

Planes over politics: Dozens wait outside airport anticipating Trump's arrival, departure



Alexandra Connor/The Gazette Dick Carter of Tiffin watches the Air Force One land at The Eastern Iowa Airport on Wednesday evening. Carter, like dozens of others, gathered in a parking lot just outside the airport to watch the plane arrive and depart.

Alexandra Connor

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CEDAR RAPIDS — Right after President Donald Trump's arrival on Wednesday evening, Mark Smith rushed to a drugstore up the road from the airport to get the photos he took of Air Force One developed.

Smith, like many others, had been watching the arrival of Air Force One as it flew into The Eastern Iowa Airport at about 5:30 p.m. ahead of Trump's rally downtown.

With a semiprofessional camera, Smith, of Cedar Rapids, shot photos through the holes of the chain-link fence around the runway. He was surprised police hadn't blocked the parking lot just off 18th Street SW near the airport.

Jim Russell of Ainsworth and his young son, Zach, were there, too. Standing off the side of the road, the Russells were less interested in the plane carrying Trump than in the plane carrying the transport vehicles.

“We stopped down here to see that one,” Jim Russell said of the cargo plane. “But then I saw the time so I figured we’d see him (the president) land.”

Zach weighed in with “I saw the president.”

As dozens of cars sifted in and out of the airport parking lot throughout the evening, it seemed the Eastern Iowans there were less interested in the politics than Air Force One, sitting on the tarmac,

Dick Carter, 75, of Tiffin, watched the arrival of the jet from the parking lot and, like Smith, was surprised he wasn’t chased out of the lot.

“Hopefully, they’re going to let me stay here and watch it take off,” said Carter said, a pair of binoculars wrapped around his neck.

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Carter said he’s seen Air Force One at The Eastern Iowa Airport a couple of times, including once

during the Reagan administration where the president held an event just outside the airport.

While a lifelong Democrat, Carter said he wanted to see the plane even though he doesn't exactly like the person riding inside it.

This differed from Smith, a former pilot himself, who is a Trump supporter.

The president departed the airport just after 8:45 p.m.