



State of Illinois  
Illinois Department of Human Rights

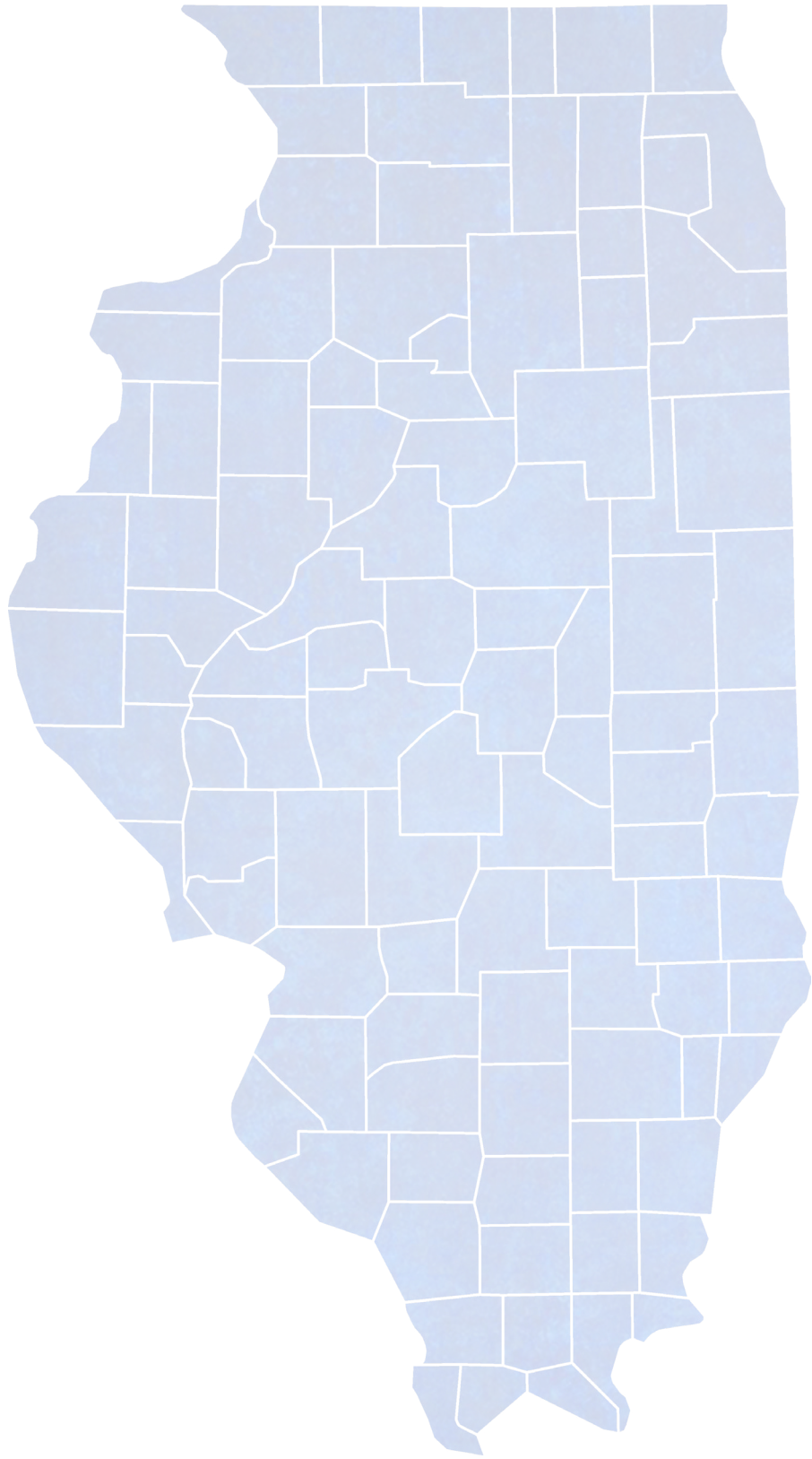


# ILLINOIS ACCOUNTABILITY COMMISSION

## FINAL REPORT

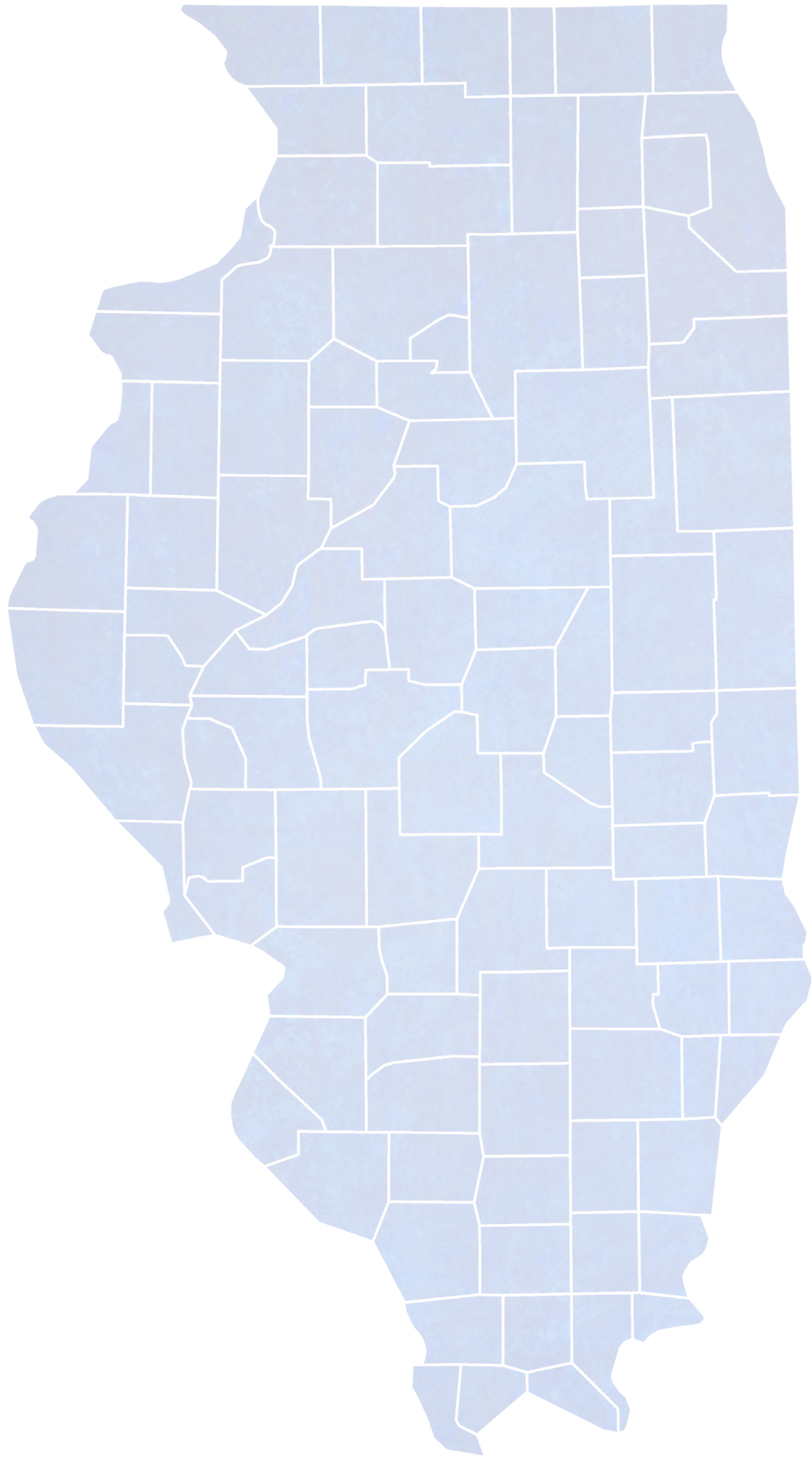
April 2026





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# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



April 30, 2026

Over the past six months, the Illinois Accountability Commission has undertaken a comprehensive investigation into the conduct of federal law enforcement during Operation Midway Blitz and its impact on communities across Illinois. This Final Report represents the culmination of that work.

Governor JB Pritzker established the Commission to develop an independent public record grounded in evidence, testimony, and investigative review. My fellow Commission members and outstanding staff have fulfilled that mandate through public hearings, community engagement, witness interviews, expert

analysis, and the examination of extensive documentary and video materials. This represents the most thorough state-level effort in recent history to examine federal law enforcement conduct, developed under conditions that included limited access to information and the lack of subpoena authority.

The record is substantial, corroborated across multiple sources, and developed through independent investigation. It demonstrates patterns of illegal and violent conduct by federal immigration enforcement agents during Operation Midway Blitz and the resulting serious and lasting consequences for individuals, families, and communities across Illinois.

The findings that follow are set forth in detail and are supported by substantial evidence. They reflect the Commission's determinations across core areas of inquiry, including enforcement practices, detention conditions, operational tactics, and the broader civic and community impacts associated with Operation Midway Blitz. The report also sets forth a series of recommendations aimed at preventing recurrence of the patterns of conduct documented in these findings and strengthening accountability, oversight, and public trust going forward.

No single report can fully capture every experience or the full extent of harm. The record presented here reflects what the Commission was able to establish within its mandate and authority. It underscores the importance of continued oversight, transparency, and accountability beyond the life of this Commission.

America's history pertaining to immigration laws and policies has been historically exclusionary, contradictory and harmful, despite the widespread whitewashing of our history as a harmonious nation of immigrants. It is impossible to have this conversation without acknowledgement of the fraught history and discriminatory policies that have dominated this country's immigration policies for centuries. Within this context, Operation Midway Blitz can largely be viewed as a continuation of these harmful policies and a broken immigration system.

Undocumented persons have become an integral and contributing part of the American economy, culture and society. But the tension created by the presence of millions of undocumented persons in what is supposed to be a nation of laws has been at the center of the political debate in our country for the last 50 years. The intelligent and humane response to this situation would be to reform immigration laws to address this situation: so-called "comprehensive immigration reform." A serious effort to enact such legislation was made in 2007, with the support of the Administration of President George W. Bush. It failed in the U.S. Senate, largely because of conservative opposition in both political parties to its provision of a path to citizenship for undocumented persons.

Since that time there have been no serious efforts to reform our immigration laws, and federal policies regarding immigration enforcement have been divergent and erratic. But never – until now – have immigration policies been addressed with the systemic and widespread use of paramilitary tactics, violence, and utter lawlessness engaged in by federal officials. Such shocking and unacceptable conduct has been perpetrated by the Trump administration in Illinois and elsewhere around the nation.

Thank you to my fellow Commissioners and the staff and investigators who carried this work forward under demanding circumstances. Thank you to the many subject matter experts who contributed analysis and perspective. I would like to thank the organizations and people who organized in opposition to this lawless invasion of the Chicago area with peaceful demonstrations, rapid responders and legal services to protect, feed, support, and

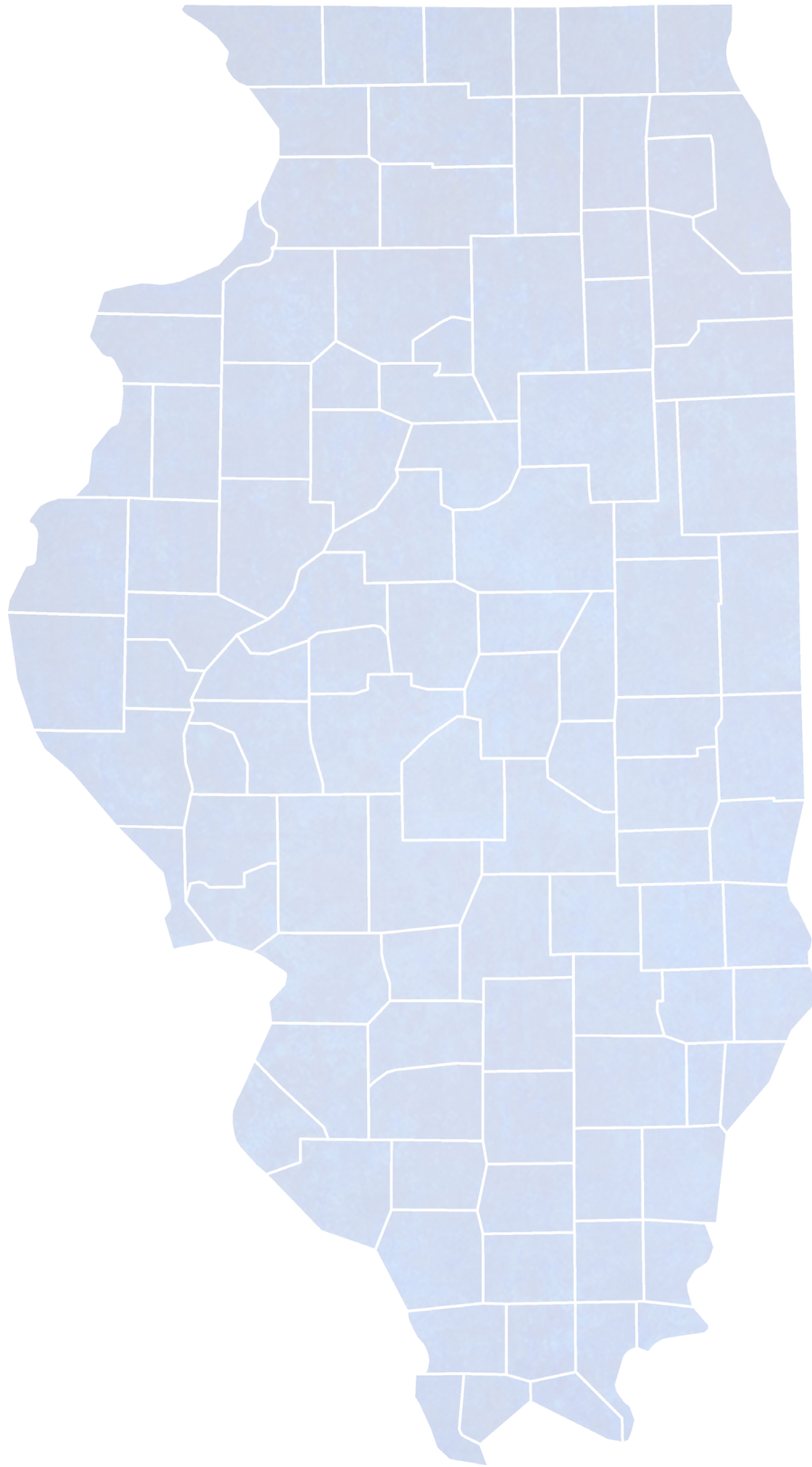
seek justice for our community members who were harmed. Thank you to all of you who felt compelled to protect your neighbors and their families. And thank you to the individuals and communities across Illinois who came forward to share their experiences, often at personal risk, to ensure that this record could exist.

I hope that this Final Report serves as a durable public record that informs future oversight, policy, and accountability.

Sincerely

Judge Rubén Castillo

Chair of the Illinois Accountability Commission



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“Chicago is not just another city experiencing immigration enforcement. Chicago matters because it is not fringe. It is diverse, institutionally strong, and politically engaged. Under Operation Midway Blitz, Chicago has become the primary testing ground for a new model of federal power, one that blurs the line between law enforcement and political control.”*

*– Professor Robert Pape*

This Final Report is the culmination of the Illinois Accountability Commission’s work to create a public record of the conduct of federal agents during Operation Midway Blitz, examine the impact that conduct had on individuals, and offer policy recommendations to prevent future harm in Illinois. To compile this Final Report, the Commission has held public hearings and community listening sessions; conducted investigations, witness interviews, and evidence gathering; solicited testimony and research from subject matter experts; and reviewed news reports and lawsuits.

