of live fire military training at Mākua Valley, another Naval base on O'ahu.⁴¹

Today, Native Hawaiians continue to face challenges that involve Native land rights and sovereignty. Senator Inouye's tenacity in advocating for Hawaiian rights has also paved the way for current Hawaiian politicians such as Senator Brian Schatz and U.S. Representative Kai Kahele. The U.S Navy's fuel facility at Red Hill, Oahu, was recently discovered to be contaminating the drinking water of Oahu's civilians.⁴² Senator Brian Schatz recognized the gravity of this situation and managed to secure \$100 million dollars to fund the defueling of the

⁴⁰ "Category:" Protect Kaho 'olawe 'Ohana,

www.protectkahoolaweohana.org/blog/category/kahoolawe%20island%20reserve. Accessed 7 May 2022. ⁴¹"Inouye Hails Makua Outcome." *Pacific Business News*, 5 Oct. 2001, www.bizjournals.com/pacific/stories/2001/10/01/daily59.html.

⁴² Jedra, Christina. "Pentagon To Close Red Hill Fuel Facility Permanently Amid Contamination Crisis." *Honolulu Civil Beat*, 8 Mar. 2022,

www.civilbeat.org/2022/03/pentagon-to-close-red-hill-fuel-facility-permanently-amid-contamination-crisis/#:%7E:t ext=After%20leaks%20at%20the%20Navy's,World%20War%20II%2Dera%20facility.

U.S Navy's underground fuel tanks.⁴³ In addition, Representative Kai Kahele, pushed for the return of Makua Valley because of its cultural significance.⁴⁴ As issues similar to the Kaho'olawe controversy persist, Senator Inouye's legacy of recognizing Native Hawaiian concerns encourages current Hawai'i politicians to use their positions to assist Native Hawaiians.

⁴³ "Schatz Secures \$100 Million To Defuel Red Hill." Www.Schatz.Senate.Gov, 7 Feb. 2022,

www.schatz.senate.gov/news/press-releases/schatz-secures-100-million-to-defuel-red-hill.

⁴⁴ "Star Advertiser: U.S. Rep. Kai Kahele Calls for Return of Makua Valley Land." *Representative Kai Kahele*, 18 Mar. 2022, kahele.house.gov/media/in-the-news/star-advertiser-us-rep-kai-kahele-calls-return-makua-valley-land.

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Senator Inouye meeting with the PKO to get their input on the Kaho'olawe issue in preparation for his meeting with President Carter.



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Frank Hewlett, "Inouye Asks Surrender of Kahoolawe," HSB, April 5, 1971, Sect. A, p.

17.

In this newspaper article, Inouye introduces legislation calling for an end to the Navy bombings on Kaho'olawe.

Haugen, Keith. "Sen. Inouye Chastised On Kahoolawe" *The Honolulu Star Bulletin*. 19. February 1977.

This newspaper article talks about when Senator Inouye failed to help PKO members George Helm and Francis Ka'uhane in Washington D.C.

Haugen, Keith. "Inouye, Carter to Confer on Kahoolawe" *The Honolulu Star Bulletin. 15, March 1977.*

This article talks about Inouye's meeting with the PKO to prepare for his meeting with the President.

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"Inouye Hails Makua Outcome." *Pacific Business News*, 5 Oct. 2001, www.bizjournals.com/pacific/stories/2001/10/01/daily59.html.

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This source is a book that I got from my school library. This source was helpful because it conveyed a chronological timeline of Daniel Inouye's involvement in the Kaho'olawe Movement. This source was also helpful because it provided information about the PKO's actions.

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