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Donald Trump's attorney, Robert I. Reardon Jr., talks about Trump's lawsuit at a news conference Wednesday.

Trump sues tribe, rivals over casino 'conspiracy'

By Neal Jones
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NEW LONDON — Casino magnate Donald Trump filed a lawsuit Wednesday against the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation claiming breach of contract and against rival casino developers, alleging they undertook a series of "immoral, unethical, oppressive and unscrupulous" practices to oust Trump from an agreed-upon casino development deal.

The nine-count suit claims the tribe violated a 1999 exclusive contract between the Eastern Pequots and Trump Hotels and Casino Resorts Development Co. to develop a casino in southeastern Connecticut.

The suit alleges there was a "conspiracy" among members of the tribe and rival developers David A. Rosow, a Southport businessman, and partner William I. Koch, both of Eastern Capital Development LLC, who entered into an agreement to pursue a casino deal with a faction of the tribe in 2000.

The tribe received federal recognition last year and, under that recognition, the Paucatuck Eastern Pequots and the Eastern Pequots merged. Trump's 1999 contract was signed with the Paucatuck Eastern Pequots, who have less membership.

The state of Connecticut and three towns surrounding the tribe's property have appealed the recognition decision to the U.S. Department of Interior's Board of Indian Appeals. That appeal is pending, and no casino development can move forward until it is settled.

Trump is seeking reimbursement of more than \$10 million he has spent over seven years in helping the tribe gain federal recognition and pushing the casino forward, his attorney, Robert I. Reardon Jr., said. He also is seeking an injunction against any plans for a casino between ECD and the tribe as well as legal fees, and unspecified compensatory and punitive damages. Payment of the \$10 million will not prevent the suit from moving forward, Reardon said, and added that Trump still intends to be the sole developer of any Eastern Pequot casino.

Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation Chairperson Marcia Flowers, in a statement, said, "To the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation, this lawsuit is just another challenge we will overcome together."

Rosow said ECD "is comfortable with its actions with the tribe and we will defend this lawsuit vigorously."

Rosow said "one of the weapons in the Trump arsenal that he uses quite often in failed investments is to file a lawsuit based on unfounded and extraordinary allegations with little basis in the issues or the facts. Using the courts to recover from a bad business deal is never a good idea."

The suit charges that Rosow and Koch engaged in "unscrupulous business practices" in violation of state and federal trade laws by "promising gifts, money gratuities and other benefits" to tribe members so they would dump Trump from the deal and go forward with ECD.

The suit also charges that Rosow and Koch are guilty of civil conspiracy and fraud because they "personally participated and approved" of all the actions that led to Trump's ouster.

Tribe spokeswoman Nancy Tyler said members were not commenting on specific allegations in the suit as they have not had a chance to review it.