Despite the many instances where the Commission has identified that the federal administration lied about Operation Midway Blitz, they were accurate in one respect: its name. It was in fact a “blitzkrieg”: a “war conducted with great speed and force.”<sup>i</sup>

Operation Midway Blitz agents regularly used force against Illinoisans without justification, including immigrants, U.S. citizens, protesters, journalists, clergy members, and bystanders. Federal agents slammed people to the ground without provocation, rammed other vehicles with theirs, sprayed bystanders (including children) with tear gas and pepper spray, and shot two individuals, killing one. Agents failed to use appropriate tactics and then inflamed dangerous situations they created in the first place. And when criticism surfaced, federal administration leadership doubled down and defended the misconduct of their officers.

DHS deployed roving patrols of agents to spread fear in residential neighborhoods. They stopped people for questioning based on how they looked, how they spoke or

where they worked. They arrested people without probable cause, often without asking any questions about their immigration status before placing them in handcuffs. Agents on these roving patrols donned face masks, military fatigues, body armor, and military-style weapons. They drove unmarked cars and refused to identify themselves. They recorded protesters and legal observers to intimidate them from documenting their activities. They used physical force and tear gas indiscriminately.

After they were arrested, individuals were detained in deplorable conditions. Their families often were not informed when their loved ones were arrested and had to track them down on their own or hope for a phone call. Detained individuals were transferred between facilities without warning or explanation and left in a state of confusion about the status of their immigration case.

None of this was by accident. It was a whole-of-government approach to suppress opposition and pressure Illinois because of its immigrant-friendly policies, under the guise of achieving mass deportation. Those efforts were instigated by and had the full support of senior federal officials. In its wake, Operation Midway Blitz leaves a devastating mark on civic life in Chicago, negatively undermining community trust in state and local law enforcement, damaging neighborhood economics, and hurting the mental health and well-being of Illinois residents, including children and families.

The Commission's work was inspired by Chicago and Illinois residents. The Commission was able to listen to their stories directly through 5 public hearings and 7 community listening sessions. The Commission analyzed the actions of federal agents with experience from numerous experts who volunteered their time.

Below are the key findings issued by the Commission. These findings were derived from the Commissioners, subject matter experts, community members, advocates, rapid responders, and many others who witnessed Operation Midway Blitz.

This Final Report cannot capture every act of misconduct committed by federal agents, nor can it capture every pain inflicted on the people of Illinois. The stories represented here are but a sample of those that must continue to be told in the months and years ahead. And while truth-telling is a form of accountability on its own, the Commission's hope is that its work will prompt further investigation and accountability by law enforcement, Congress and in the courts.

# KEY FINDINGS



## Finding 1

Federal immigration agents engaged in dangerous high-speed vehicular pursuits, extreme physical force, indiscriminate use of chemical agents, shootings, beatings, and other violent acts, amounting to unconstitutional uses of force.



## Finding 2

Officials from Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Protection, the Department of Homeland Security, and the White House routinely lied to the public about the motivations and outcomes of Operation Midway Blitz and concealed and distorted key facts about events involving federal immigration agents.



## Finding 3

Federal immigration agents conducted discriminatory stops and unlawful warrantless arrests, creating widespread fear throughout the Chicago metropolitan area and beyond.



## Finding 4

CBP and ICE paramilitary tactics like face masks, military fatigues and body armor, unmarked vehicles, and military-style weapons, along with surveillance of protesters and observers, created an environment of occupation that terrorized immigrants and attempted to silence individuals engaged in First Amendment protected activity.



## Finding 5

Inhumane conditions and lack of due process were used by federal immigration agents to coerce individuals in detention into leaving the country, even if they had a legal pathway to residency or relief from deportation.



## Finding 6

High-level White House, DHS and other federal officials enabled and encouraged misconduct by ICE and CBP agents during Operation Midway Blitz by urging agents to "go hard," defending and mischaracterizing incidents of use of force, shielding agents from accountability, lifting safeguards, and effectuating harmful policies.



## Finding 7

Operation Midway Blitz had a pervasive chilling effect on civic life, negatively undermined community trust in state and local law enforcement, strained many businesses and economic districts in the Chicago area, and hurt the mental health and well-being of Illinois children and families.



## Finding 8

Illinois' TRUST Act and other initiatives to support immigrants promoted public safety, despite claims to the contrary by the federal government.

# BACKGROUND ON THE ILLINOIS ACCOUNTABILITY COMMISSION

On October 23, 2025, Governor JB Pritzker signed Executive Order 2025-06 establishing the Illinois Accountability Commission (Commission).<sup>ii</sup> The Commission was created in response to the deployment of large numbers of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and other federal officers to the Chicagoland area in September 2025 as part of an enforcement “blitz” during which federal agents employed unprecedented, militarized tactics, including repeated uses of force, causing widespread fear and intimidation and resulting in the wrongful detention of and serious and fatal physical harm to U.S. citizens and others.<sup>iii</sup> This campaign was named “Operation Midway Blitz” by DHS.

The purpose of the Commission is to (1) create a public record of the conduct of federal agents during “Operation Midway Blitz” and the Trump Administration’s military-style operations throughout the Chicago metropolitan area and throughout Illinois; (2) examine the impact of that conduct on individuals and communities; and (3) consider policy recommendations to prevent future harm to these individuals and communities. In announcing the Commission, Governor Pritzker stated

*“We are going to show the public – here in Chicago, the State of Illinois, across the nation, and around the world – exactly what is going on. We will create a detailed record, and that record will reflect reality. Once this all ends, I believe there will be people of good faith who will review what the Commission has recorded and will demand answers and accountability.”<sup>iv</sup>*

To accomplish these objectives, the Commission was asked to:

- a) Determine the most effective manner in which the Commission can gather publicly-available videos documenting the actions of federal officers—including agents of DHS components (such as ICE and CBP) and other federal agents working in coordination with DHS—during “Operation Midway Blitz”;
- b) Gather additional information and documentation, to the extent possible, of the actions of federal law enforcement and the impact of those actions, including through testimony;
- c) Create a public record, including through public hearings, to document the conduct of federal officers during “Operation Midway Blitz” and its impact on Illinois residents;
- d) Analyze the documented conduct of federal officers during “Operation Midway Blitz” and identify conduct requiring the most urgent corrective action and remediation based on its impact on the community and the egregiousness of the conduct;
- e) Make recommendations for law or policy changes to ensure greater protection for Illinois residents from violations of their rights and to ensure community safety;
- f) Provide, not later than January 31, 2026, an initial status report to the Governor, and, not later than April 30, 2026, a final report; and
- g) Refer, as appropriate, information or reports of potential violations of law to the agencies or entities responsible for investigating or enforcing such violations.

Additionally, on January 29, 2026, Governor Pritzker requested the Commission to examine the conduct and decisions made by key Trump Administration officials related to Operation Midway Blitz<sup>v</sup>. The Commission adopted this request at its hearing on January 30, 2026.

## Commission Members

The Commission is composed of a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and six additional members, each appointed by the Governor. Each Commissioner serves without compensation, and the term of each Commission member expires one year from the date of their appointment. Commission members may be reappointed or replaced at the pleasure of the Governor, and the Commission shall dissolve one year after the date of the Executive Order unless extended by the Governor.

**The Honorable Rubén Castillo (Chair):** Judge Rubén Castillo served as Judge on the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois for 25 years and served as the Chief Judge for six of those years. He served multiple terms on the U.S. Sentencing Commission — appointed by President Bill Clinton and re-appointed by President George W. Bush. He is a former federal prosecutor and highly regarded leader who received numerous law enforcement awards for his previous work in the Special Prosecution Unit of the U.S. Attorney's Office. (Appointed Oct. 23, 2025)

**The Honorable Patricia Brown Holmes (Vice Chair):** Judge Patricia Brown Holmes is the managing partner of the law firm of Riley Safer Holmes and Cancilla, LLP, which she also founded. Judge Homes has experience on the Illinois state bench and as a state and federal prosecutor, having served as an associate judge in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Assistant U.S. Attorney and Assistant State's Attorney. (Appointed Oct. 23, 2025)

**Aurora Austriaco:** Aurora Austriaco is an experienced and award-winning litigation attorney and a partner and shareholder at an all-women-owned law firm, Valentine Austriaco & Bueschel, P.C., with a long record of leadership, locally and nationally. Austriaco is currently serving as Commissioner for the Illinois Courts Commission. Previously, she served 9 years as Commissioner for the Park Ridge Planning and Zoning Commission and has served 11 years as Commissioner for the Cook County Human Rights Commission. She is the immediate past president of the National Conference of Bar Presidents, past president of the Chicago Bar Association, and past president of the Lawyer's Trust Fund of Illinois. (Appointed Oct. 23, 2025)

**Professor Susan Gzesh:** Professor Gzesh is an Instructional Professor at University of Chicago and the prior Executive Director of the University of Chicago Pozen Family Center for Human Rights. She has concentrated her legal practice on the representation of immigrants and refugees in immigration, labor, and civil rights matters. She was a founding attorney of the National Immigrant Justice Center (formerly known as the Midwest Immigrant Rights Center),

was retained as legal counsel to the Embassy of Mexico in Washington, D.C. from 1997-1999, and she co-led a project for the Mexican Foreign Ministry from 2010-2014, among other accomplishments. (Appointed Oct. 23, 2025)

**Linda Xóchitl Tortolero:** A lawyer and strategist, Linda Xóchitl Tortolero is President and CEO of Latino Policy Forum, and she also serves on the Women’s Advisory Council of the Mayor’s Office for the City of Chicago and the Board of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice. She previously led Mujeres Latinas en Acción, the longest-standing Latina organization in the country, playing a pivotal role in its transformative expansion and strategic positioning. (Appointed Oct. 23, 2025)

**Commander Cindy Sam:** Commander Sam is retired from the Chicago Police Department, having served as a police officer for over 34 years, including serving as Commander and leading police security operations for one of the nation’s largest urban transit systems. Previously, she served as Lieutenant of Public Transportation at Midway Airport, leading security and protection strategies. (Appointed Oct. 23, 2025)

**Jimmy L. Arce:** Jimmy L. Arce is a former federal prosecutor with extensive experience leading complex criminal and civil investigations in the Northern District of Illinois. He played a key role in the Department of Justice’s civil rights investigation of the Chicago Police Department, which led to a landmark consent decree. In private practice at Dowd Bennett LLP, Arce represents clients in commercial litigation and white-collar matters, bringing expertise in federal investigations, enforcement, and institutional oversight. (Appointed Nov. 20, 2025)

**Ric Estrada:** Ric Estrada is CEO of Metropolitan Family Services, one of Illinois’s largest human-services organizations. With more than three decades in public service and nonprofit leadership — including senior roles in the City of Chicago — Estrada brings a community-centered perspective and a strong track record of guiding organizations that serve families and neighborhoods directly affected by federal actions. (Appointed Nov. 20, 2025)

The Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) provides administrative and professional support to the operations of the Commission. The Commission is authorized to also work with subject matter experts and non-profit organizations to ensure that it has access to appropriate staffing and expertise to conduct its review and analysis of the actions of federal law enforcement. The Commission hired an Executive Director, Lead Counsel, Special Counsel, and Commission Counsels to support the Commission’s work.

## Commission Hearings

The Commission held five public hearings to solicit testimony from witnesses, experts and members of the public about the impact on Operation Midway Blitz.<sup>vi</sup> Each hearing provided an opportunity for members of the public to provide comment. Video of each Commission hearing is available [here](#).

Hearings	Witnesses
<p>December 18, 2025</p> <p><i>Use of Chemical Weapons During Operation Midway Blitz</i></p> <p>Arturo Velasquez Institute (AVI) at the Richard J. Daley College Chicago, IL</p>	<p>Dr. Rohini Haar, Assistant Adjunct Professor of Epidemiology at the University of California, Berkeley, and emergency medicine physician</p> <p>Pastor Matt DeMateo, CEO of New Life Centers</p>
<p>January 30, 2026</p> <p><i>Unconstitutional by Design: How Federal Immigration Enforcement Transformed into a Paramilitary Force that Operates Above the Law</i></p> <p>Michael A. Bilandic Building Chicago, IL</p>	<p>Professor Robert Pape, Professor of Political Science and Founding Director of the Chicago Project on Security and Threats</p> <p>Garrett Graff, Historian and Journalist</p> <p>Deborah Fleischaker, Principal Consultant, Blackbird Ventures, LLC, and former U.S. Department of Homeland Security official</p> <p>Dr. Marc Brown, Academic Director and Lead Instructor for the Excellence in Policing and Public Safety Program at the University of South Carolina Joseph F. Rich School of Law</p> <p>Professor Nicole Hallet, Clinical Professor of Law</p>

Hearings	Witnesses
<p data-bbox="152 205 418 241"><b>February 24, 2026</b></p> <p data-bbox="152 258 581 449"><i>The Myth of Safety: Federal Enforcement and Its Real Impacts on Illinois Communities</i></p> <p data-bbox="152 468 542 558">Michael A. Bilandic Building Chicago, IL</p>	<p data-bbox="633 205 1182 241"><b>Panel 1: Health, Mental Health &amp; Social Well-Being</b></p> <ul data-bbox="672 310 1455 716" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="672 310 1455 401">• Dr. Minal Giri, MD, FAAP, Executive Director, Midwest Human Rights Consortium</li> <li data-bbox="672 417 1455 508">• Dr. Rebecca Ford-Paz, PhD, Advisory Board Member of the Coalition for Immigrant Mental Health</li> <li data-bbox="672 525 1455 716">• Dr. Karen Susan Haverkamp, MD Panel, Co-Chair of the Refugee and Immigrant Child Health Initiative of the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatricians</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="633 735 1140 770"><b>Panel 2: Education &amp; Youth Stability</b></p> <ul data-bbox="672 789 1344 1087" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="672 789 1344 879">• Seth Lavin, Principal, Brentano Math &amp; Science Academy</li> <li data-bbox="672 896 1344 987">• Juliet de Jesús Alejandro, Executive Director, Palenque LSNA</li> <li data-bbox="672 1003 1344 1087">• Mariana Souto-Manning, PhD, President, Erikson Institute</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="633 1106 1226 1142"><b>Panel 3: Public Safety &amp; Community Trust</b></p> <ul data-bbox="672 1161 1390 1459" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="672 1161 1390 1251">• Dr. Kathryn Bocanegra, PhD, LCSW, Assistant Professor, University of Illinois Chicago</li> <li data-bbox="672 1268 1390 1358">• Garien Gatewood, Deputy Mayor for Community Safety, City of Chicago</li> <li data-bbox="672 1375 1390 1459">• Domonique F. McCord, Chief Program Officer, Metropolitan Peace Initiatives</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="633 1478 1313 1514"><b>Panel 4: Economic Vitality &amp; Household Stability</b></p> <ul data-bbox="672 1533 1463 1726" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="672 1533 1463 1575">• Anna Valencia, City Clerk, City of Chicago</li> <li data-bbox="672 1591 1463 1675">• Marcela Rodriguez, Co-Executive Director, Enlace Chicago</li> <li data-bbox="672 1692 1463 1726">• Michael Salvatore, Owner, Heritage Hospitality Group</li> </ul>

Hearings	Witnesses
<b>April 27, 2026</b> <i>Militarizing Streets and Suppressing Speech and Assembly</i> <b>Michael A. Bilandic Building, Chicago, IL</b>	<b>Denise Lorence, Mother of Katie Abraham</b> <b>Marissa Vivoda, Lakeview Witness</b> <b>Natalia Connelly, Lakeview Witness</b> <b>Brian Kolp, Old Irving Park Witness</b> <b>Jennifer Moriarty, Evanston Witness</b> <b>Presentations of Evidence by IAC Attorneys</b>
<b>April 28, 2026</b> <i>Immunity for Lawlessness, Federal Propaganda and Free &amp; Fair Elections</i> <b>Michael A. Bilandic Building Chicago, IL</b>	<b>Marimar Martinez, Brighton Park Witness</b> <b>Christopher Parente, Attorney of Marimar Martinez</b> <b>Jim Durkin, Former IL House Minority Leader</b> <b>Sean Morales-Doyle, Director of Voting Rights &amp; Elections, Brennan Center for Justice</b> <b>Presentations of Evidence by IAC Attorneys</b>

## Commission Investigations

To create a durable public record of Operation Midway Blitz, the Commission relied on a team of lawyers and staff to investigate some of the most egregious incidents identified by the Commission. Evidence was carefully gathered, rigorously examined, and pieced together from the following events:

- September 12, 2025: Village of Franklin Park – shooting death of Silverio Villegas González
- September 16, 2025: City of Elgin – home raid
- September 30, 2025: City of Chicago South Shore neighborhood – apartment raid
- October 1, 2025: City of Chicago Garfield Park neighborhood – chokehold
- October 3, 2025: City of Chicago Logan Square neighborhood (Funston Elementary School) – chemical weapons
- October 4, 2025: City of Chicago Brighton Park neighborhood – shooting of Marimar Martinez and chemical weapons
- October 10, 2025: City of Chicago West Loop neighborhood – arrest of Dayanne Figueroa
- October 14, 2025: City of Chicago East Side neighborhood – vehicular pursuit, excessive force and chemical weapons

- October 3, 22, and 23, and November 8, 2025: City of Chicago Little Village neighborhood – military-style occupation
- October 24, 2025: City of Chicago Lakeview neighborhood – racial profiling, use of force and chemical weapons
- October 25, 2025: City of Chicago Old Irving Park neighborhood – use of force and chemical weapons
- October 31, 2025: City of Evanston – use of force and chemical weapons
- November 3, 2025: City of Melrose Park – chokehold
- December 6, 2025: City of Elgin – use of force, chemical weapons, paramilitary intimidation, racial profiling

Evidence development proceeded through structured phases: preliminary research and open-source cataloging; witness outreach and screening; formal interviews and testimonial collection; and legal analysis of the factual record against applicable agency policies as well as state and federal laws. Former federal prosecutors and civil litigators specializing in police misconduct led the analysis to ensure that proper standards were applied.

