ICE Fires New Hires After Vetting Red Flags Emerge

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By James Morley III September 15, 2026

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has begun quietly firing some officers brought aboard during its massive hiring surge after belated background reviews uncovered red flags or recruits failed to meet performance standards, The Washington Post reported Tuesday.

Three former Department of Homeland Security officials told the Post that ICE has dismissed recruits in recent months over problems that in some cases should have been identified before they were hired.

The firings follow an expansion that brought roughly 12,000 new officers and agents into ICE as the Trump administration sought to rapidly increase immigration arrests and deportations.

The hiring campaign, backed by billions of dollars approved by Congress, offered signing bonuses of up to $50,000 and drew more than 220,000 applications.

ICE also shortened training and allowed some recruits with previous law enforcement experience to bypass the agency's training academy.

Earlier reporting found some new hires were permitted to begin working before their full background investigations were completed.

A whistleblower who oversaw background investigations warned the DHS inspector general last year that ICE's rapid expansion had overwhelmed its vetting operation.

According to the complaint, human resources officials made job offers before preliminary checks were completed, with some applicants cleared without fingerprint, identity, or credit checks.

The whistleblower urged officials to stop the hiring surge until federal vetting standards were restored.

"They failed to engage in basic vetting requirements which led my client to be alarmed that they were putting agents on the street without knowing anything about their backgrounds," Kevin Owen, an attorney representing the whistleblower, told the Post.

The concerns have taken on greater urgency following questions about the backgrounds of newly hired officers and several high-profile enforcement incidents.

In July, the Trump administration said it was reviewing ICE's vetting procedures following the fatal shooting of an immigrant in Maine.

Former officers also described field offices struggling to absorb the influx of personnel, with one saying hiring jumped from one or two employees at a time to dozens.

"People were stacked on top of people and sharing two to three people per cubicle," the former officer told the Post.

ICE defended its hiring and personnel practices, saying the dismissals are "nothing new" and that the agency applies required vetting standards.

"ICE is hiring the best of the best to go after the worst of the worst criminal illegal aliens including drug traffickers, murderers, and pedophiles," the agency told the Post.

"When individuals fall short of that standard, personnel decisions are made. This is standard practice in almost every American workplace."