



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on December 19, 2011

## Obama Family's Hawaii Vacation Estimated to Cost More Than \$4 Million

According to government estimates, the military jet flight that Michelle and the girls took Friday costs more than \$60,000, and that's not including the additional cargo flight, limousines, and other furnishings and equipment. The First Lady also requires her own Secret Service protection and staffers, clocking the total bill at well over \$100,000, according to [White House Dossier](#), which the White House declined to address during Friday's daily press briefing. Estimates are that the trip may cost as much as \$4 million.



The extra trip and the costs associated with it seemingly defy the letter, if not the spirit, of a recent executive order issued by the President just last month, which [states](#), in part:

To ensure efficient travel spending, agencies are encouraged to devise strategic alternatives to Government travel, including local or technological alternatives, such as teleconferencing and video conferencing. Agencies should make all appropriate efforts to conduct business and host or sponsor conferences in space controlled by the Federal Government, wherever practicable and cost effective.

One reporter [queried](#) Press Secretary Jay Carney during Friday's briefing: "I wanted to ask, isn't it quite an extravagance — four people to go in two jets to Hawaii — particularly given the state of the economy, the state of the budget, and also given the directive that was just put out about limiting air travel by the administration?"

Carney responded, "As previous First Ladies have done, they will travel on a military aircraft. As previous First Ladies have done, they will travel separate from the President."

Former Massachusetts Governor and GOP presidential hopeful Mitt Romney also criticized President Obama's holiday plans, [venting](#) to a group of Iowa voters, "I just think it's time to have a president whose idea of being 'hands on' doesn't mean getting a better grip on the golf club."

Figures obtained by [Hawaii Reporter](#) reveal the trip is estimated to cost more than \$4 million, including the \$100,000 extra spent so the President's wife and daughters could leave Friday. According to the Hawaiian newspaper, the total travel expenses stand at \$3,629,622, and the bulk of that comes from the [\\$181,757 per-hour](#) rate for operating Air Force One (totaling \$3,271,622). While the costs of the USAF C-17 cargo aircraft that transports the presidential limousines, helicopters, and other equipment are not available, *Hawaii Reporter* estimates that the operating expenses should float somewhere around \$12,000 per hour; moreover, the U.S. Marine Corps provides a helicopter, requiring pilots and support crews, which should cost upwards of \$250,000.



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The *Reporter* confirmed that White House staff and the press corps will be staying at Moana Surfrider, a Westin Resort & Spa on Oahu and one of Hawaii's oldest and most elegant hotels. According to the paper,

Rooms typically start at \$250 but can cost on average as much as \$450 a night, and are even higher during the holidays. Hotel spokeswoman Marsha Weinert said she could "neither confirm nor deny" the president's staff is staying there.

A conservative estimate with rooms at the government rate of \$177 per day (excluding a 9.25 percent Transient Accommodation Tax and a 4.712 percent General Excise Tax on each bill, meals, internet charges and other charges) means the taxpayers are covering more than \$72,216 in hotel bills for an estimated 24 staff.

Beyond the national taxpayer costs of the Obama family's vacation is the cost to local taxpayers (about \$260,000), as residents will be subsidizing overtime pay for local police, which historically cost Oahu taxpayers \$250,000; the city ambulance that will travel with the President 24 hours a day should cost \$10,000, according to Oahu spokeswoman Louise Kim McCoy. Also, the *Reporter* notes, there are several other security-related costs the White House refuses to release:

- For example, the President's security usually rents an entire floor of an office building in Kailua on the canal during the President's stay.
- There are security upgrades and additional phone lines to several private homes where Obama and friends are staying. That includes bullet proof glass installed, home security systems disabled, new security measures put into place and additional phone lines added.
- There is the cost for car rentals and fuel for White House staff staying at Moana Hotel.
- And there are additional travel costs Secret Service and White House staff traveling ahead of the President.

All in all, the total sum for a 17-day Hawaii vacation for the President and his family is estimated at \$4,113,038 — and taxpayers will be covering a large chunk of the bill.



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