Investigators reviewed hundreds of hours of body worn camera footage, surveillance video, and bystander recordings. They analyzed sworn declarations filed in federal court, federal agent text messages, official incident reports and records, and the public statements of federal officials that in many cases contradicted the available evidence. Across the investigations, Commission lawyers conducted dozens of interviews with community members, bystanders, victims, and other witnesses. Commission lawyers also consulted subject-matter experts in use of force, chemical weapons, immigration enforcement, civil rights law, and health care to inform the Commission's findings and recommendations.

This body of evidence was developed under significant constraints, including the lack of subpoena power. Critical categories of evidence—including internal communications, disciplinary records, use-of-force reviews, and the full body-worn camera inventory—remain in the exclusive possession of the federal government and were beyond the reach of the Commission's investigation team. The evidentiary record that follows is rich, but it is far from complete.

The investigation teams were supported by witnesses who chose to participate in the Commission's work. Every witness did so voluntarily, knowing that the conduct they were being asked about involved a federal government that has shown a willingness to retaliate,

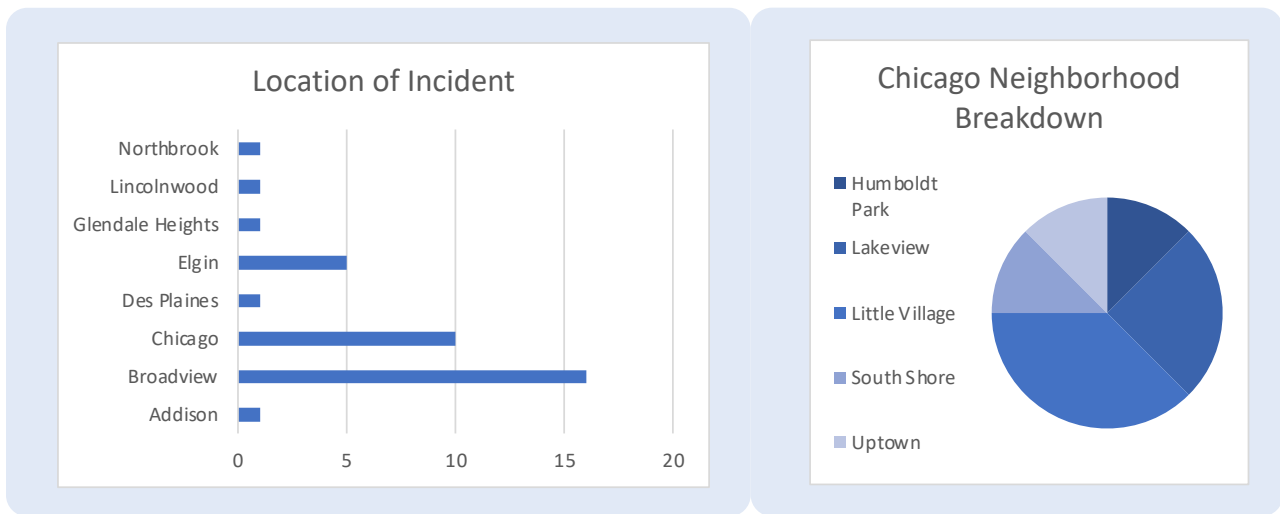
to lie, and to brand its own victims as criminals. Many came forward courageously at considerable potential personal risk. Some witnesses declined to participate out of fear of retaliation or public identification, including the possibility of retaliatory action by ICE against themselves or a family member.

The result is an evidentiary foundation that, while incomplete, reflects one of the most comprehensive state-level investigations of federal law enforcement misconduct undertaken in recent American history. What follows are the Commission's findings drawn from that record.

The Commission also consulted several subject matter experts and research organizations to help develop the factual record and Commission findings. This includes research conducted at the request of the Commission by the Cline Center for Advanced Social Research at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign on societal instability events during Operation Midway Blitz; National Opinion Research Center (NORC) regarding impact to immigrant-serving organizations; and The Robinson Collective regarding economic impact of Operation Midway Blitz on businesses and communities. The Commission also consulted with several additional experts who provided background information, research support and analysis, and frontline experiences and observations to inform the Commission's findings.

## IAC Portal Submissions

To gather information from the public, the Commission launched a portal on January 15, 2026, through which individuals who witnessed or experienced potential misconduct by federal agents during Operation Midway Blitz could submit video or narrative information to the Commission.<sup>vii</sup> As of April 1, 2026, the Commission received reports regarding a total of 36 incidents from 24 individuals. Submissions were analyzed based on the Commission's investigative areas of focus and shared with the Commission's investigative team for further review. The majority of incidents reported through this process occurred in the City of Chicago (10) or the Village of Broadview (16), with additional incidents in the broader Chicagoland area (10). Within Chicago, there was representation across the City's geography with submissions from the South (1), North (3), Northwest (1), and West (3) sides.



Reported incidents spanned the entirety of Operation Midway Blitz, which was most active between September 9 and November 10, 2025, as well as incidents spanning through early December. Incidents reported through this process were tagged across 8 areas of potential misconduct, identified by the Commission’s investigative team as areas of interest. The two most common issues identified were the use of tear gas/pepper spray and intimidation tactics by federal agents.

## Community Listening Sessions

In support of the Illinois Accountability Commission’s mandate to document the impact of federal law enforcement actions—including Operation Midway Blitz—the Commission hosted a series of seven community listening sessions. These sessions were designed to create accessible, community-centered spaces where individuals could voluntarily share firsthand experiences, ensuring those accounts are preserved in the public record. These sessions were hosted in partnership with local community-based organizations and trusted neighborhood stakeholders, which played a critical role in outreach, facilitation, and trust-building with participants.

Across all seven sessions, attendance ranged from approximately 30 to 60 participants per session, for an estimated total of 210 to 420 attendees overall. Listening sessions were held across a range of community areas in northern Illinois to ensure geographic and demographic accessibility:

- Franklin Park, Illinois
- North Side (Chicago)
- South and Southeast Side (Chicago)

- Southwest Side (Chicago)
- West Side (Chicago)
- Lake County, Illinois
- Will County, Illinois

The sessions reflect a core principle of the Commission’s work: accountability depends on credible documentation of impact, and credible documentation of impact depends on the direct engagement of a diversity of community voices. By going to communities, the Commission aimed to reduce barriers to participation and ensure that experiences of harm, misconduct, and community impact are collected and captured accurately in people’s own words. A key priority across all sessions was fostering an environment where participants felt comfortable sharing sensitive and often traumatic experiences. Efforts to create such an environment included:

- Partnering with trusted local organizations and community leaders
- Offering multiple ways to share testimony (oral, written, or follow-up submission)
- Providing clear information about how testimony would be used and stored
- Allowing participants to engage at their own pace within facilitated conversations, with no requirement to share details on the spot and opportunities to share information anonymously, in group settings, and/or one-on-one with Commissioners
- Ensuring staff were available to answer questions and discuss privacy considerations
- Ensuring access to bilingual (Spanish and English) and culturally responsive mental health support to help participants navigate sharing sensitive or traumatic experiences and access to mental health resources after the listening session concluded

The listening sessions helped surface early themes the Commission is documenting, including use of force, arrests and detentions, impacts on families and children, suppression of speech, and broader effects on community trust and daily life. In this way, the sessions elevated individual testimonies and helped identify patterns that informed the Commission’s findings and recommendations.

Throughout the Final Report, the Commission has provided many stories and quotes shared by participants at the community listening sessions using their own words (or those used by a translator) as close as possible with modifications made as necessary to protect anonymity.

# CHAPTER 1:

## THE PITCH - WORST OF THE WORST

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced Operation Midway Blitz on September 8, 2025.<sup>viii</sup> U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) Commander at Large Gregory Bovino arrived in Chicago on September 10, 2025,<sup>ix</sup> and U.S. Customs and Border Patrol announced Operation at Large on Sept. 16, 2025.<sup>x</sup> Together, ICE and CBP engaged in enhanced enforcement activity throughout the Chicagoland area through November 11, 2025, when DHS confirmed that Gregory Bovino was leaving Chicago and that DHS' Command Center at Naval Station Great Lakes would be closing.<sup>xi</sup> Gregory Bovino returned to Chicago on December 16, 2025, with approximately 200 CBP agents,<sup>xii</sup> staying only a few days. Although no formal end-date for Operation Midway Blitz has ever been announced, the Commission has examined events that occurred in the Chicagoland area between September 8, 2025, through December 31, 2025.

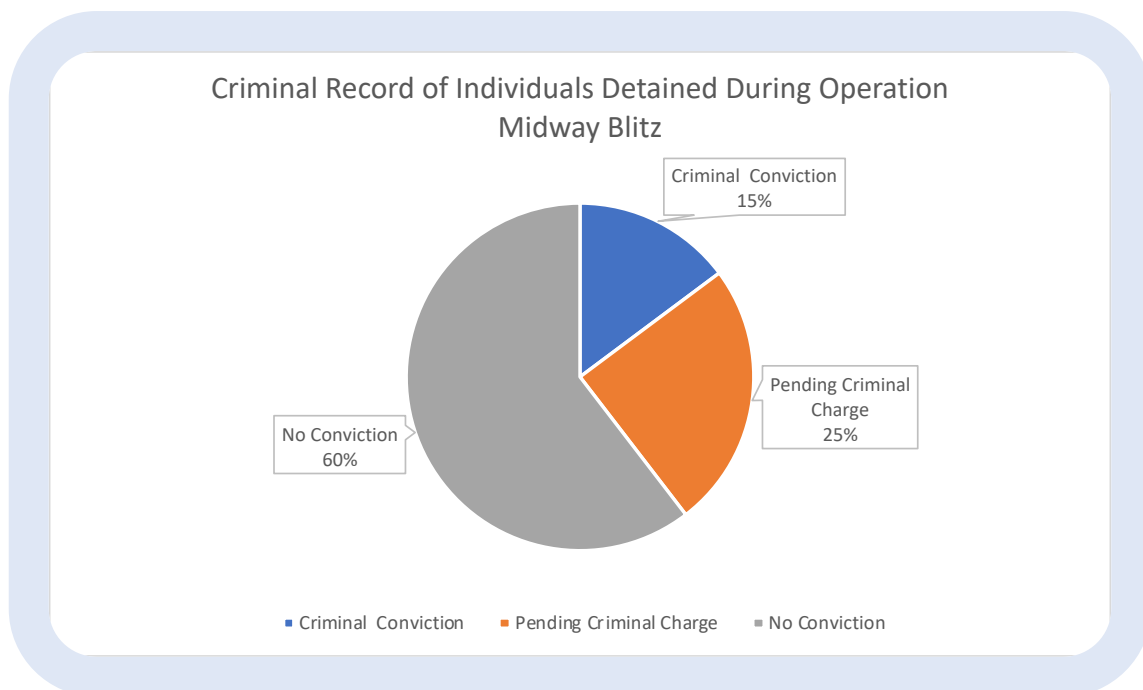
Although DHS officials claimed that Operation Midway Blitz was designed to target the “worst of the worst” – referencing those with criminal records – the data demonstrates the opposite and undermines the entire premise that Operation Midway Blitz was about public safety. Federal immigration agents did not target the “worst of the worst” during Operation Midway Blitz; in reality, the percentage of arrestees with a criminal conviction was lower during Operation Midway Blitz than at any point since the start of 2024.<sup>xiii</sup>

## Arrests and Detentions During Operation Midway Blitz

DHS has provided the public with only limited data about how many individuals were arrested, detained, or removed from the country as a part of Operation Midway Blitz. The most comprehensive data available comes from government data obtained by the Deportation Data Project through a Freedom of Information Act request. The Commission conducted an analysis of this data to identify the number of individuals detained by ICE and CBP during Operation Midway Blitz, as represented by the periods between September 8 and November 10, 2025, and December 16 – 18, 2025. Individuals who were arrested by CBP or other federal agents supporting ICE during Operation Midway Blitz and subsequently detained at the Broadview or South Loop detention center would likely be represented in this set of detentions data.

DHS has claimed that by the end of December 2025, nearly 4,500 individuals had been arrested as part of Operation Midway Blitz,<sup>xiv</sup> including at least 75 U.S. citizens.<sup>xv</sup> In information provided to members of the Illinois congressional delegation, however, ICE claimed that no U.S. citizens had been arrested.<sup>xvi</sup> In that letter, ICE reportedly acknowledged that 81% had no criminal convictions.

The Commission's analysis estimates that over 3,900 individuals were arrested and detained at Chicago area facilities during Operation Midway Blitz, 85% of which had no criminal conviction.<sup>xvii</sup> Another analysis of that data found that the vast majority of those arrested during Operation Midway Blitz with criminal convictions had convictions for non-violent offenses.<sup>xviii</sup>



At the request of the Commission, the Cline Center for Advanced Social Research at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign analyzed the available data and found that “persons arrested by ICE during Operation Midway Blitz were far less likely to have been convicted of any kind of crime than for any period since the start of 2024.”<sup>xix</sup> The Cline Center also found that, as statewide daily arrests went up during Operation Midway Blitz, the percentage of arrestees with criminal convictions went down.<sup>xx</sup> In the graph below, the orange line represents the number of daily arrests by ICE, and the blue bars represent the percentage of those arrested by ICE with a prior conviction. Between September 1 and December 1, 2025 – when Operation Midway Blitz’s roving patrols were active – the percentage of those with criminal records went down as the number of arrests went up.

