



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

STATEMENT

OF

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REGARDING A HEARING ON

“Oversight of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement”

BEFORE THE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

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Introduction

Chairman Amodei, Acting Ranking Member Underwood, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee:

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is exceedingly proud of its workforce for their dedication to the agency's responsibilities to the American public while maintaining a culture of integrity, courage, and excellence. I am extremely proud to serve beside our over 20,000-person workforce and am thankful for the opportunity to highlight their work and the impact of that work on national security and public safety.

Despite routine villainization, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement employees, especially our law enforcement officers and agents, remain resilient and mission focused. Brave officers and agents are on the streets every day, risking their lives to locate, arrest, and remove the most egregious criminal aliens in line with the President's policy of "worst first." U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement continues to prove it can implement and execute highly impactful programs strengthening national security and public safety.

On behalf of our workforce, I thank you for your ongoing support to our agency and for providing the critical resources needed to better enable U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to accomplish our critical mission. I look forward to working with Congress on the Fiscal Year 2026 budget and ensuring U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement can meet its immigration enforcement, public safety, and national security missions.

Homeland Security Investigations

As one of the country's premier federal law enforcement agencies, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is dedicated to detecting and dismantling transnational criminal networks targeting the American people and threatening our industries, organizations, and financial systems. Because of its unique authorities and footprint, Homeland Security Investigations is best positioned to investigate and dismantle Transnational Criminal Organizations. Homeland Security Investigations comprises approximately 8,800 personnel across 243 domestic locations and more than 90 international locations. It leverages more than 4,500 task force officers from various federal, state, tribal, territorial, and local partners. Homeland Security Investigations' mission includes combating a wide range of transnational crimes, including terrorism, human trafficking, child sexual exploitation, drug trafficking, human smuggling, and cybercrime.

Under Executive Order 14159, signed by President Trump on January 20, 2025, Homeland Security Investigations and partners from Department of Justice have taken steps to establish Homeland Security Task Forces in all states and U.S. territories. The Homeland Security Task Forces are charged with investigating, prosecuting, and removing criminal cartels, foreign gangs, and Transnational Criminal Organizations operating in the United States. Homeland Security Investigations coordinates Homeland Security Task Force activities through a national command center in collaboration with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, other federal law enforcement partners, U.S. Attorney's Offices, and relevant state, tribal, territorial, and local law enforcement agencies. Each Homeland Security Task Force targets the most prolific Foreign Terrorist Organization targets. The Homeland Security Task Force network aligns with Executive Orders 14159 and 14157 and is focused on dismantling cross-border human smuggling and human trafficking networks, especially those involving children, and enforcing U.S. immigration laws.

Under the Trump Administration, Homeland Security Investigations has aggressively pursued investigations into Tren de Aragua, a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization. Since January 20, 2025, Homeland Security Investigations has arrested 1,182 Tren de Aragua members and associates, 373 of whom have been or will be charged with violations of federal criminal law. On April 21, 2025, Homeland Security Investigations and the Department of Justice announced two superseding indictments charging 27 individuals currently or formerly associated with Tren de Aragua with racketeering conspiracy, sex trafficking conspiracy, drug trafficking conspiracy, robbery, and firearms offenses. This indictment marks the first time Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act charges have been filed against the Tren de Aragua Foreign Terrorist Organization and its members.

Homeland Security Investigations' International Operations, in collaboration with Transnational Criminal Investigative Units in foreign partner locations, has served as a critical force multiplier in enhancing global security and addressing the Tren de Aragua threat, resulting in the identification of Tren de Aragua members in the United States with foreign criminal records, including International Criminal Police Organization Red Notices.

