

CONGRESS

# Sen. Alex Padilla is forcibly removed from DHS Secretary Kristi Noem's news conference in Los Angeles

Noem was in L.A. to address the ongoing protests against President Donald Trump's immigration policies. Federal agents handcuffed Padilla after his removal.

**Senator forcibly removed from DHS Secretary Noem's news conference**

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**By Rebecca Shabad, Jacob Soboroff and Zoë Richards**

Sen. Alex Padilla, D-Calif., was forcibly removed from a news conference in Los Angeles on Thursday after he tried to question Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem during [a media event related to immigration](#).

"I am Sen. Alex Padilla. I have questions for the secretary," Padilla told Noem, which prompted several men dressed in plainclothes to push him out of the room. A [top FBI official later said](#) bureau personnel and Secret Service agents were involved in his removal.

Padilla's office shared a video of the incident with NBC News. The video shows Padilla being taken into a hallway outside and pushed face forward onto the ground as officers with FBI-identifying vests tell him to put his hands behind his back. The officers then handcuff him.

President Donald Trump's [immigration policies](#) – and the administration's handling of demonstrations against them – have sparked an outcry in recent days. After protesters clashed with officers from Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Los Angeles on Friday, Trump deployed members of the National Guard, and later the Marines, to assist local law enforcement. [Dozens of demonstrations](#) have taken place across the country since then.

Padilla told reporters later Thursday that he was waiting for a scheduled briefing from military officials when he learned Noem was in the same building and decided to join her briefing.

"I was there peacefully," he said. "At one point, I had a question, and so I began to ask a question. I was almost immediately forcibly removed from the room, I was forced to the ground, and I was handcuffed."

**Sen. Padilla after removal from DHS event: 'We will hold this administration accountable'**

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Noem offered a different account [in an interview on Fox News](#) in which she falsely said Padilla did not identify himself before he was forced out.

"We were conducting a press conference to update everyone on the enforcement actions that are ongoing to bring people bring peace to the city of Los Angeles, and this man burst into the room, started lunging towards the podium, interrupting me and elevating his voice, and was stopped, did not identify himself, and was removed from the room," she said.

Before Padilla began questioning Noem, she spoke to reporters about the administration's actions, the subject of her appearance in Los Angeles. Noem said the Department of Homeland Security and its agencies, as well as the military, "will continue to sustain and increase our operations in this city."

"We are not going away," she said. "We are staying here to liberate this city from the socialist and the burdensome leadership that this governor and that this mayor have placed on this country," she said, referring to California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass, both Democrats.

As Padilla tried to question her, Noem spoke over him, "I want to say thank you to every single person," and he was removed from the room.

The news conference was held in a federal building.

Anthony Cangelosi, a former Secret Service agent, said that if it was an event that was not open to the public, then the forcible removal of Padilla appeared to be justified because he resisted leaving the room.

"The facts and circumstances of him resisting the officers makes their use of force legitimate," said Cangelosi, who is now an adjunct professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York.

"If he had put his hands up and said, 'OK. I'm out of here, guys,' and they still put him on the floor and in handcuffs, then they'd be using too much force," Cangelosi added.

Secret Service officials told NBC News that they interviewed Padilla after the incident and quickly determined he had no intention to harm Noem.

Secret Service personnel also facilitated a short meeting between Noem and Padilla.

An official told NBC News that its agents “work off pins” to recognize any dignitaries who might be present.

In [an interview on MSNBC](#), Padilla said that the polo shirt he was wearing at the news conference said “United States Senate” and that the FBI agents who were handling him “wouldn’t identify themselves.”

“I kept repeatedly asking them, ‘Why am I being detained?’ No answer,” Padilla said, adding that he also was not told where they were taking him.

“Am I being led back outside? I don’t know. Am I being taken to a cell? I don’t know. They were not communicative until somebody from, I’m sure, Secretary Noem’s team, figured out I was who I said I was,” he added.

The incident provoked further outrage from Democrats.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., denounced it on the Senate floor. “I just saw something that sickened my stomach – the manhandling of a United States senator. We need immediate answers to what the hell went on,” he said.

Democratic Sen. Adam Schiff, California's other senator, [wrote on X](#) that Padilla “represents the best of the Senate. The disgraceful and disrespectful conduct of DHS agents, pushing and shoving him out of a briefing like that, demands our condemnation. He will not be silenced or intimidated. His questions will be answered. I’m with Alex.”



Newsom [said on X](#) that Padilla "is one of the most decent people I know."

"This is outrageous, dictatorial, and shameful. Trump and his shock troops are out of control. This must end now," he added.

Former Vice President Kamala Harris called the incident "a shameful and stunning abuse of power."

Republicans largely criticized Padilla.

"Padilla didn't want answers; he wanted attention," White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson said. "Padilla embarrassed himself and his constituents with this immature, theater-kid stunt."

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said that what Padilla "ought to be doing, in my view, is making sure that we have rational immigration policy. And Sen. Padilla, who's a nice man, sat on the sidelines for four years, watch the border completely be blown apart."

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, however, called video of the incident "very disturbing."

"I don't know what preceded it," she told reporters. "I just was shown on the floor a small play, but it looks like he is being manhandled and physically removed. And it's hard to imagine a

justification for that.”

The incident follows a string of arrests of Democratic elected officials related to immigration. Newark Mayor Ras Baraka was [arrested last month](#) and accused of trespassing at an ICE facility in New Jersey. The charges were ultimately dropped; Baraka [he has sued interim U.S. Attorney Alina Habba](#) and Ricky J. Patel, a special agent in charge of the Newark division of Homeland Security Investigations, over the incident.

Rep. LaMonica McIver, D-N.J., was [indicted this week on federal charges](#) that stemmed from the same confrontation with law enforcement.

Trump's "border czar," Tom Homan, also suggested that Newsom and Bass [could be arrested, too, if they interfere with federal agents](#).

Padilla to reporters Thursday that his treatment raises questions about how the immigration raids are being conducted.

“If this is how this administration responds to a senator with a question, if this is how the Department of Homeland Security responds to a senator with a question, you can only imagine what they’re doing to farmworkers, to cooks, to day laborers out in the Los Angeles community and throughout California and throughout the country,” he said.



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