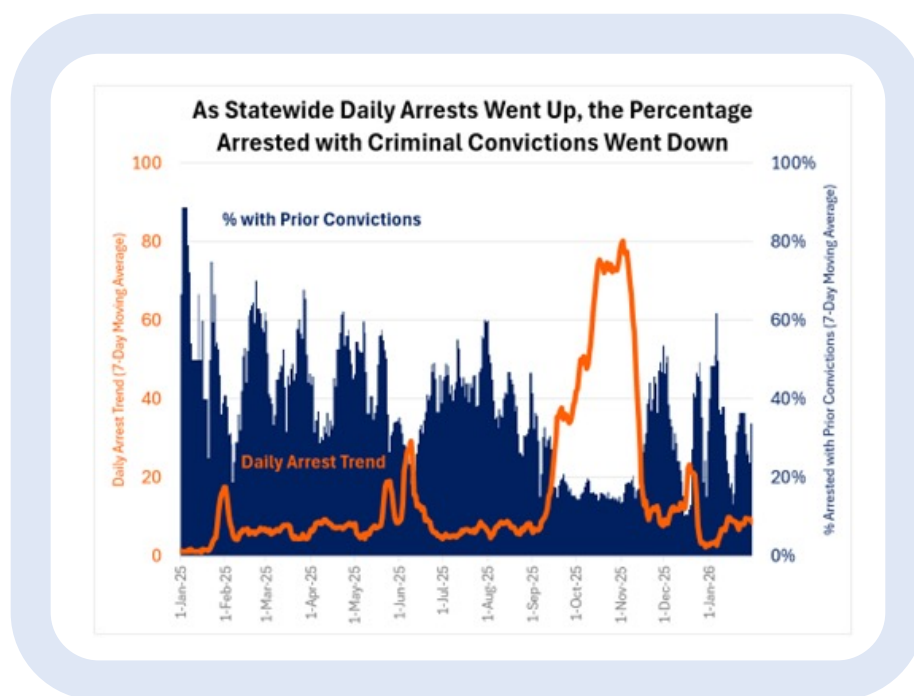


Figure: ICE administrative arrest records from January 1, 2025 through January 30, 2026 analyzed by the Cline Center. Source: Deportation Data Project<sup>xxi</sup>

Only 40% of those detained during Operation Midway Blitz had a final order of removal, which is a final decision by an immigration judge or the Board of Immigration Appeals authorizing ICE to remove an individual from the United States. This suggests that over 60% of individuals were detained even though ICE did not have a record that a final order of removal had been issued. This may reflect the Administration’s reinterpretation of the Immigration and Nationality Act to subject more individuals to mandatory detention pending their removal proceedings (see section 2.C).

“I have been in Illinois for 2 years, and I didn’t have any problems and they illegally detained me. I know the law, I said, why are you detaining me? I’m showing up to my appointments, why are you detaining me? He said the law changed. I asked the person, in what way did the law change? He told me this is a political thing.”

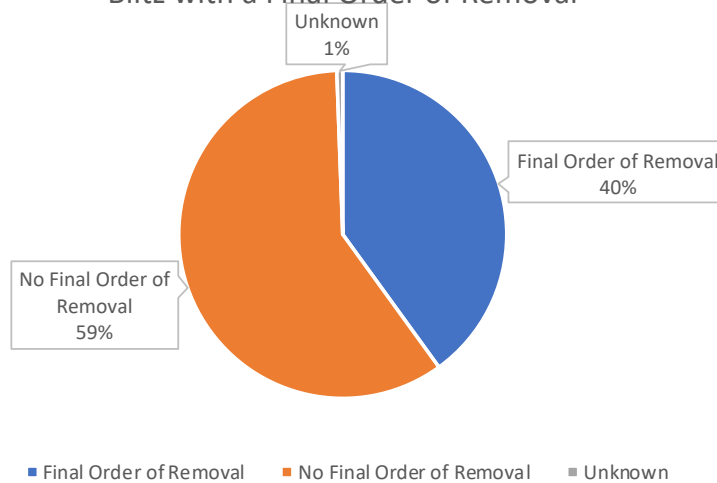
– South and Southeast Side Listening Session Participant

The Commission heard many stories from individuals who were arrested and detained even though they had been in compliance with instructions from DHS as they awaited resolution of their immigration status. Two individuals at the South and Southeast Side listening session reported that they received a letter from ICE telling them to come check in regarding their immigration case, and were detained when they arrived.

“They are affecting people who have been here for 10, 15 years already. It seems like they really should give a little. There needs to be a system and allow people to go through the [immigration] process while they’re here. They shouldn’t be threatened with fear of losing their lives, losing their livelihoods, losing their children.”

– West Side Listening Session Participant

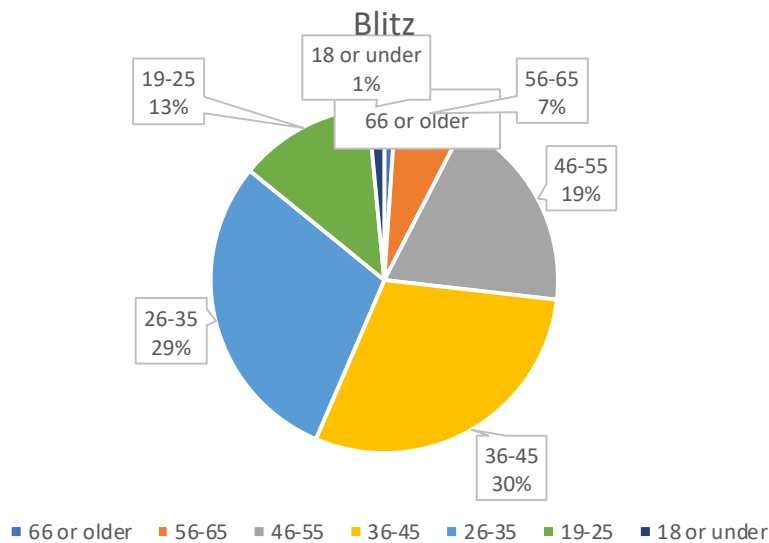
### Percentage of Individuals Detained During Operation Midway Blitz with a Final Order of Removal



Source: Deportation Data Project and analyzed by IAC Commission staff.

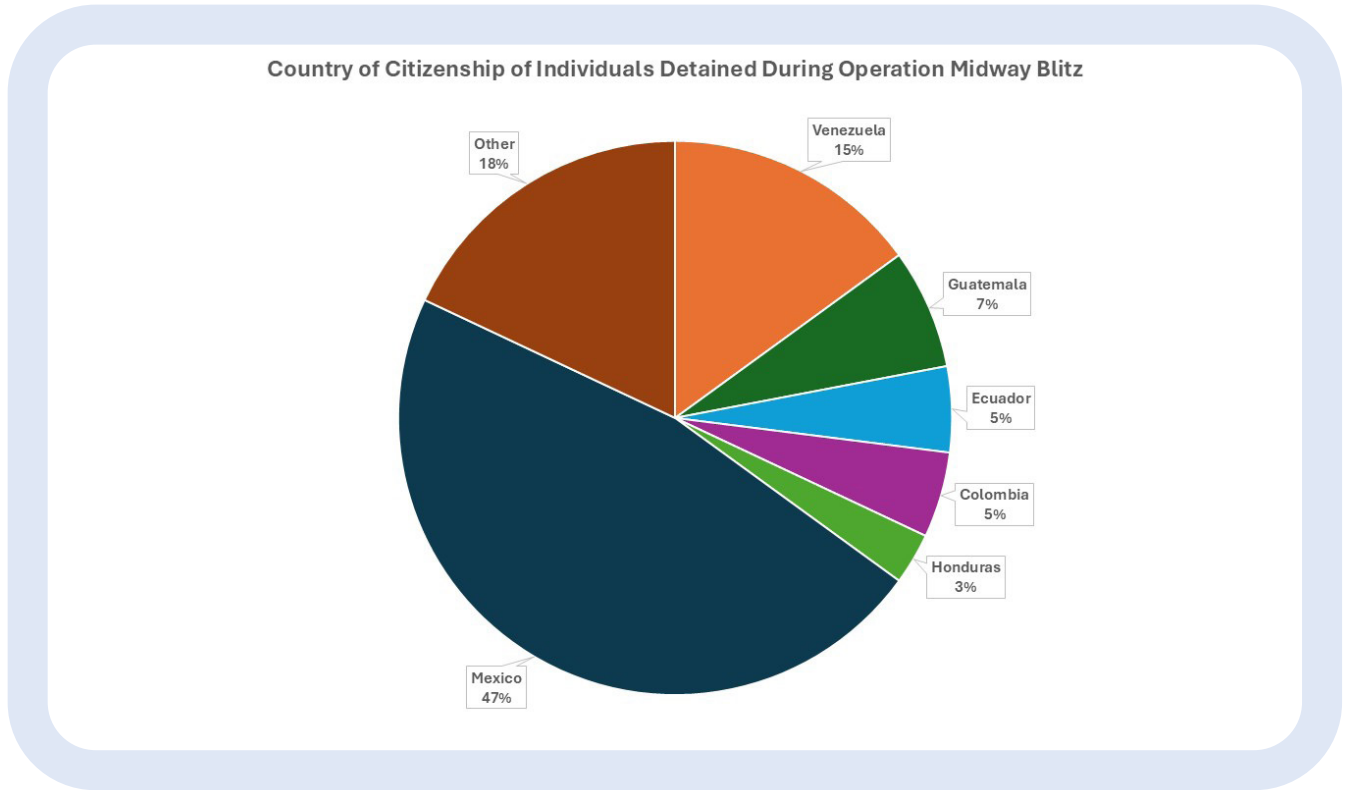
Ninety-three percent of the individuals detained at Broadview were male. Fifty-nine percent of the individuals detained were between the ages of 26 and 45. Fifty-nine individuals were aged 18 or under.

### Ages of Individuals Detained During Operation Midway Blitz



Source: Deportation Data Project, analyzed by Commission staff.

Individuals from 93 different countries were detained during Operation Midway Blitz. The most prominent countries of citizenship for individuals detained during Operation Midway Blitz were: Mexico (47%), Venezuela (15%), Guatemala (7%), Ecuador (5%), Colombia (5%) and Honduras (3%).



Source: Deportation Data Project, analyzed by Commission staff.

Country of Citizenship		Country of Citizenship	
MEXICO	1833	NORTH MACEDONIA	4
VENEZUELA	570	CAMEROON	4
GUATEMALA	276	SLOVAKIA	4
ECUADOR	201	KAZAKHSTAN	4
COLOMBIA	180	TURKMENISTAN	4
HONDURAS	124	LAOS	4
NICARAGUA	96	HAITI	4
INDIA	69	DEM REP OF THE CONGO	4
RUSSIA	64	PHILIPPINES	4
KYRGYZSTAN	53	ANGOLA	3
POLAND	47	UGANDA	3
EL SALVADOR	38	SPAIN	3
CHINA, PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF	29	AFGHANISTAN	3
UZBEKISTAN	22	BULGARIA	3
JORDAN	21	MOLDOVA	3
UKRAINE	18	SOMALIA	3
PERU	17	CZECH REPUBLIC	3
TURKIYE	14	INDONESIA	3
NIGERIA	13	ISRAEL	3
MONGOLIA	13	PANAMA	3
ROMANIA	11	YEMEN	3
MAURITANIA	11	GEORGIA	2
CUBA	9	SENEGAL	2
SERBIA	9	ERITREA	2
GHANA	7	BELARUS	2
BRAZIL	7	VIETNAM	2
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	6	LIBYA	2
MONTENEGRO	6	IRAN	2
PAKISTAN	6	ITALY	2
LITHUANIA	6	AZERBAIJAN	2
BELIZE	5	PORTUGAL	1
UNKNOWN	5	BURMA	1
TAJIKISTAN	4	AUSTRIA	1
JAMAICA	4	ZAMBIA	1

Country of Citizenship	
TOGO	1
BANGLADESH	1
COSTA RICA	1
CROATIA	1
SYRIA	1
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	1
THAILAND	1
UNITED KINGDOM	1
TONGA	1
URUGUAY	1
NETHERLANDS	1
ALGERIA	1
BOLIVIA	1
IRELAND	1
SWITZERLAND	1
KENYA	1
SOUTH AFRICA	1
USSR	1
SOUTH KOREA	1
KOREA	1
NEPAL	1
SUDAN	1
ETHIOPIA	1
HUNGARY	1
EGYPT	1
(blank)	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3913</b>

Source: Deportation Data Project, analyzed by Commission staff.

Although most media attention was drawn to the stories of immigrants from Latin America, other communities felt the impact of Operation Midway Blitz just the same.<sup>xxii</sup> At its listening sessions, the Commission heard from individuals who were originally from the countries of Eritrea, Colombia, Guatemala, Venezuela, Mexico, Senegal, China and Korea, among others.

During the public comment portion of the December 18, 2025, hearing, the Commission heard about fear caused by Operation Midway Blitz in communities like Little Palestine,<sup>xxiii</sup> and the presence of immigration enforcement in black communities and the impact on immigrants from the African diaspora.<sup>xxiv</sup> A report by the Illinois Task Force on Black Immigrants reported that over the past decade, approximately 14,000 Black immigrants in Illinois have undocumented legal status, and detailed the dual discrimination Black immigrants face due in both policing and immigration enforcement, where a criminal record can affect immigration options.<sup>xxv</sup> Operation Midway Blitz also created “fear and instability in the South Asian community, even when they are trying to follow the rules” said one participant at the Northside listening session.

**Latino, Asian, not just Hispanic community.  
Everyone is impacted. We must be in solidarity  
with one another.**

**– Franklin Park Listening Session Participant**

Across nationalities, many listening session participants described that the decision to leave their home country and come to the United States was not an easy one, but they believed that America could become their new home. One participant at the Southwest Side listening session, a member of the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community shared, “There has to be a reason we left our homeland, for a better life. America is a country with immigrants, so all people came here because they need to find a way to live better or because their homeland had some trouble.” Another individual from Colombia shared at the South and Southeast Side listening session, “It’s crazy how we are persecuted in our home country, we flee here, and we are persecuted in this country.” And one man from the Uptown neighborhood shared at the West Side listening session that Operation Midway Blitz has created “mass otherizing” in communities and struggles with racism have been exacerbated. People have less trust in their neighbors, he shared, and people are leaving the country because it does not feel like home anymore.

At the West Side community listening session, several participants spoke of the need for communities to come together, especially those who are not at risk of deportation. One participant said, “We need to emulate the strategies of Harriet Tubman...have different factions of how to help and figure out who can do what.” Another participant agreed and

spoke of the inter-movement focus of policing Black and Brown communities. One woman shared that a friend of her son, an African American, always checks in on her because he knows what she is going through and wants to make sure that she does not need anything. “We all need to come together, because we keep us safe,” said one speaker.