In Fiscal Year 2025, the Visa Security Program has already screened more than 1.8 million visa applications, identifying more than 5,500 applicants having a nexus to terrorism. Additionally, more than 370 watchlist nominations were approved based on Visa Security Program-vetted information. Biometric Identification Transnational Migration Alert Program foreign partners enrolled 21,003 subjects, resulting in more than 250 terrorist links and 46 International Criminal Police Organization matches. Homeland Security Investigations' International Operations has independently watchlisted 309 foreign terrorists, including 47 Foreign Terrorist Organization members. These programs have been critical in identifying known or suspected terrorists and members of Transnational Criminal Organizations and Foreign Terrorist Organizations prior to reaching U.S. borders.

Homeland Security Investigations, along with federal partners, are working to ensure approximately 84,000 unaccompanied alien children, with whom the Department of Homeland Security has had no contact since being released from the custody of the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement during the previous administration, have met their immigration obligations and are not being trafficked or exploited. Homeland Security Investigations responds to every unaccompanied alien child border encounter to investigate potential human smuggling violations that brought them to the United States and leverages the interagency forced labor initiative, Homeland Security Task Forces, worksite investigations, and national awareness campaigns to address at-risk alien children. Since the unaccompanied alien children initiative commenced in February 2025, over 1,500 individuals have been arrested, including 361 criminal and 1,216 administrative arrests. More specifically, 314 sponsors have been arrested with 278 placed in immigration removal proceedings. Additionally, there have been 247 criminal, and 405 administrative arrests related to the entry of new unaccompanied alien children at the Southwest Border.

The Homeland Security Investigations Victim Assistance Program was recently codified through the passage of the Investigators Maintain Purposeful Awareness to Combat Trafficking Trauma Program Act. This legislation mandates a designated number of Victim Assistance Specialists and Forensic Interview Specialists be maintained in each Homeland Security Investigations Special Agent in Charge office. The involvement of the Victim Assistance Program in investigations not only supports victim recovery but also enhances victim

engagement and participation throughout the criminal justice process. This, in turn, strengthens criminal cases, prosecution outcomes, and contributes to safer communities. In Fiscal Year 2024, the Victim Assistance Program supported 3,715 victims and conducted 2,033 forensic interviews. To ensure the Victim Assistance Program can continue to meet the needs of victims, additional funding and hiring authorities will be necessary.

Worksite Enforcement is a critical component of Homeland Security Investigations' efforts to ensure employers are held accountable for their hiring practices and employment records. The program aims to ensure criminal prosecution and seizure of illicitly gained assets from employers who exploit employees or knowingly hire or continue to employ unauthorized aliens. Homeland Security Investigations' worksite enforcement strategy leverages both civil and criminal authorities, with particular focus on the financial gains of egregious employers. In Fiscal Year 2025, Homeland Security Investigations initiated more than 2,600 worksite enforcement cases, made nearly 850 arrests, served more than 900 Notices of Inspection and issued nearly 50 Notices of Intent to Fine, with an amount totaling approximately \$14 million related to worksite enforcement. By comparison, for the entirety of Fiscal Year 2024, Homeland Security Investigations initiated 830 worksite enforcement cases, made 283 arrests, served 265 Notices of Inspection and 90 Notices of Intent to Fine, and seized more than \$11 million related to worksite enforcement.

Homeland Security Investigations' top line budgets remained virtually the same from Fiscal Year 2024 to 2025. However, the Fiscal Year 2026 request will enable Homeland Security Investigations to address the entire Homeland Security Investigations portfolio, which is dedicated to implementing the administration's priorities and continuing to address the increasing and ever-evolving criminal syndicates.

Enforcement and Removal Operations

Enforcement and Removal Operations protects the homeland through the arrest and removal of aliens undermining the safety of U.S. communities and the integrity of U.S. immigration laws. Its 7,600-plus personnel, including approximately 6,000 law enforcement officers, are spread across 25 domestic field offices, approximately 180 sub-locations nationwide, and more than 30 overseas postings. Enforcement and Removal Operations' primary areas of focus are interior enforcement operations, management of the agency's detained and non-detained populations, and removal efforts. The Enforcement and Removal Operations workforce is critical to reaching the Administration's goal of conducting one million illegal alien removals per year.

