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ICE Attorney: 'This job sucks'

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ICE attorney says the system, and her job 'sucks'

An attorney for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had an emotional response to a judge in federal court Tuesday. FOX 9 Investigator Paul Blume has more.

The Brief

- An attorney with the Department of Justice said the federal government's system for processing and responding to immigration cases "sucks" and is overwhelmed by a flood of judicial orders requiring ICE to immediately release immigrants who have been wrongfully detained during Operation Metro Surge.
- Julie Le assured a judge that DOJ attorneys are working around the clock to comply with the orders, saying, "I wish you would just hold me in contempt of court so I can get 24 hours of sleep."

- Le, who previously worked as an ICE attorney in immigration court, volunteered to move to the U.S. Attorney's Office last month to help deal with a flood of habeas petitions for immigrants.

MINNEAPOLIS (FOX 9) - A federal judge in Minnesota demanded to know why Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is not complying with court orders and failing to immediately release immigrants who are being wrongfully detained as part of Operation Metro Surge. A government attorney responded that the federal government's system "sucks."

What we know: Julie Le, an attorney working on behalf of the U.S. Attorney's Office, admitted in court Tuesday that the government is "overwhelmed" by the number of legal challenges coming out of Operation Metro Surge.

Le appeared in court to explain why ICE has repeatedly failed to comply with court orders during the ongoing immigration operation in Minnesota.

What they're saying: "I am here to make sure the agency understands how important it is to comply with court orders," said Le, who became visibly emotional during the court hearing.

While Le said procedures are being implemented to ensure ICE complies with court orders moving forward, she admitted it has been like pulling teeth and has required non-stop work in an already depleted office.

"I wish you would just hold me in contempt of court so I can get 24 hours of sleep," Le said. "The system sucks, this job sucks, I am trying with every breath I have to get you what I need."



U.S. District Judge Jerry Blackwell said he called Tuesday's hearing to remind ICE and other federal agencies they are not above the law.

Big picture view: "Some of this is of your own making because of non-compliance with orders," Blackwell said.

Blackwell expressed frustration that people with no criminal records are being wrongfully detained even after judges have ordered their immediate release.

He said there are too many detainees and too many cases in the ongoing immigration operation that is clearly outpacing the logistics.

The backstory: Le volunteered to help the U.S. Attorney's Office last month as habeas petitions started to flood into federal court.

She previously worked as an attorney for ICE in immigration court.

ICE has its own court policies and procedures and was not prepared to argue cases in federal court, according to Le.

"We have no guidance or direction on what we need to do," Le said.

Investigators Investigating ICE

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