



# honolulu diary

News from a pacific perspective

edited by ragnar carlson

## UARC contract avoids key questions

Last Friday, the long-awaited draft contract between the University of Hawai'i and the U.S. Navy detailing the contentious proposal to establish a University Affiliated Research Center (UARC) on the Mānoa campus was finally released. Under the terms of the deal, much of Mānoa's work will focus on exploratory and advanced research, advice, testing and evaluation of weapons systems. Consisting of 86 single-spaced pages but missing five attachments, including one on security classification specifications, the contract produces two major surprises—far less money guaranteed for UH and far more ironclad secrecy than had previously been intimated by Mānoa administrators.

If okayed—the contract is subject to approval by the UH Board of Regents and by the Naval Sea Systems Command—UH's Navy UARC would be the fifth in the nation and the first in 58 years. Unlike the Navy's four huge research centers elsewhere, however, which operate as distinct institutions, Mānoa's UARC would be interspersed with the existing campus research infrastructure—buildings and personnel financed largely by Hawai'i taxpayers.

The biggest surprise is that the contract fails to specify how much the Navy will pay. UH officials have said that the UARC would bring in a maximum of \$50 million during the five-year contract, but the draft makes no mention of that figure. Also, instead of the five-year guaranteed deal previously touted by UH, the contract now calls for a three-year award with a two-year option—after evaluating its need for the UARC, the Navy will have until April 5, 2008, to extend the contract for an additional two years. Further clouding the picture, changes already underway in U.S. military strategy could divert the Navy into different kinds of research, thus eviscerating the fledging UARC.

Supplies and services authorized during the first three years of the contract range from a minimum of 1,000 staff hours to a maximum of 317,763 staff hours—the

difference between one staffer working for two months and 53 staffers working for three years. During the two-year option period, maximum supplies and services are 215,078 staff hours—enough to accommodate roughly 50 staffers. The amount of money UH would receive for these supplies and services is labeled “TBD”—To Be Determined.

Besides these uncertainties, an additional one concerns the condition, expressed in the UH management plan, that researchers can refuse to accept any Navy task order. The contract is silent on what would happen should UH researchers decline to work on the most lucrative of the Navy's projects.

Another unwelcome surprise is the extent to which Naval Sea Systems

Command censors will serve as gatekeeper for information resulting from all UARC research, not just the classified portion.

The contract states that UH shall not release to anyone outside its organization any unclassified information that may be identified by Navy censors “as sensitive and inappropriate for disclosure regardless of medium (e.g., film, tape, document), pertaining to this contract or any program related to this contract” without prior written approval by Navy censors. Referring to the supervising Navy official, the contract states, “In cases where the evidence supporting release or retention of unclassified information is inconclusive, the Contracting Officer has the responsibility and retains the authority to make final determinations for such disclosure.” Such ironclad censorship flies in the face of the Mānoa Faculty Senate resolution reaffirming that research conducted at UH must be made public within a reasonable time period.

These twin surprises—the uncertainty surrounding UH's compensation and the certainty that even unclassified information will be Navy-censored—are likely to stoke rising tensions on UH's flagship campus.

—Beverly Keever