Enforcement and Removal Operations arrests aliens for administrative violations of U.S. immigration law. The agency conducts these enforcement actions through at-large and custodial arrests when its officers have probable cause to believe an alien is removable from the United States. Over the course of the fiscal year, Enforcement and Removal Operations has expanded its immigration enforcement actions and operations by including officers from other federal agencies. Federal law enforcement officers from the Department of Justice, the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the Department of the Treasury have assisted Enforcement and Removal Operations officers for a more effective, whole-of-government approach.

Under the Trump Administration, these increased immigration enforcement efforts have led to the arrest of a higher number of aliens than in previous years. For example, increased immigration enforcement resulted in the arrest of 88,872 aliens in Fiscal Year 2025, an increase

of 39 percent compared to the same period in Fiscal Year 2024.¹ Moreover, 57,312 of those arrests, or 65 percent, took place after January 20, 2025, clearly reflecting the Administration's focus on increased immigration enforcement by faithfully executing the immigration laws of the United States.

Since January 20, 2025, the number of suspected gang member arrests increased 95 percent compared to the same period in Fiscal Year 2024.² These arrests include members of the Mara Salvatrucha and Tren de Aragua terrorist organizations, two transnational poly-criminal organizations posing grave threats to U.S. national security. Similarly, the number of known or suspected terrorists arrested since January 20, 2025, has increased by 655 percent compared to the same period in Fiscal Year 2024.³ Since January 20, 2025, Enforcement and Removal Operations has arrested 44,846 aliens with criminal histories, including criminal convictions and pending criminal charges at the time of arrest. This is a 46 percent increase over the same period in Fiscal Year 2024.⁴

As part of the increased immigration enforcement, the Department of Homeland Security deputized an unprecedented number of state and local law enforcement officials to work with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to identify and apprehend aliens who entered the United States illegally and those who violated the conditions of their legal admission to the United States. One avenue for increased cooperation and coordination with state and local law enforcement is the 287(g) program which allows U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to delegate the authority to perform specified immigration officer functions under the agency's direction and oversight to state and local law enforcement officers. Under the Trump Administration, there has been an historic expansion of the 287(g) program. At the start of the fiscal year, only two models were utilized within the 287(g) program: the Jail Enforcement Model and Warrant Service Officer program. Subsequently, in Fiscal Year 2025, the Task Force Model was implemented allowing participating state and local law enforcement agencies who encounter illegal aliens during their police duties to transfer arrested aliens to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody who would otherwise have evaded detection. As of April 23, 2025, a total of 456 287(g) memoranda of agreement in 38 states are in place. Moreover, 386 of these agreements were signed after January 20, 2025.

Since President Trump resumed office, Enforcement and Removal Operations' enhanced enforcement operations and routine daily operations have resulted in a significant number of arrests of aliens with criminal histories and who pose national security or public safety threats, requiring greater detention capacity. As of the end of April 2025, there are nearly 50,000 aliens in Enforcement and Removal Operations detention. However, to meet the needs of rising apprehensions, we are diligently working to increase bedspace. Since January 20, 2025, Enforcement and Removal Operations has increased detention capacity by nearly 10,500 beds.

Under its Title 8 authority, Enforcement and Removal Operations officers remove aliens from the United States subject to final orders of removal issued by an immigration judge or other lawful orders, including high-priority aliens who pose serious threats to public safety or national security such as suspected gang members and known or suspected terrorists. In Fiscal Year 2025,

¹ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrest data is current through April 23, 2025.

² Fiscal Year 2025 suspected Foreign Terrorist Organization gang member data is current from January 20, 2025 through April 23, 2025.

³ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrest data is current through April 23, 2025.