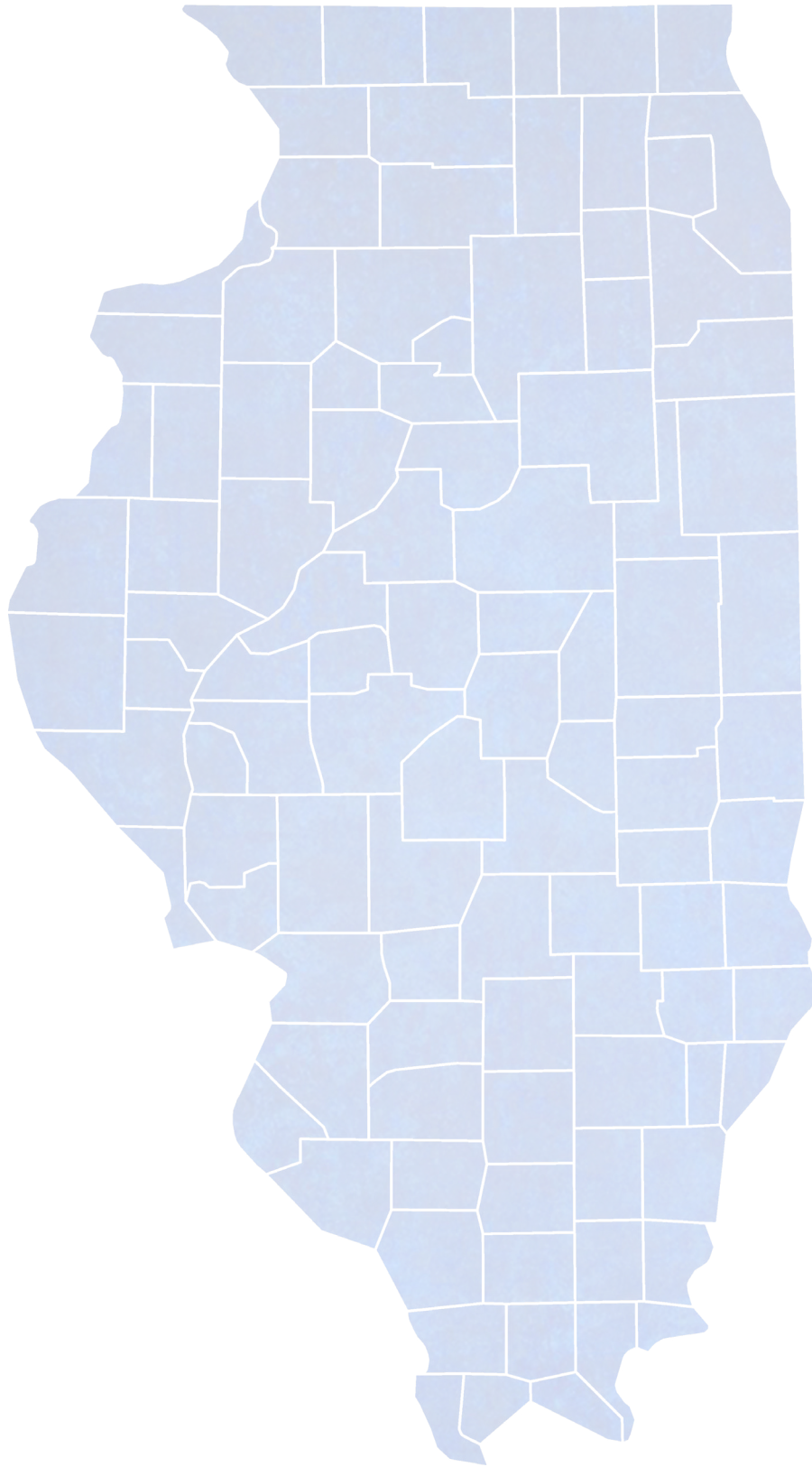
## Federal Resources During Operation Midway Blitz

ICE conducts immigration enforcement within the interior of the United States, while U.S. Customs and Border Patrol is responsible for entries and exits into the United States at the border and ports of entry. CBP’s focus is supposed to be on preventing illegal entry into the U.S., while ICE investigates and enforces immigration related statutes.

Prior to Operation Midway Blitz, the ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) Chicago Field Office was regularly staffed with 180 officers, with about 65 working in the Chicagoland area including 31 at the Broadview holding facility.<sup>xxvi</sup> For Operation Midway Blitz, additional ICE agents and Special Response Teams were reportedly added to the Chicago ERO’s field operations.<sup>xxvii</sup> During Operation Midway Blitz, the ICE Chicago ERO Field Office mandated 12-hour shifts for its Special Response Team officers.<sup>xxviii</sup>

DHS did not solely rely on ICE to carry out Operation Midway Blitz, however. CBP agents were also pulled from the border to conduct immigration enforcement in Chicago, a function that would traditionally have been done by the ICE ERO Chicago Field Office. The CBP agents were under the command of CBP “Commander at Large” Gregory D. Bovino.<sup>xxix</sup> Over 200 Customs and Border Patrol agents were deployed to assist with Operation Midway Blitz.<sup>xxx</sup> They conducted “targeted” enforcement of individuals known to be illegally present in the U.S., performed community raids in areas where there was allegedly “known illegal immigration activity,” and also assisted with processing individuals inside the Broadview holding facility.<sup>xxxi</sup> CBP deployed Border Patrol Tactical Units (“BORTAC”), a special operations force adapted for counterterrorism missions, and mobile response team agents to assist with enforcement activities.<sup>xxxii</sup> According to deposition testimony from Commander Bovino, he also oversaw, on occasion, agents from other federal agencies including ICE, FBI, DEA and ATF who were deployed to Chicago to assist with immigration enforcement.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The federal administration also issued a series of orders to federalize and deploy 500 National Guard troops from Texas and Illinois to support Operation Midway Blitz. These additional resources for Operation Midway Blitz are estimated to have cost U.S. taxpayers \$59 million.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Although CBP has not provided complete data about the number of arrests that they executed during Operation Midway Blitz, CBP's incident reports demonstrate that they participated in the roving patrols around Chicagoland. These roving patrols not only led to racially-based interrogations, they also led to the arrest of many people, including U.S. citizens, for interfering or obstructing law enforcement activities under 18 U.S.C. § 111. According to evidence produced in the Chicago Headline Club litigation, CBP agents made 92 criminal arrests between September 2 and October 19, 2025.<sup>xxxv</sup> Nearly all the people arrested under this authority were acquitted, not prosecuted, or had their charges dropped.<sup>xxxvi</sup>



# CHAPTER 2:

## THE DESIGN: MASS DEPORTATION AND INTIMIDATION

### 2.A. FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION LEADERSHIP ADOPTED POLICIES AND USED TACTICS TO CAUSE CHAOS IN ILLINOIS AND EFFECT MASS DEPORTATION

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Federal administration officials made many policy decisions beginning in January 2025 that influenced the conduct of federal immigration agents during Operation Midway Blitz, including Executive Orders, changes to federal regulations and internal agency policies, and other administrative decisions. Their directives drove the implementation and design for Operation Midway Blitz tactics and outcomes.

#### Operation Midway Blitz was Not About Targeted Enforcement

Since January 5, 2025, President Trump has issued at least 38 executive orders related to immigration and taken an estimated 500 actions regarding immigration policy.<sup>xxxvii</sup> These actions, many of which are outlined in the [Commission's Initial Report](#), were designed to create chaos and cause violence while arresting and detaining as many immigrants as possible, regardless of their criminal history or ties to the United States. Several key policy decisions were particularly influential in Operation Midway Blitz.

First, the Administration expanded the number of people eligible for deportation. The Trump Administration upended the legal status of over 1.6 million people who had previously been authorized by the federal government to temporarily remain in the United States through various humanitarian programs.<sup>xxxviii</sup> These actions revoked or called into question the legal status of individuals who had applied for legal residency through student visas, asylum, refugee admission, parole, and other programs that allowed them to remain in the United States while their immigration cases were reviewed. Virtually overnight, these individuals who had been granted at least temporary permission to live in the United States, many of whom who had complied with conditions imposed on them (such as regular check-ins with ICE), were now subject to deportation. A federal District Court judge in the Eastern District

of Pennsylvania described the extraordinary nature of this act when granting a request for release from an individual who had been detained:

“The Court notes that the arrest and detention of affirmative applicants for asylum, who are patiently waiting for years-long delays in asylum adjudications, in violation of the INA, is an abrupt policy change. Several presidential administrations, including the first Trump administration, did not arrest and detain affirmative asylum applicants who applied with lawful status. This conduct ought to be considered.”<sup>xxxix</sup>

Second, the Trump Administration deployed large-scale roving patrols, expanding a tactic used during the Trump Administration’s first term. Although initially the Administration stated it would conduct warrant-based targeted enforcement, instead it expanded its use of roving patrols. They flooded Chicago streets with CBP agents, rather than only ICE agents, and enabled those agents to stop and question people on the streets based on where they work or how they look: their apparent race or ethnicity. DHS even rescinded a court-ordered policy governing the authority of agents to conduct warrantless arrests. Each of these actions, explained further throughout this report, cleared the way for agents to roam the streets looking for people to detain.

Third, the Trump Administration reversed longstanding DHS policy that prohibited federal immigration agents from making civil immigration arrests in sensitive locations, like courthouses, schools, houses of worship, and hospitals.<sup>xi</sup> This policy had ensured that enforcement discretion was exercised thoughtfully and in a way that balanced law enforcement needs with community protection, according to DHS expert Deborah M. Fleischaker who testified before the Commission.<sup>xii</sup> The rescission of this policy, she described, was not to improve enforcement effectiveness but to remove internal guard rails and amplify fear.<sup>xiii</sup> Similarly, an internal ICE memo adopted in May 2025 purported to allow agents to enter subjects homes without a warrant, in contrast to long-standing department policy and Fourth Amendment jurisprudence.<sup>xiiii</sup> As a result, these roving patrols could also intimidate and suppress opposition by patrolling people as they picked up their children from school, went to the hospital for care, or attended church.

***“If ICE can decide on its own initiative without approval from a judge that it has the right to enter your home, then the Fourth Amendment is a dead letter.”***

***– Expert Testimony of Nicole Hallett***

Fourth, reports indicate that senior administration officials exerted pressure on ICE and CBP field offices to increase the number of individuals arrested for immigration violations, demanding in January 2025 that they achieve at least 1,200 to 1,500 arrests per day.<sup>xliv</sup> That pressure would continue to achieve even greater numbers: White House “Border Czar” Tom Homan announced in a news interview on January 26, 2025, “You’re going to see the numbers steadily increase, the number of arrests nationwide as we open up the aperture.”<sup>xlv</sup> By May 2025, White House officials were reportedly frustrated that the number of deportations was lagging behind the average number during the Biden Administration, and White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller and DHS Secretary Kristi Noem reportedly threatened to fire the bottom 10% of regional ICE officials with an insufficient number of arrests.<sup>xlvi</sup> Miller reportedly then said the White House was looking to “set a goal of a minimum of 3,000 arrests for ICE every day, and President Trump is going to keep pushing to get that number up higher each and every day.”<sup>xlvii</sup> A former ICE chief counsel publicly stated that quotas “will incentivize ICE officers to arrest the easiest people to arrest, rather than the people that are dangerous noncitizens.”<sup>xlviii</sup>

Lastly, they implemented a plan to make detention as painful as possible for the individuals in custody by imposing mandatory detention in many cases, keeping individuals away from their lives, support systems, and family members to compel self-deportation. In July 2025, ICE and CBP leadership reinterpreted the Immigration and Nationality Act to deny bond to anyone in the country who had entered without inspection, subjecting many more individuals to mandatory detention while their asylum, refugee or immigration cases remained pending.<sup>xlix</sup> This meant most people had no pathway to release other than a federal habeas corpus petition, causing a massive increase in the number of individuals held in immigration detention (see section 2.C)!

## A History of Misconduct

The decision to deploy U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agents to Chicago was a departure from long-standing practice. CBP and ICE agents are not trained or accustomed to conducting neighborhood patrols in urban environments like those used during Operation Midway Blitz. Congress infused significant funding to DHS which resulted in rapid hiring, lowering of hiring standards and little onboarding of new enforcement field officers. As expert Garrett M. Graff, a journalist and historian who has extensively researched and covered CBP and ICE, described CBP agents, “They’re not regular police, and they don’t know how to behave in this moment or how to navigate urban civilian environments. They don’t have the muscle memory or de-escalation skills of dealing with angry citizens or innocent people.”<sup>ii</sup>

“Their poor training and sense of political impunity is contributing to and driving their ‘arrest first, question later’ approach.”

– Expert Testimony of Garret M. Graff

Appropriate training for the specific environments where officers will be assigned is essential to ensure that officers are equipped for their missions, according to Dr. Marc Brown, a use of force training instructor at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.<sup>iii</sup> In his experience, CBP officers were trained to be stationed at land borders, sea ports, and airports and not trained to conduct daily street activities. Nor did they receive training on crowd management, traffic stops, patrol tactics, or how to operate in an urban environment. The U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, Andrew Boutros, recently acknowledged this same point about CBP’s unsuitability for the Operation Midway Blitz environment: “It would be like taking a soldier who has extraordinary training in doing desert warfare and then dropping them into cold winter conditions. They know how to fire their guns, but it’s a different environment.”<sup>iiii</sup>

*“For the mission that they’re currently being tasked to do, I don’t think they’ve been trained properly for that at all. I think there is a significant gap in training and its creating an issue for public safety.”*

*– Testimony of Dr. Marc Brown*

Operation Midway Blitz is not the first time that DHS’ agencies have come under scrutiny and criticism, nor should their current tactics be entirely surprising, according to expert Garrett Graff. “Since 9/11, the culture of ICE and CBP has meant that the agencies have been what you might call a fascist-secret-police-in-waiting, troubled agencies simply waiting for ambitious would-be authoritarians,” he told the Commission.<sup>liv</sup> Since DHS’ creation following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, both ICE and CBP have undergone various hiring surges to increase the number of immigration law enforcement officers. During these surges, concerns were raised about the qualifications and readiness of agents who were placed in the field.<sup>lv</sup> Following an influx of funding from Congress in July 2025, ICE went on such a hiring spree and hired more than 12,000 new officers – an increase in 120% in its workforce in just four months.<sup>lvi</sup> CBP in particular has been plagued with reports of misconduct. One report found that CBP employees were arrested at a rate of about five times that of other U.S. law enforcement agencies.<sup>lvii</sup> Since 2010, CBP agents have been involved in at least 74 fatal deadly shootings or use of force incidents and 125 fatal vehicle collisions.<sup>lviii</sup> And two studies found that 95-97% of complaints against CBP agents resulted in no action against the officer or agent accused of misconduct.<sup>lix</sup>

## **2.B. LEADERSHIP DISMANTLED ENTITIES THAT SHOULD HAVE HELD AGENTS ACCOUNTABLE**

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DHS’ oversight and accountability mechanisms have been “hollowed out” by the Trump Administration, according to expert Deborah Fleischaker.<sup>lx</sup> In March 2025, DHS Secretary Kristi Noem closed the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL), dismantling its 150-person office.<sup>lxi</sup> In reference to the closure of CRCL, a former staff member noted that

“its closure signals that rights violations, including those against U.S. citizens, could go unchecked.”<sup>lxii</sup> Along with CRCL, DHS also closed the Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman and the Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman.<sup>lxiii</sup> In one statement, DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said, “These offices have obstructed immigration enforcement by adding bureaucratic hurdles and undermining [the Department’s] mission. Rather than supporting law enforcement efforts, they often function as internal adversaries that slow down operations.”<sup>lxiv</sup>

Without meaningful oversight from these offices, Fleischaker described, enforcement operations are driven by outcomes, rather than law and risk assessment, and DHS cannot adequately assess whether its strategies are advancing public safety or achieving stated goals.

***“Poorly designed operations strain capacity, provoke community distrust, and invite litigation, diverting attention from genuine threats.”***

***– Expert Testimony of Deborah M. Fleischaker***

Similarly, the Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, the prosecuting office responsible for investigating and prosecuting misconduct by law enforcement, has lost nearly two thirds of its staff.<sup>lxv</sup> Without investigation and accountability, officer misconduct goes unpunished.

## 2.C. DESPITE REPEATED VIOLATIONS OF COURT ORDERS AND AN UNPRECEDENTED NUMBER OF ADMONISHMENTS FROM FEDERAL JUDGES, NO CHANGES WERE MADE

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In courts across the country, federal government attorneys have attempted to defend the current administration's campaign of aggressive immigration operations. In turn, the federal judiciary has acted as a check on the improper conduct of individual actors and the legally unsound positions taken by the administration in defending its internal policies, which have allowed its agents to act with impunity.

Hundreds of legal orders and opinions – written by federal judges who have been appointed by every President over the past 30 years – summarize the devastating experiences of individuals and communities impacted because of the administration's immigration operations, including through the detainment of individuals without due process.<sup>lxvi</sup> A significant body of caselaw has developed and continues to develop every day that identifies violations of due process rights by DHS, particularly regarding extended detentions in intolerable conditions. These cases demonstrate the administration's lack of adherence to governing statutes and disregard for constitutional safeguards. The cases further reflect the administration's lack of respect for the authority and function of federal judges, including conduct by government counsel in contravention of their ethical duties as attorneys.

