

QUESTION: WHAT SHOULD A TRIP TO KUBS COST?

WHERE?

KUBS, OF COURSE!

If you are a new reader of this series, catch up by reviewing [A Brief History of Saunders' "Lease" of airplane N777AQ During a Recession, Part 1](#). That report provides background information concerning the actual costs for the first 17 months of an airplane N777AQ leased by President Saunders for a 60-month period. For example, USM documents report total actual cost of **\$591,231.71** during the first 17 months of airplane N777AQ operations.

Interdepartmental Invoices for 30 flights were provided in an initial response from USM to a Mississippi Open Records Act (MORA) request concerning the airplane President Saunders leases and pays for with Mississippi taxpayer and student dollars. Although the MORA request was for all records related to the plane, USM's response was incomplete. When legal counsel followed up concerning the inadequate response, the University produced more documents. [usmnews.net](#) reporters are currently reviewing the additional documents and there are reasons to believe the response was again incomplete. The following is one example.

To KUBS for reasons unknown

We now have the pilot's log, which USM legal counsel provided after we noted the original request was incomplete. On February 11, 2009, a USM Pilot Trip Log represents that airplane N777AQ flew to KUBS. The [pilot's log for the flight to KUBS](#) is incomplete in several important aspects. There is **no Interdepartmental Invoice** and **no purpose** was given for the trip. Since no Interdepartmental Invoice was provided, no information was given with regard to the office or department "charged" for the flight.

AirNav.com reports KUBS as Columbus-Lowndes County Airport, Columbus, MS. (www.airnav.com/airport/KUBS) The passengers were Martha Saunders, D. Davies, and Joe Paul. The number of flight hours reported were 1.6.

We do know that the flight was paid for by taxpayers and students in the amount of \$9,900.27 (1.6 flight hours x \$6,187.67 per flight hour). **(Remember, [usmnews.net](#)'s computation of cost does not include or amortize the \$907,053.85 balloon payment due on the 60th month. If that**

amount is included, the cost per flight hour is substantially higher than \$6,187.67.)

WHO'S MONITORING THESE "PUBLIC SERVANTS"?

The disorganized response to our MOR request and the incomplete information signal irresponsible accountability and questionable use of taxpayer and student assets.

We all know that costs of higher education are skyrocketing. Is anyone in authority holding USM and IHL administrators accountable? IHL members blessed the lease/purchase of the plane. IHL members are enjoying the use of the plane (see the list of passengers in past and future reports in this series.) So, do not expect the IHL to do its oversight responsibility and hold President Saunders accountable for this extravagant expenditure of taxpayer and student money. A corollary is to expect costs of higher education to continue to unnecessarily increase.

Stay tuned to usmnews.net for cost analyses of the remaining flights aboard President Saunders' plane.