⁴ Fiscal Year 2025 arrests of aliens with criminal histories from January 20, 2025, through April 23, 2025.

through April 23, 2025, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement removed 2,987 suspected gang members. Of those, 1,794, or 60 percent, were removed since President Trump resumed office⁵ Similarly, the 200 known or suspected terrorists removed since January 20, 2025, account for 75 percent of the total removed in Fiscal Year 2025.⁶ Enforcement and Removal Operations also focuses on removing aliens posing threats to public safety, including those with criminal histories. Since January 20, 2025, 55 percent of the illegal aliens removed have criminal histories, including charges and convictions for assault, homicide, and many other egregious crimes.⁷ These figures demonstrate the tenacity of our workforce to protect the United States from aliens who pose national security or public safety threats.

Enforcement and Removal Operations' workforce has remained relatively static in recent years even as officer caseloads continue to grow. Despite expanded coordination efforts with its law enforcement partners, additional resources and personnel are required to accommodate increasing workload in executing its national security and public safety mission.

Office of the Principal Legal Advisor

With over 1,800 attorneys and 440 support personnel in 25 domestic field locations, the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor is the largest legal program in the Department of Homeland Security and one of the largest law offices in the nation. Office of the Principal Legal Advisor attorneys advise U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement personnel on a wide range of matters, including criminal, administrative, and civil customs and immigration laws and authorities, and provide critical legal guidance to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's operational components. The Office of the Principal Legal Advisor serves as the federal government's exclusive representative in removal proceedings before the Department of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review.

In Fiscal Year 2024, the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor represented the Department of Homeland Security in more than 1.8 million removal hearings before EOIR. This number includes master calendar hearings, hearings held for pleadings, scheduling, and other similar matters, and other individual hearings where substantive legal arguments and applications for relief and protection from removal were presented and decided. In Fiscal Year 2024, the Department of Homeland Security also obtained 287,000 removal orders and managed more than 1,900 human rights violator cases and over 5,100 national security cases nationwide.

Office of the Principal Legal Advisor attorneys, paralegals, researchers, and support personnel work under tremendous caseloads related to removal proceedings and a variety of immigration laws while also providing counsel to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials. Currently, the disparity between Office of the Principal Legal Advisor attorneys and Office for Immigration Review judges is 698 personnel, 509 attorneys and 189 support staff. The Office of the Principal Legal Advisor needs the resources and personnel requested in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2026 President's Budget to meet mission requirements.

Mission Support

Under Executive Order 14159, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is proud to have reestablished the Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement office. This office serves as a

⁵ Fiscal Year 2025 removal data is current from January 20, 2025 to April 23, 2025.

⁶ Fiscal Year 2025 removal data is current from January 20, 2025 to April 23, 2025.

⁷ Fiscal Year 2025 removal data is current from January 20, 2025 to April 23, 2025.

resource for Americans who have been victimized by aliens, including those in the country illegally. The office provides information on the immigration status of offenders and connects victims to local victim services. Since its reestablishment after the previous administration shut it down, the Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement office has fielded nearly 53,000 calls requesting case status for criminal aliens and has assisted 160 victims of crimes committed by immigrants.

The Mission Support workforce at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement serves a pivotal role in our national security and public safety missions. These dedicated professionals address the agency's expansive operational needs by providing a solid, integrated information technology infrastructure; a dynamic human capital program encompassing proactive recruitment endeavors and pre-employment suitability; the development of acquisition strategies and oversight of procurement activities and contracts; and sound and prudent stewardship of all U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement resources.

As U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ramps up its operational tempo, it is imperative the agency receives the resources requested in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2026 President's Budget to support its mission-critical operations. These resources will ensure foundational services are fortified and continue to advance in key areas. This includes improvements to hiring timelines, which would enable the agency to swiftly and efficiently onboard new talent, thereby maintaining a robust and capable workforce. Furthermore, maintaining essential training for front-line personnel is crucial, as it ensures staff are well-prepared and equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to perform duties effectively and safely.

Conclusion

By providing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement with the resources requested in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2026 President's Budget, we can make certain the agency remains capable of effectively executing its critical national security and public safety mission.

Thank you again for inviting me to testify today. I am honored and humbled to represent the brave men and women of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement who work so hard to keep the American public safe. I look forward to your questions.