### **“Re-Interpretation” of the Immigration and Nationality Act**

One of the most significant immigration law developments during the second Trump Administration has been its reinterpretation of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) to broaden the use of “mandatory detention” to deny individuals the opportunity for a bond hearing. The consequence of this reinterpretation has been an increase in detentions and a flood of habeas corpus petitions in the federal courts. Federal judges across the country have been grappling with this reinterpretation and how to provide due process for individuals in federal immigration detention.

## ***Habeas Corpus***

All persons in the United States, regardless of citizenship status, have the right to due process. The United States Constitution requires that no “person” be “deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.” As the Supreme Court has emphasized, “[f]reedom from imprisonment” lies at “the heart of the liberty” protected by the Constitution.<sup>lxvii</sup>

A person who has been detained or imprisoned by the federal government without due process has the right to petition the federal courts for a “writ of habeas corpus.” Habeas corpus is, at base, an individual’s right to have a court review whether their detainment or imprisonment is proper. The executive branch and its agents cannot lock people up in prisons or detention facilities, without justification and without an opportunity to be heard by a court. As the Supreme Court has held, “[t]he writ of habeas corpus is itself an indispensable mechanism for monitoring the separation of powers”<sup>lxviii</sup> and habeas corpus rights are a right held by everyone in the United States, regardless of citizenship status.<sup>lxix</sup>

## ***The Current Administration’s Expansive Use of “Mandatory Detention” without Process***

Millions of more individuals are now subject to mandatory detention reversing decades of previous interpretation of the INA. The rights of each individual detained for possible removal proceedings are guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, and the processes that the Government must follow during that detainment, are contained in the INA. Under the statute, a limited category and minority of those individuals taken into custody are subject to “mandatory detention” while awaiting removal proceedings, which means they are not eligible to seek or be granted release on bond while they await proceedings.<sup>lxx</sup>

Historically, the vast majority of individuals taken into custody were processed through a “bond hearing,” at which an Immigration Judge (IJ) considered evidence from the Government and the individual. The IJ determined if the individual was either a danger to the community or a potential flight risk. If the IJ identified no such risk, the individual could pay a bond and be released with an order to report back for their removal proceedings.

All prior presidential administrations, including the first Trump administration, interpreted the INA as distinguishing between individuals taken into custody at the U.S. border and individuals taken into custody in the interior of the country. A person who was already in the country at the time they were taken into custody was entitled to due process – including a bond hearing

soon after arrest. Up until the current reinterpretation by the Trump Administration, only someone “seeking entry” at the border was subject to mandatory detention without a bond hearing.

The second Trump Administration has abandoned this long-standing interpretation and began subjecting all individuals who entered the United States without inspection to mandatory detention. The Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), part of DHS’ Executive Office for Immigration Review, then adopted this position as well.<sup>1</sup> Courts have estimated that millions more people are subject to mandatory detention under this reinterpretation.<sup>lxxi</sup>

Not surprisingly, the greatly expanded use of mandatory detention has led to a deluge of habeas petitions to the federal courts, including petitions from individuals who have resided in the United States for years, individuals who had previously reported and been released on their own recognizance, and individuals awaiting asylum proceedings who reported to all hearings required.

### ***The Federal Judiciary’s Response***

Federal judges across the country have determined that the administration is misreading the INA’s mandatory detention provisions, is depriving detainees of their constitutional due process rights, or both. Indeed, Illinois federal judges have “join[ed] the chorus of decisions granting a bond hearing to a detainee who had previously been present and living in the United States—a right guaranteed by statute and the Constitution.”<sup>lxxii</sup>

Courts have found that the administration’s reading of the INA’s mandatory detention as applying to individuals already present in the United States as “overly, and incorrectly, expansive”<sup>lxxiii</sup> and as creating “a high risk of erroneous deprivation” of liberty based only on the “sole, unguided, and unreviewable discretion” of ICE and DHS officers.<sup>lxxiv</sup> As a federal judge in Florida reminded the government, detained individuals, including noncitizens, “retain certain rights and privileges, such as a meaningful opportunity to seek release on bond during the pendency of their removal process,” and accordingly, the Government “must afford Petitioner the chance” to present a case for release on bond, “because Congress said so.”<sup>lxxv</sup> A federal judge in Nevada found that the government had “asserted no individualized justification—let alone a special or compelling justification—to continue to deprive Petitioners

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1. Immigration Judges and the Board of Immigration Appeals, though often referred to as “courts,” are actually part of the Executive Branch of our federal government and *not* part of the independent Judicial Branch. IJs and the BIA, like executive agencies, are thus subject to the judgments of federal courts, which have the constitutional role of determining whether properly challenged executive actions comply with statutory requirements enacted by Congress, including those in the INA.

of their physical liberty,” continuing to opine that “[s]uch indifference from the executive branch to the Constitution’s guarantee of freedom from arbitrary detention is grave cause for concern.”<sup>lxxvi</sup>

The federal courts continue to grapple with this new interpretation, and there has been a split among federal appeals courts presented with these issues, including strong dissents to those opinions that accepted the administration’s position.<sup>lxxvii</sup> The vast majority of federal judges, however, have found, and continue to find, that habeas petitions should be granted and some form of due process provided to individuals who have been subjected to mandatory detention.

The caselaw is replete with examples of judicial incredulity and criticism of the government’s detention of individuals without even minimal process afforded. One Minnesota judge referred to a detention presented to the court as “Orwellian,” holding that “vague assurances of inspection ‘in due course’ cannot serve as a lawful basis for Petitioner’s open-ended detention.”<sup>lxxviii</sup> A judge in the Eastern District of New York similarly criticized the government and ordered the release of an 18-year-old who was pursuing Special Immigrant Juvenile Status and was taken by ICE while walking to school and then detained without an individualized custody determination or bond hearing.<sup>lxxix</sup> A federal judge in Georgia found that the government’s position “that a non-citizen who has resided lawfully in this country for years now can instantly be subject to detention and expulsion under ICE’s new regulatory regime” to be “highly concerning and questionable.”<sup>lxxx</sup> These cases are only examples of an extensive and growing body of habeas orders and opinions being issued daily around the country. As one judge described the important function of the judiciary in this process:

“This Court does not have the power to impede removal proceedings, but it does have the power to ensure that the Government follows the law when it detains people. It did not, so the Court ordered Petitioner’s immediate release. In this country, we don’t enforce the law by breaking the law.

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Judges across the country—the vast majority who have considered this question—have told the Government many times in the past few months that its interpretation of the law is wrong. . . . This is no partisan stance: judges appointed by every President from Ronald Reagan through Donald Trump have said so.”<sup>lxxxi</sup>

## Attacks on the Integrity of the Judicial System

As reflected in the cases discussed above, the American judicial system exists as an independent branch of government whose mission is, in part, to ensure the fair administration of justice. A fundamental ethical principle of the legal system is the duty of candor to the court, which arises from the attorney's role as an officer of the court. This principle, which arises in tandem with the judiciary's responsibility to uphold the integrity of the system, is a cornerstone of the judicial system. The rules of professional conduct governing attorneys have codified these bedrock principles, prohibiting attorneys from providing evidence that the attorney knows to be false, regardless of their client's wishes.<sup>lxxxii</sup> Furthermore, the authority and effectiveness of the judiciary relies on the expectation that parties will follow orders even when they disagree with them, reserving challenges for appeals to higher courts rather than defiance. Compliance with court directives maintains order, protects the rights of all parties, and preserves the integrity of the legal process.

Unfortunately, caselaw across the country reflects that over the last year, the government has provided significant false evidence and baseless arguments to federal judges and has flagrantly ignored and violated hundreds of court orders. The result has been delayed justice, a waste of judicial resources, and additional injury to petitioners and plaintiffs.

### ***False Statements and Previously Rejected Arguments Made to the Courts***

When litigants and their attorneys do not uphold their duties to vet and present relevant facts, courts are misled; decisions rest on faulty premises; rights are not protected; and public confidence in the rule of law erodes

For the federal judges to perform their role as an independent check on government overreach or abuse, they must be presented with truthful evidence and well-founded arguments from which to make independent legal judgments. In recent months, courts have found and denounced false evidence presented by the DOJ in support of ICE and CBP actions, undermining the credibility of the administration and its attorneys. In addressing ICE's conduct against protestors in Illinois, U.S. District Court Judge Sara Ellis of the Northern District of Illinois criticized DHS and officers for "creat[ing] their own narrative of what happened" and "misrepresenting the evidence to justify their actions."<sup>lxxxiii</sup> As the Court explained, the inconsistencies of the government's claims "call[ed] into question everything that Defendants say they are doing in their characterization of what is happening at the

Broadview facility or out in the streets of the Chicagoland area during law enforcement activities.”<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

The lack of candor and the submission of false information by the government in Illinois federal court is consistent with behavior in other courtrooms across the country. For example, courts in New York have noted the government’s submission of false declarations with false information about detention statuses.<sup>lxxxv</sup> The government has been further criticized for its attempt to “deliberately mislead the Court about the law and the record” by citing to a case that did not apply to the jurisdictional issues in front of the court.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> One New Jersey court found that “[a]t a minimum” the government had “materially misrepresented [a] Petitioner’s reporting history” to the court.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> As the federal judge there aptly opined, “[a] hearing cannot be fundamentally fair when one of the Respondents’ principal arguments rests on an assertion for which they concede there was no evidentiary support.”<sup>lxxxviii</sup> As another federal judge stated in the context of a detention challenge:

“If the Government is going to argue for expanding the interpretation of a law or maintain a widely rejected position to preserve its appellate rights, it may do so. But its lawyers must make those arguments in a way that comports with their professional obligations, as lawyers have done since time immemorial: Cite the contrary binding authority and argue why it’s wrong. Don’t hide the ball. Don’t ignore the overwhelming weight of persuasive authority as if it won’t be found. And don’t send a sacrificial lamb to stand before this Court with a fistful of cases that don’t apply and no cogent argument for why they should.”<sup>lxxxix</sup>

### ***Refusal to Comply with Court Orders***

Federal judges have also repeatedly vocalized their concern with the government’s refusal to comply with court orders. For example, a Trump-appointed judge from the Eastern District of New York called the agency’s refusal to comply with his order “indefensible,” writing:

“A party who believes that a court order is unlawful - or in this case, unduly burdensome - does not have the right to resort to self-help. That party has legal alternatives [...] ‘In the fair administration of justice no man can be judge in his own case, however exalted his station or righteous his motives. Respect for judicial process is a small price to pay for the civilizing hand of law, which alone can give abiding meaning to constitutional freedom.’”<sup>xc</sup>

In Minnesota, the failure to comply with numerous court orders from various federal judges in the state was termed “extraordinary,”<sup>xcii</sup> one judge even holding a DOJ attorney in civil contempt for failure to comply in a timely manner with an order to return the plaintiff’s identification, requiring the attorney to pay \$500 each day the order was not followed.<sup>xcii</sup> In response to the government’s claim that it was understaffed, the judge wrote:

“[T]he refrain of ‘understaffing’ and ‘too many cases’ has worn out its welcome, particularly when it comes at the expense of individual rights. This Court would never allow a private attorney or litigant to rely on an ‘I’m too busy’ excuse to justify disobedience of a court order. The Government is no different.”<sup>xciii</sup>

Even when judges do not impose sanctions, courts have made clear that ICE’s noncompliance with their orders is unacceptable. One Eastern District of New York judge published an entire Order outlining ICE’s and DOJ’s false statements and failure to adhere by prior orders, determining sanctions were not needed only because ICE released the plaintiff after admitting their conduct violated those orders.<sup>xciv</sup> Similarly, in finding that ICE had violated no-transfer injunctions 17 times, a federal judge required DOJ and ICE officials to submit sworn declarations to the court for each future injunction in order to ascribe personal accountability to the government’s actions.<sup>xcv</sup>

### **Case Example – Zheng v. Rokosky**<sup>xcvi</sup>

The current Federal Administration’s lack of respect for the judiciary extends beyond the courtroom, with real life consequences, as exemplified in the case *Zheng v. Rokosky*. Haiguang Zheng, a Chinese citizen, was detained at the Elizabeth Contract Detention Facility in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Zheng had a pending application for asylum and was detained by ICE when he appeared at a routine check-in appointment. After a month of detention without due process, Zheng filed a federal habeas petition in the District Court of New Jersey. A federal judge held that the government’s interpretation of the INA was incorrect and ordered that the government provide Zheng with a bond hearing. A bond hearing was ostensibly held before an Immigration Judge, who denied bond, and Zheng remained in detention. After three more months in detention, Zheng returned to federal court, asking that the court review the bond hearing proceedings for fundamental fairness. Upon review of the bond hearing transcript, the federal judge found that the Immigration Judge had disregarded the District Court’s order that Zheng was eligible for bond, government attorneys misrepresented several key facts of Zheng’s case, and the Immigration Judge ignored evidence of Zheng’s deep ties

to the United States when they ruled Zheng was a flight risk.<sup>xcvii</sup> The federal judge determined “that the bond hearing was not conducted in accordance with this Court’s Order and was fundamentally unfair.”<sup>xcviii</sup> She went on to conclude:

“Finally, the Court cannot ignore that the circumstances surrounding these proceedings raise substantial concerns as to whether any non-citizen can receive the impartial hearing that due process requires... Respondents have reportedly terminated nearly one hundred IJs in recent months. And now openly advertise these vacancies for ‘deportation’ judges. These developments, among others, raise a serious question as to whether the constitutional guarantee of an impartial decisionmaker is being honored in any case brought before an IJ.”<sup>xcix</sup>

In the end, Zheng was improperly detained by ICE for 150 days. In its final holding, the federal judge concluded that the fundamental flaws in the initial bond hearing show that “another bond hearing would serve little purpose and would only prolong detention that has already become constitutionally problematic,” and ordered Zheng be released.<sup>c</sup>

As the *Zheng* case demonstrates, the federal judiciary is an essential check on the government’s inhumane and unconstitutional conduct during its immigration operations and resulting detentions. The case also demonstrates the herculean effort required to obtain a just result, particularly when the government engages in misconduct during judicial and administrative proceedings. The judiciary can only address the issues that are brought before it, and for every improper detention or other government overreach corrected by the courts, there are likely hundreds more problematic events that have not come to light. The Commission encourages state and local political entities, community groups, the legal community, and individuals to continue to surface misconduct and hold government actors accountable through legal actions.

## 2.D. LEADERSHIP WEAPONIZED THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AGAINST U.S. CITIZENS

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The whole-of-government approach to Operation Midway Blitz was also reflected in how the U.S. Department of Justice leveled criminal charges against U.S. citizens, usually alleging that they had assaulted or impeded a federal officer in the performance of their duties in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 111. In case after case, however, the charges were dropped or dismissed, often because of evidence contradicting the claims of the federal agents.

