

Hearing before the Subcommittee on Government Operations

“An Update on Mail Theft and Crime”

Statement of Frank Albergo

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Good afternoon — Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member Mfume, and Members of the Subcommittee.

On behalf of our nation's Postal Police Officers, we thank you for calling attention to the dramatic rise in mail theft experienced by so many Americans, as well as the equally disturbing trend in violent crime perpetrated against postal employees, especially letter carriers.

My name is Frank Albergo, and I serve as the National President of the Postal Police Officers Association (PPOA), representing the uniformed federal police officers employed by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS).

Postal Police Officers (PPOs) are a highly trained federal police force stationed in 21 major metropolitan areas. We specialize in mail theft prevention and the protection of postal employees. PPOs are not Postal Inspectors. PPOs are the uniformed front line — trained, visible, and devoted to crime prevention, not after-the-fact investigations.

For over 50 years, PPOs protected the Postal Service's most critical assets: its employees and the U.S. Mail. We escorted letter carriers along dangerous routes, patrolled blue collection boxes, and responded to postal-related crimes in real time. PPOs had law enforcement authority to operate anywhere postal operations occurred — not just inside postal buildings.

In August 2020, that changed when the Inspection Service unilaterally stripped PPOs of their authority to patrol off postal property. Overnight, USPIS sidelined its own uniformed police force — removing the only federal patrol unit dedicated to deterring mail theft and protecting letter carriers in real time.

The result? A collapse in mail security and a criminal free-for-all:

- Robberies of letter carriers surged by 845% from FY 2019 to FY 2023.
- Mail theft complaints soared by 327% from FY 2018 to FY 2023.
- High-volume mail theft attacks have more than doubled since FY2019 — and have exploded by 2,083%, from 2,251 incidents in FY2010 to 49,156 in FY2023 — nearly 25 times higher than only a decade ago.

The significant increase in mail theft is not merely an isolated surge in criminal activity; it reflects a deeper systemic failure in the nation's physical mail security.

During a time when every law enforcement agency in the country responded to rising crime by increasing uniformed police patrols, the Postal Inspection Service did the opposite. It benched and actively began defunding its own federal police force. Even worse, USPIS publicly declared that it had “comprehensively curtailed” postal police patrol activity —

effectively announcing to criminal networks that federal law enforcement was no longer on the streets to protect the U.S. Mail.

This policy reversal defies common sense. It left letter carriers and postal infrastructure unprotected. And it ignored the realities of a fast-evolving threat landscape — where postal crime is now increasingly violent, organized, and lucrative.

Today, I respectfully urge the Subcommittee to support H.R. 2095, the Postal Police Reform Act — a bipartisan, no-cost bill that would restore the authority of the Postal Police Force and put uniformed deterrence back on patrol. This commonsense legislation is endorsed by America’s three premier law enforcement associations: the National Association of Police Organizations, the Fraternal Order of Police, and the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association. It would, at once, enhance public safety, protect USPS personnel, and restore visible federal law enforcement presence in high-crime areas.

This is not mere speculation. It is consistent with what our government’s own oversight bodies have uncovered.

In 2023, the USPS Office of Inspector General issued a stark warning: the Inspection Service had no finalized strategy to address mail theft, no staffing benchmarks, and no performance metrics. The OIG’s words were blunt:

“Without a finalized Mail Theft strategy, the Postal Inspection Service risks not having a comprehensive and timely approach to addressing mail theft.”

That 2023 warning has now become reality.

In 2024, the Government Accountability Office confirmed that USPIS still lacks a method to determine how many investigators or uniformed police officers it needs — or where they should be deployed. In response, USPIS did not implement immediate fixes. Instead, it requested an extension — until April 2026 — just to begin acting upon GAO’s three modest recommendations.

Meanwhile, USPIS remains stuck in a reactive model of law enforcement.

Rather than prioritize crime prevention, USPIS has allowed itself to drift into mission creep. It now devotes vast resources to cybercrimes, narcotics, child exploitation, and immigration cases — most of which have little to do with the mail or protection of the Postal Service and duplicate the efforts of other federal agencies like the FBI, DEA, and DHS.

