

From [Hawaii World Can't Wait](#) | Original Article

What happened when Obama came to the East-West Center?

Last night more than 200 people stood near the entrance of the East-West Center to "greet" President Obama. About 100 held signs: " **U.S. Military Destroys the Planet,**" "**No TPP,**" "**No More Ko`oholawe's**", "**Navy Sonar Kills Whales,**" "**Military Occupation is Not Conservation,**" "**No DOI Rule Over Kanaka Maoli**" and many, many more. Many of the people without signs were UH students hoping to get a glimpse of Obama.

Barricades lined the front of the East West Center, keeping onlookers at a distance. Undercovers moved amongst activists and observers snapping photos. Others were in positions on nearby buildings with high power cameras and weaponry.

The huge variety of signs provoked a lot of conversation among the people. "What does 'Save Tinian' mean"? "What's the Dakota Pipeline"? "What's DOI"? "How are we going to stop all of this shit?".... For more than an hour new acquaintances were made and e-mails were exchanged; people walked along the several blocks lining East-West Road reading the signs and acquainting themselves with issues they'd never thought about before.

After activists received the news that Air Force One had touched down at Hickam, the K-Nine unit pulled up beside the protesters, an HPD bicycle unit began patrolling East-West Center Road, and more HPD units assumed positions.

As Obama's entourage approached some 30 minutes later, activists began chanting:

"People of the World Scream and Shout, U.S. Military Get the Hell Out"

and the

Ku`e chant

rang out loud and clear, energizing the group. More HPD cars moved in, followed by huge black SUV's. A few had windows down and doors open, revealing heavily equipped military personnel holding assault weapons. Obama's press team poured out of another and headed for the East West Center along the sidewalk. An SUV with heavily tinted windows rolled into the drive alongside the East West Center and down to the bottom floor and out of sight of on-lookers, offering Obama entry into the East-West Center away from the sight of on-lookers.

Those who came to catch a glimpse of Obama were sorely disappointed.

The majority of the people continued to line East-West Road, resigned to a long wait while Obama "met with Pacific Island leaders" as promised. Not much more than 10 minutes later the entire entourage rolled out leaving everyone to wonder just how much he had listened to the concerns of the leaders gathered there in such a short time. Today's *StarAdvertiser* leads us to conclude that the President did no listening, but instead spent his short time there delivering a largely self-congratulatory speech on how much had been done for the environment during his presidency. We could only wonder what Pacific Island leaders thought of this photo op while the sea levels continue to rise.

As people gathered up their signs many talked about being surprised by the numbers that came out on very short notice and recounted conversations they'd had with fellow demonstrators. People remarked on how many different issues had been represented. Others talked about the militarization of the event or the amount of money spent for this 10-minute photo op.

Was the signholding a success? □ Our response is a resounding "yes." □ □ □ A diverse group of people came together. □ They talked with each other and among themselves. □ The entourage itself was a real-life lesson in militarization

And we're sure that even while Obama was probably not aware of ALL of the issues being spoken to, he could not have missed the fact that people in Hawai`i were making demands. □ The mainstream media remarked on the action, and the *Star-Advertiser* included the "U.S. Military - Get the Hell Out" slogan in their front page account of the event.