- Marimar Martinez was charged under 18 U.S.C. § 111(a) and (b) on the basis that she had rammed her vehicle into that of federal immigration agents before they shot her on October 4, 2025.<sup>ci</sup> Those charges were dropped after body-worn camera footage was released contradicting the agents claims.<sup>cii</sup>
- The so-called “Broadview Six” were arrested and charged with conspiracy to impede or injure federal officers, among other charges, related to protests at the Broadview detention facility on September 26, 2025.<sup>ciii</sup> All charges against two of those individuals were dropped, while charges against the remaining four defendants are still awaiting trial.
- Juan Espinoza Martinez was found by a jury not guilty of placing a bounty on Border Patrol Commander Gregory Bovino, after the federal government had to withdraw their allegation that he was affiliated with a gang and could provide no evidence to corroborate the alleged murder-for-hire plot.<sup>civ</sup>
- Nathan Griffin, manager of Chicago’s Laugh Factory, was charged for allegedly forcibly assaulting and interfering with a federal agent, but those charges were dropped after a grand jury refused to indict him.<sup>cv</sup>

In November 2025, U.S. Magistrate Judge Gabriel A. Fuentes issued an opinion regarding federal charges against five individuals related to protests at the Broadview detention center that occurred on September 27, 2025.<sup>cvi</sup> In each of the cases, the federal government dismissed all charges, two of which followed a grand jury’s refusal to indict. Judge Fuentes noted “how unusual and possibly unprecedented it is for the U.S. Attorney’s Office in this district to charge so hastily that it either could not obtain the indictment in the grand jury or was forced to dismiss upon a conclusion that the case is not provable, in repeated cases of a similar nature.”<sup>cvii</sup>

U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois Andrew Boutros has publicly confirmed that federal immigration agents arrested hundreds of people during Operation Midway Blitz for which charges were never actually filed: out of hundreds of arrests, 32 criminal charges were filed, only one of which resulted in a conviction.<sup>cviii</sup>

## 2.E. ADMINISTRATION LEADERSHIP DEFENDED OPERATION MIDWAY BLITZ

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By reviewing the statements and actions of senior DHS and White House officials, the Commission has concluded that one of the goals of Operation Midway Blitz was to exert political control over and create chaos in a major American city. As Professor Pape testified to the Commission, the public gleans the intent behind government actions by listening to the statements of its leaders. “When national leaders frame enforcement as a righteous battle against political enemies, they raise the stakes of every encounter,” Professor Pape testified. While moralized rhetoric mobilizes supporters, it also amplifies the perception that force is being used to impose political control and drives the public’s response.<sup>cix</sup>

A review of official agency communications and statements by senior administration officials regarding Operation Midway Blitz reveals an intent to mislead the public. Official statements contradicted publicly available evidence. Politicized rhetoric framed enforcement as an existential struggle for American values. Senior leadership defended use of force by agents and pushed them to ‘go harder.’ And many posts promoted white nationalist and anti-immigrant tropes.

### ***President Donald J. Trump***

Operation Midway Blitz was part of an effort to punish and coerce cities and jurisdictions that refused to support President Trump’s mass deportation agenda. The President is in charge of the federal agencies responsible for immigration enforcement, and his words shape the public’s perception and guide the actions of federal agents. The President’s actions, policy changes, and words inspired federal leaders to condone and promote federal officers’ use of aggressive and violent tactics and behavior. “The most important framing comes from the President, the Commander in Chief of the U.S. Armed Forces,” testified Professor Pape.

As far back as July 2020, during his first term, Trump vowed to send a “surge” of federal law enforcement officers to Chicago, despite opposition from local leaders, including then-

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot.<sup>cx</sup> President Trump repeatedly talked about his disapproval of Chicago's leadership, reinforcing that Operation Midway Blitz was about exerting political control over the city. See examples of this rhetoric below:

- August 11, 2025: "Other cities are hopefully watching this. They're all watching just like everyone's watching here [DC].... Uh so they're watching us today and if they don't learn their lesson, if they haven't studied us properly because we're going to be very successful. I have zero doubt about that ... And if we need to, we're going to do the same thing in Chicago, which is a disaster."<sup>cx</sup>
- Aug. 22, 2025: "Chicago's a mess. You have an incompetent mayor, grossly incompetent. And we'll straighten that one out probably next, that'll be our next one after this, and it won't even be tough, and the people in Chicago, Mr. Vice President, are screaming for us to come. They're wearing red hats just like this one, but they're wearing red hats. African American ladies, beautiful ladies are saying, "Please President Trump, come to Chicago."<sup>cxii</sup>
- Sept. 30, 2025: "It's a war from within...We should use some of these dangerous cities as training grounds for our military, national guard, but military. Because we're going into Chicago very soon."<sup>cxiii</sup>

As the chief executive officer, President Trump is responsible for selecting and retaining the senior leadership of the federal government, and President Trump regularly voiced his approval of senior leadership and the activities of Operation Midway Blitz:

- Aug. 11, 2025: "Tom Homan was great. Our, as you know, our secretary did a great job. They did a great job. There's no games. They didn't play games."<sup>cxiv</sup> Press Conference
- Oct. 15, 2025: "I love to watch [Stephen Miller] on television. I'd love to have him come up and explain his true feelings. Maybe not his truest feelings, that might be going a little too far."<sup>cxv</sup>
- January 27, 2026: "You know, Bovino is very good, but he's a pretty out there kind of a guy."<sup>cxvi</sup>

President Trump's statement about the beginning of Operation Midway Blitz also used language suggestive of military invasion:

- Sept. 2, 2025: "We're going in..."<sup>cxvii</sup>
- Sept. 6, 2025: "I love the smell of deportations in the morning..." Chicago about to find out why it's called the Department of WAR."<sup>cxviii</sup>

President Trump also made statements promoting the use of force and defending the aggressive tactics adopted by Gregory Bovino:

- Sept. 30, 2025: "I say, they spit, we hit."<sup>cxix</sup> – Remarks to military generals
- Nov. 2, 2025: "No, I think they haven't gone far enough because we've been held back by the by the judges, by the liberal judges that were put in by Biden and by Obama. [You're okay with those tactics?] Yeah, because you have to get the people out. You know, you have to look at the people. Many of them are murderers. Many of them are people that were thrown out of their countries because they were, you know, criminals."<sup>cxx</sup>

President Trump also made many anti-immigrant statements and misleading remarks about arresting the "worst of the worst":

- Nov. 2, 2025: "These are very smart countries. Their leaders are very smart. They're very streetwise...They want people that are bad out. So, they - what do they do? They open their jails, they let them out. They get rid of their drug dealers, they let them out. But you know who else they get out? The people that are on welfare that aren't working. In other words, they have people that just don't work. They don't want people that just don't work. So, they put them into our country."<sup>cxxi</sup>
- Nov. 2, 2025: "You know, I campaigned on crime, but I've done a much better job on crime than I thought. You know, the crime numbers are way down. Even though we've have a lot more people in our country that really shouldn't be here, and many of them are stone cold, hard criminals."<sup>cxxii</sup>

### ***Stephen Miller, White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy***

As White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy, Stephen Miller is widely viewed as the architect of the Trump Administration's immigration policy. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt has said that Miller "oversees every policy the administration touches."<sup>cxxiii</sup>

While some senior officials pushed the narrative that the administration was focused on removing the "worst of the worst" – individuals with criminal records – reports indicate that Miller was a key driver in increasing the number of people detained and removed regardless of their criminal background. At a meeting in May 2025, Miller reportedly directed ICE to "just go out there and arrest illegal aliens."<sup>cxxiv</sup> Rather than target gang members and violent criminals, he reportedly urged them to target locations like Home Depot and 7-Eleven.<sup>cxxv</sup>

That same month, when White House officials were reportedly frustrated that the number of deportations was lagging behind the average number during the Biden Administration, Miller and DHS Secretary Kristi Noem reportedly threatened to fire the bottom 10% of regional ICE officials with an insufficient number of arrests.<sup>cxxvi</sup> Miller reportedly then said the White House was looking to “set a goal of a minimum of 3,000 arrests for ICE every day and President Trump is going to keep pushing to get that number up higher each and every day.”<sup>cxxvii</sup> A federal district court judge referenced this statement as one example by high-ranking officials “that indicated an intent to revert to their unconstitutional and unlawful practices” of arresting and detaining individuals without sufficient probable cause.<sup>cxxviii</sup>

Miller also defended agents using force, and suggested on multiple occasions that federal officers had immunity for engaging in use of force: “To all ICE officers, you have federal immunity in the conduct of your duties. Anybody who lays a hand on you or tries to stop you or tries to obstruct you is committing a felony. You have immunity to perform your duties and nobody, no city official, no state official, no illegal alien, no leftist agitator or domestic insurrectionist can prevent you from fulfilling your legal obligations and duties.”<sup>cxxix</sup>

Miller also characterized opposition protests to Operation Midway Blitz as violent coordinated actions against federal officers:

- Oct. 7, 2025: “They’ve handed out flyers. I saw one Antifa flyer recently, and it said we need to mobilize around the Broadview facilities. This is in Chicago to shut down ICE. So what does that mean when they say we’re going to mobilize to shut down ICE? What are they saying? They’re saying they’re going to carry out insurrection against the federal government by using force, obstructive force to keep ICE officers from going out and conducting arrests.”<sup>cxxx</sup>
- Oct. 24, 2025: “And the Department of Justice has made clear that if officials cross that line into obstruction, and the criminal conspiracy against the United States, or against ICE officer, then they will face justice.”<sup>cxxxi</sup>
- Oct. 24, 2025: “We have now daily incidents of vehicle rammings against ICE officers, constant doxxing threats against public officials, against federal law enforcement, non-stop death threats, non-stop violence against federal officers out on the street

conducting their duties. Mobs form, individuals begin striking at, throwing at, and hurling rocks at ICE officers."<sup>cxxxii</sup>

Just as Professor Pape described, Stephen Miller often described opposition to the Administration's immigration policies as domestic terrorists: "the democrat party, through years of indoctrination as well as through importing radicals into the country through migration policy, as well as through implanting in the judiciary, in our legal system, like-minded radicals have created this incredibly dangerous moment for our republic...the domestic terrorists will lose, we will crush them, and we will fulfill the mandate that the American people voted for in 2024."<sup>cxxxiii</sup>

### ***Tom Homan, White House "Border Czar"***

Tom Homan has served as the White House "Border Czar" throughout the first year of the Trump Administration. Homan led the first major immigration sweep in Chicago during the second Trump Administration.<sup>cxxxiv</sup>

While conducting Operation Safeguard in Chicago during January 2025, Homan regularly spoke about conducting enforcement actions in jurisdictions like Illinois where local law enforcement does not assist with civil immigration enforcement. He rejected the notion that the arrest of "collateral" individuals who ICE agents encountered while doing targeted enforcement could be characterized as neighborhood sweeps: "So forget the false narrative of sweeping neighborhoods looking for people a different color than us. Forget that hogwash and look at what we actually did. We're proving it to them. How can you argue with the system we set up...Sweeps don't occur anywhere."<sup>cxxxv</sup> Yet Homan also said that "if we can't get the bad guy in jail, we're going to the community. I don't have a quota. My instructions is arrest as many as you can that are public safety threats and if they're with somebody else illegally here, they're coming too."<sup>cxxxvi</sup>

Homan was also very vocal about his perspective that immigration enforcement surges were necessary in jurisdictions that have policies like Illinois' TRUST Act, which prohibits local and state law enforcement from assisting with civil immigration enforcement. In the month before the launch of Operation Midway Blitz he explained why they would be sending a "large contingent" to Chicago: "We're going to take the assets we have and move them to problem areas like sanctuary cities, where we know for a fact they're releasing public safety threat illegal aliens to the streets every day. That's where we need to send the majority of the resources, and that's where they're going to go."<sup>cxxxvii</sup>

Homan has also inaccurately characterized individuals arrested during Operation Midway Blitz as criminals. In response to criticism that many individuals arrested during Operation Midway Blitz did not have criminal records, Homan claimed that these individuals had entered the country illegally and had "cheated the system."<sup>cxxxviii</sup> This is despite evidence that many of the individuals arrested during Operation Midway Blitz were from countries which the U.S. had previously designated with Temporary Protected Status, and many individuals who were arrested appeared to have been temporarily granted permission to remain in the United States while their requests for permanent residency were reviewed.

### ***Kristi Noem, Former Secretary of Department of Homeland Security***

Kristi Noem was Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security from January 25, 2025, until March 5, 2026. As Secretary, Noem was in charge of both ICE and CBP and responsible for implementing all of the Executive Orders entered by the President regarding immigration enforcement. In addition, Noem was the very public face of the Trump Administration's immigration campaign, personally appearing in an ad campaign warning "If you come to our country and break our laws, we will *hunt you down*." (emphasis added),<sup>cxxxix</sup> and a controversial ICE recruitment campaign using the phrase "Defend the Homeland."<sup>cxli</sup>



Image 1 Screenshot of Video Posted to X<sup>cxlii</sup>

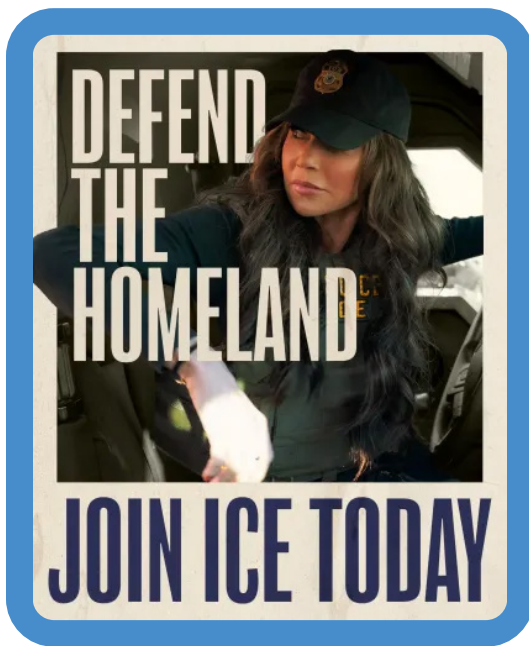


Image 2 DHS "Defend the Homeland" Recruitment Photo<sup>cxliii</sup>

In addition to her responsibilities as head of the Department, Secretary Noem was on the ground in Illinois several times before and during Operation Midway Blitz.

- May 7, 2025: Noem hosts press conference in Springfield, Illinois, and is photographed interrogating two detainees at an ICE field office.<sup>cxliiii</sup>
- Aug. 8, 2025: Noem hosts press conference at DHS office in Lombard, Illinois, criticizing Illinois elected officials and claiming recent ICE arrests only targeted "dangerous criminal illegal aliens."<sup>cxliv</sup>
- Sept. 16, 2025: Noem led a militarized raid, involving helicopters, bright lights and smoke bombs on Chippewa Drive in Elgin, Illinois, where at least 6 individuals were arrested, including two U.S. citizens.<sup>cxlv</sup> Noem posted video of the raid to her social media saying "I was on the ground in Chicago today to make clear we are not backing down."<sup>cxlvi</sup>
- Oct. 3, 2025: Noem visited the detention center in Broadview, Illinois, where protesters allege they were wrongly arrested and detained as part of a government promotional video filming Noem's visit with Border Patrol Commander Bovino.<sup>cxlvii</sup> Secretary Noem was recorded telling agents, "Today when we leave here, we're going to go hard...we're going to hammer these guys."<sup>cxlviii</sup>
- Dec. 6, 2025: Noem attended a Christmas tree event with the U.S. Coast Guard at Navy Pier on the same day that federal immigration agents deployed tear gas and pepper spray on protesters on Maple Lane in Elgin, Illinois.<sup>cxlix</sup>

Secretary Noem was also a principal messenger of the false claim that DHS was conducting targeted enforcement to arrest "the worst of the worst," despite evidence that arrests of people without convictions increased over 8 times (8.7x) in the first year of the Trump Administration compared to the six months prior.<sup>cl</sup>

- Aug. 8, 2025: "Our top priorities have been these two items: securing our borders and arresting dangerous criminals and removing them from our cities and our towns and our states across the country, from coast to coast. Since President Trump has taken office, we have arrested hundreds of thousands of these illegal criminals."<sup>cli</sup>
- Sept. 16, 2025: "This operation targets criminal illegal aliens who flocked to Chicago and Illinois because they knew Governor Pritzker and his sanctuary policies would protect them and allow them to roam free on American streets."<sup>clii</sup>
- Oct. 30, 2025: "We absolutely every day are focused on arresting the worst of the worst and those individuals that have been targeted for their criminal activities. But remember, if you come into our country illegally, you are breaking our laws. You are committing a criminal activity. And many times when we're out there on the streets making sure that we're getting these criminals off of our uh streets and out of our communities that there are individuals that they are with that we also are making sure that they should be in this country. And if they aren't then we're making sure that they get their due process and they're removed and returned to their home countries."<sup>cliii</sup>
- Jan. 15, 2026: "In every situation, we're doing targeted enforcement," Noem said Jan. 15 at the White House. "If we are on a target and during an operation, there may be individuals surrounding that criminal that we may be asking who they are and why they're there and having them validate their identity."<sup>cliv</sup>