While USPIS rides the coattails of these larger and more capable federal agencies, the crimes crippling the Postal Service — mail theft, arrow key theft, and assaults on letter carriers — persist at historically unprecedented levels.

Arrow keys are the universal master keys used by postal workers to access mail receptacles across entire ZIP Codes. They are not just tools of opportunity — they are the foundation of organized postal crime. From 2020 to 2024, arrow key thefts rose by 150% — from 1,374 to 3,437. Yet, under the USPS-led “Project Safe Delivery” initiative, only 183 of those stolen keys were recovered — a 5% recovery rate. Even when a key is recovered, the number of counterfeit copies of each key remain unknown.

USPIS has begun touting a 27% drop in letter carrier robberies — but without context, that statistic is deeply misleading. To reiterate, in only 4 years — robberies of letter carriers skyrocketed by 845%. A slight dip from an all-time high is not a sign of success — it is damage control, deliberately disguised as progress.

USPIS somehow credits the modest decline in carrier robberies to Project Safe Delivery. However, a more credible explanation is far more troubling: criminal networks have simply adapted and evolved. Why risk a violent robbery when criminals can: buy stolen or counterfeit arrow keys on the black market; collude with compromised postal employees; reverse-engineer keys from missing locks; break into postal delivery vehicles; and/or harvest mail from the millions of unprotected neighborhood cluster box units across America?

What Project Safe Delivery offers in optics, it lacks in substance. There is no deployment of postal police, no clear metrics for success, and no evidence of sustained operational impact. USPIS press releases praise “partnerships” and “targeted enforcement,” but with mail theft still rising and carrier robberies only slightly declining from historic highs, the campaign is engineered to manage Congressional and public perception — not crime.

Intelligent policing starts with prevention. Project Safe Delivery begins and ends with a slogan.

The most dangerous irony is that the disproportionate share of street-level postal crime occurs in the very cities where PPOs are already stationed: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Memphis, Miami, New Orleans, New York, Newark, Oakland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, San Juan, St. Louis, and Washington DC.

These are not marginal outposts. They are dense, high-volume delivery environments with tens of thousands of postal employees, mail trucks, blue collection boxes, green relay boxes, business cluster box units, and apartment panels. But in these very cities, the Postal Police Force has been deliberately neutered — sidelined by an internal policy decision that no law required, no oversight body recommended, and no risk assessment or cost/benefit analysis justified.

Instead of reallocating resources to protect these urban hubs, USPIS has spent years dismantling its uniformed police force. Since 2016, the Postal Police Force has been

guttled by over 33% — most aggressively beginning in 2020. Today, PPOs are being quietly phased out through unbridled attrition and chronic under-hiring. Incredibly, the Inspection Service is defunding its most effective tool proven to stop postal crime during a postal crime wave.

Yet, USPS has been sure to replenish the ranks of Postal Inspectors — the complement of which remains consistent at around 1,300. For every Postal Inspector hired, the Postal Service could have hired two [2] PPOs at less cost.

But USPS leadership insists that this is a job for Postal Inspectors. But here is what the Department of Justice told the Ninth Circuit:

“The overwhelming majority of a Postal Inspector’s time is spent working at a desk or in an office setting.”

Not patrolling. Not intervening in street-level postal crimes. Sitting behind desks. Worse still, Inspectors can “claim” arrests made by local police — padding performance metrics without ever leaving their cubicles.

This isn’t law enforcement. It’s bureaucracy.

If the Postal Service is serious about saving money, it should cut the Inspection Service’s unnecessary and duplicative investigations — not the highly effective postal police crime prevention patrols. In fact, the OIG recommended just that.

If the American people are surprised that mail theft has become a systemic threat to public order, they are not alone. Most citizens still assume that someone is in charge — that when they hand over their mail, they are entrusting it to a system that works. But right now, that trust is misplaced, and that should concern every member of this Subcommittee and Congress.

We know what works. We know how to fix this. Uniformed deterrence. Geographic targeting. Data-driven patrols. Not drawn-out, costly investigations that rarely lead to arrests or convictions.

Postal Police Officers are already trained and equipped. Already assigned to the highest-risk ZIP Codes. And already on the payroll. But we are banned by policy from stepping off postal property.

That’s not law enforcement. That’s policy failure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any of your questions at today’s hearing or in questions for the record.