

Lobbyists' merger leaves Taiwan out in the cold

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Taiwan has lost out to China in the merger of two Washington-based lobbying companies.

While the details are being kept secret, the giant Patton Boggs has in effect taken over the boutique Breaux Lott Leadership Group.

Both companies make a living by “lobbying” or persuading members of the US Congress and other politicians to adopt policies promoted by their clients.

In this merger, the dominant Patton Boggs has China as a client, while the much smaller Breaux Lott has Taiwan.

As a result, Taiwan is being dropped by the newly merged firm.

In a contract negotiated in May of last year with Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office Representative Jason Yuan (袁罔罔), Breaux Lott has been receiving US\$35,000 a month to represent Taiwan.

It is not known how much China has been paying Patton Boggs, but it is presumably much more.

Breaux Lott was run by former Democratic senator John Breaux of Louisiana and former Republican senator Trent Lott of Mississippi. They will both now work for the new company, but it is not known if they will be part of the China account.

If so, they will have to make a dramatic U-turn on some issues, such as arms sales.

According to published reports, Breaux and Lott had a contract with Taiwan that required them to “advance and promote” Taiwan “at all levels of the departments and agencies of the US Government.”

They were also obliged to help Taiwanese officials with “introductions to and negotiations with senior officials” of the US government.

Lott was supposed to work “diligently to exhort members of Congress and the United States Senate to act favorably on matters of interest and benefit to Taiwan.”

In addition, he was to provide recommendations and advice on how best to improve relations between Taiwan and the US.

The decision by the new lobbying company to drop Taiwan has caused quite a stir in Washington political circles involved in Asian issues.

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Coen Blaauw, executive director of the Formosan Association for Public Relations, said: “If relations between Taiwan and China are so good, why can't the new firm work for both countries?”

“But no, they can't,” Blaauw said.

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