Noem also oversaw, and was often the spokesperson for, DHS recruitment and ad campaigns that deployed inflammatory rhetoric, including phrases often associated with white nationalist causes: "We'll never apologize here for protecting the American people, but we're going to continue to arrest dangerous, criminal, illegal aliens. *We will defend the homeland.* That's what ICE is doing."<sup>clv</sup> (emphasis added)

Noem also made inaccurate statements about Illinois, including unfounded claims that Illinois law and elected officials obstructed federal immigration enforcement or protected individuals with criminal records. Statements like these, consistent with Professor Pape's testimony, conveyed that the federal government was attempting to exert control over Chicago and Illinois. These include the following:

- Aug. 8, 2025: "I'm here today because the elected leaders in this state of Illinois are ignoring the law. In fact, they're being obstructionists when it comes to getting dangerous criminals off of their streets. They are deciding that dangerous criminals that are murderers, rapists, um money launderers, have committed assault, that are

trafficking children are more important than the families that live in the communities here. That includes Governor Pritzker, Mayor Johnson, and others who have worked so hard to protect these dangerous criminals. They'd rather be a sanctuary state and continue to put those individuals above American citizens."<sup>clvi</sup>

- Aug. 31, 2025: "When asked if citizens can expect the National Guard in Chicago: "You know, that always is a prerogative of President Trump and his decision. I won't speak to the specifics of the operations that are planned in other cities, but I do know that LA wouldn't be standing today if President Trump hadn't taken action then. That city would have burned down if left to the devices of the mayor and the governor of that state, and so the citizens who live there, the small business owners in Downtown LA, they're thankful that President Trump came in with federal law enforcement officers and helped support keeping those streets open, keeping their homes and businesses from burning down and making sure law and order was restored."<sup>clvii</sup>
- Oct. 30, 2025: (Responding to Governor Pritzker's request to pause enforcement activities on Halloween) "No, we're absolutely not willing to put on pause any work that we will do to keep communities safe. The fact that Governor Pritzker is asking for that is shameful and I think unfortunate that he doesn't recognize how important the work is that we do to make sure we're bringing criminals to justice and getting them off our streets, especially when we're going to send all of our kiddos out on the streets and going to events and enjoying the holiday season. Uh we want to make sure that they're safe."<sup>clviii</sup>

Like Commander Bovino and others, Secretary Noem defended federal agents who had been involved in controversial events and encouraged federal immigration agents to "go harder." Statements like these signaled to Operation Midway Blitz agents that they could use force with impunity.

- Oct. 3, 2025 (Speaking to agents at Broadview): "Today, when we leave here, we're going to go hard. We're going to hammer these guys who are advocating for violence against the American people. What they are doing is advocating to harm not just you and your colleagues, but your families and they're doxxing your identities and victimizing people every day by the way that they are talking, speaking, who they are affiliated with, who they're funded with and what they're talking about as far as consequences for what we're doing by protecting this country... So, we're going to go out there and make sure there are consequences for the way that they are behaving.

And we're going to prosecute them. We're going to bring them to justice. We're not taking this anymore, alright? The president is sick of it. I'm sick of it. And we're going to give you guys all the authority that you need to go out there and arrest these individuals who are advocating for violence against you. Does that sound alright?"<sup>clix</sup>

- Oct. 3, 2025 (Speaking to agents at Broadview): "You're setting an example for the rest of the country. Everybody is watching how strong you are here, the operations and the professionalism in which you're conducting this law enforcement and restoring some safety back to the city, and it's rippling across the country."<sup>clix</sup>
- Oct. 30, 2025: "I would say the White House and I am and our leadership team is thrilled with all the work that ICE and Border Patrol are doing to help clean up our streets. In fact, giving people an opportunity to lead is fantastic. Giving people an opportunity to step up and take up on more responsibilities is uh a wonderful thing that you see happening in this country right now. As you see more and more operations get built out, we're calling on more people to use their skills and their talents to help enforce our laws."<sup>clxi</sup>

Noem also equated public opposition to being anti-American, and seems to have orchestrated shows of force for publicity reasons. In front of the Broadview detention facility on October 3, 2025, Noem said: "You look at these protesters out here. They don't care about America. They don't care about freedom. They don't care about what this country is and how special it is. We're going to remind them today."<sup>clxii</sup> Shortly, thereafter a line of federal agents began pushing protesters and arresting them, even those who had complied with instructions to remain behind a certain line. About a dozen individuals were arrested that day and accused of attacking federal officers, but only one was charged with a crime. Cole Sheridan was accused of assaulting Gregory Bovino, but video evidence contradicted the claim and charges were dropped. In one interview, Sheridan was asked "If there hadn't been a bunch of cameras there. . . Secretary Noem, if they hadn't been there, do you think you would have been arrested?" Sheridan replied, "It seems unlikely, given how truly weak their case was. I would kind of imagine that a huge part of it was publicity. Another part of it was trying to terrify people and trying to scare people away from protesting and speaking their mind."<sup>clxiii</sup>

Noem also lied to the public on several instances about Operation Midway Blitz.

- Oct. 30, 2025: Noem denied claims that any American citizens had been arrested, despite numerous accounts of citizens being arrested: "There's no American citizens have been arrested or detained. We focus on those that are here illegally. And anything

that you would hear or report that would be different than that is simply not true and false reporting.”<sup>clxiv</sup>

- Sept. 16, 2025: Noem posted on social media that an agent’s “life was put at risk” when he was “dragged many yards by a car,”<sup>clxv</sup> seeming to reference the events leading up to the shooting of Silverio Villegas González on Sept. 12, despite statements by the officer that his injuries were “nothing major” and video evidence disputing that the agent was dragged.

### ***Gregory Bovino, Former “Commander at Large” of Customs and Border Patrol***

Gregory Bovino was appointed to a newly created position in the Trump Administration: Border Patrol Commander at Large. Commander Bovino had been with the Border Patrol for 30 years, most recently – and controversially – as the Chief Patrol Agent at the El Centro Sector in Southern California beginning in 2020. Commander Bovino was the operational and public head of Operation Midway Blitz, overseeing both CBP and ICE agents on the ground. According to news reports, he reported directly to Secretary Noem and Corey Lewandowski. Many of the tactics deployed during Operation Midway Blitz mirror those used by agents at El Centro under Commander Bovino’s leadership

Under his command, El Centro built a reputation for using excessive force at higher rates than any other station.<sup>clxvi</sup> This pattern would repeat itself during Operation Midway Blitz. Commander Bovino often claimed that uses of force by CBP agents during Operation Midway Blitz were justifiable responses to assaults against them by civilians. He equated any civilian resistance as violence:

- Oct. 23, 2025: “The use of force that I’ve seen, Nicole, and I’ve been here at the Broadview facility during some of those riots, in which extremists and others did attack federal law enforcement agents, and the use of force that I’ve seen has been exemplary and by exemplary, I would say, the least amount of force necessary to accomplish the mission.”<sup>clxvii</sup>
- Nov. 5, 2025: “These individuals are now coordinating to hurt and kill and maim federal law enforcement. And I saw that coordination yesterday in full effect. Now, our agents see this every day. I saw that firsthand with my own eyes yesterday. Coordinated attacks on federal law enforcement. I saw individuals in vehicles trying to ram border patrol agents for a period of 40 minutes straight. At one point there were 70, let me say

that again, 70 vehicles that were engaged in obstruction and 31 minutes, 41 seconds following and trying to hurt Border Patrol agents. Uh, a few of those vehicles became extremely violent."<sup>clxviii</sup>

- Nov. 6, 2025: "We can operate with great skill, legally, ethically and morally," Bovino said during a brief stop in Gage Park after pepper balls were fired at a moving vehicle. He described Chicago as "a very tough place" and gestured to the people gathering outside the store. "Look at what's happening here," he said, gesturing outside the store. "Just to go use the bathroom and get something to eat, that's even a safety concern."<sup>clxix</sup>
- Nov. 12, 2025: "Arrest as many people that touch you as you want to. Those are the general orders."<sup>clxx</sup>

Commander Bovino also claimed that those U.S. citizens who were arrested by federal immigration agents had been accused of assaulting federal officers. As shown in Section 2.D, however, the lack of successful prosecution of these cases suggests that the arrests were improper in the first place: "A large majority of those arrests are United States citizens that have been arrested for 18 USC § 111. That's assault, impede, delay, or obstruct a federal officer. So, by and large, most of those non-immigration arrests do include US citizens and there have been illegal aliens in sprinkled in there also for assault on a federal officer. Um, I don't have the exact number now, Ally, but it's dozens and dozens and dozens."<sup>clxxi</sup>

Commander Bovino also lied, in federal court deposition testimony, when use of force against protesters. U.S. District Court Judge Sara Ellis described Commander Bovino's sworn deposition testimony regarding several incidents of force as "not credible" and highlighted several examples:<sup>clxxii</sup>

- "When shown a video of agents hitting Rev. Black with pepper balls [outside Broadview detention facility], Bovino denied seeing a projectile hit Rev. Black in the head." (referring to events on Sept. 19, 2025, at Broadview detention facility)
- "In another video shown to Bovino, he obviously tackles Scott Blackburn...[b]ut instead of admitting to using force against Blackburn, Bovino denied it and instead stated that force was used against him." (referring to events on October 3, 2025 at Broadview detention facility)
- "Bovino also testified that, in Little Village on October 23, 2025, several individuals associated with the Latin Kings were found taking weapons out of the back of their

car, and that they, as well as at least one individual on a rooftop and one person in the crowd of protesters, all wore maroon hoodies... Bovino's and Hewson's explanations about individuals in maroon hoodies being associated with the Latin Kings and threats strains credulity."

- "Most tellingly, Bovino admitted in his deposition that he lied multiple times about the events that occurred in Little Village that prompted to throw tear gas at protesters... Moreover, videos of what happened in Little Village taken from agents' BWCs and helicopters do not match up with agents' descriptions of the alleged chaos they encountered." (referring to events on October 23, 2025).

Judge Ellis issued a Temporary Restraining Order enjoining CBP and ICE agents from improperly deploying force and requiring agents to have visible identification, among other things. When asked about whether he intended to follow the TRO, Commander Bovino replied that, yes, Border Patrol was "well acquainted with TROs", but that CBP would "operate and conduct this mission and accomplish this mission with that TRO in effect just like it was if it wasn't in effect. In fact, as the team and I have discussed, we're actually going to go and conduct that mission with an even more spirited approach. We're going hard. We're going to turn and burn, as we always say here, at Operation Midway Blitz and in the Border Patrol, we're going to turn and burn."<sup>clxxiii</sup>

Following an allegation that a member of the Latin Kings had placed a "bounty" on Commander Bovino's head, he said that they would target Little Village even harder. As described in Section 2.D, the individual was acquitted at trial. But within a week of this statement, Bovino led a two-day occupation of the Little Village neighborhood, an operation that seemed to be forecast by his remarks:

- Oct. 15, 2025: "What makes us so fantastic here in the United States is we went harder. Latin Kings, you're going to put a bounty on my head? We streamed into Little Village, ground zero for the Latin Kings by the hundreds, and we're there today as a matter of fact. As a matter of fact, one of our agents was just assaulted in that area earlier today. We stream into that area and roll heavy. We won't be intimidated. .... I'm going even harder now in Latin Kings territory and then any of you other gangs out there, we're going harder in your territory, whether it's Tren de Aragua, MS-13, or the Surreños because of what the Latin Kings did now we're going to target all of you and we're going deport all of you and anyone associated with you. We're going harder again. This is what we've talked about in the past that turn and burn mentality, we are

going to turn and burn and we're gonna go throughout Chicago with reckless abandon professionally, legally, ethically and morally and arrest all illegal alien gang members that we can get our hands on, it's on now."<sup>clxxiv</sup>

- Nov. 10, 2025 (Bovino official account on X): "Now Governor, there you go again lying. We uphold communities by ridding them of criminals such as Latin Kings that you've allowed to fester with no action for years. We are zeroing in on a CORRUPT system and changing it. Feel free to join us in Little Village tomorrow"<sup>clxxv</sup>

Commander Bovino also made several statements calling Operation Midway Blitz a success, claiming that the people of Chicago and the Administration was supportive of the operation:

- Nov. 6, 2025: "I would call it not a success but a resounding success thus far. That's a resounding success."<sup>clxxvi</sup>
- Nov. 6, 2025: "We're in this for the long long haul. And I know that Secretary Noem, uh, the great Cory Lewandowski, Tom Homan, and President Trump are in this for the long haul. We're thankful that we're all on that same sheet of music."<sup>clxxvii</sup>
- Nov. 12, 2025: "All I can say is, stay tuned. And they seem to be appreciative. We're in lockstep with Ma and Pa America, with the taxpayer."<sup>clxxviii</sup>

Commander Bovino also appears to have been an architect of the 'roving patrols' and discriminatory stops that were so central to Operation Midway Blitz. Commander Bovino had implemented such tactics in Los Angeles, an approach that was originally ruled unlawful by a federal district court before the U.S. Supreme Court intervened.<sup>clxxix</sup> Commander Bovino's assignment to lead Operation Midway Blitz was a signal that the Administration was going to expand those tactics to Chicago:

- Sept. 16, 2025: "Well, Chicago, we've arrived! Operation at Large is here to continue the mission we started in Los Angeles--to make the city safer by targeting and arresting criminal illegal aliens."<sup>clxxx</sup>
- Nov. 6, 2025: "We don't know what ... their criminal histories are in their home country. We don't have access. And we're finding a lot of that kind of thing here, you know, both at the airport and all over Chicago. So, this is not just the airport. We're going to leave the airport and we'll probably be in a neighborhood. We'll probably be at a Home Depot parking lot. We'll probably be um at a truck stop."<sup>clxxxii</sup>

- Nov. 12, 2025: "We already had the model down. We already knew what we were doing. And once we started, that good work spoke for itself."<sup>clxxxii</sup> (referring to Operation Return to Sender)
- Nov. 12, 2025: "That reasonable suspicion is below probable cause. Many of your viewers probably understand what probable cause is. Reasonable suspicion is an even lower standard. So to get that reasonable suspicion, we look at things called articulable facts. [Interviewer Hamed: And someone's ethnicity is naturally an articulable fact, as well.] It could be, but that's a case-by-case basis, Hamed. There's not a blanket articulable fact sheet that we're going to look and say, well, you know what? That guy's got all these, or that girl's got all these, and go get them. We're not looking at any one thing. We like the compendium of facts. We like a lot of different facts put together, the outward-facing characteristics of an individual. Do they turn and run? Is that an articulable fact?"<sup>clxxxiii</sup>

Commander Bovino also used militarized and dominating language when talking about civil immigration enforcement, furthering the perception of exerting political control:

- Sept. 4, 2025: "We're going to turn and burn to that next target and the next and the next and the next, and we're not going to stop."<sup>clxxxiv</sup>
- Sept. 18, 2025: "The Green Team has your back, Chicago. Criminal Illegal aliens are on notice as Operation Midway Blitz heats up. There is no safe sanctuary anywhere in the Windy City - self deport immediately."<sup>clxxxv</sup>
- Nov. 12, 2025: "That was a highly successful operation, Hamed. Remember, there was a lot of American citizens in that apartment building that were being preyed upon by violent gang members. So I'm very, extremely proud of that large-scale of an operation. Kudos to the agents there." (referring to South Shore Apartments raid)<sup>clxxxvi</sup>

And Commander Bovino also signaled that the federal administration was not done with Chicago and would continue to use immigration agents to target Chicago.

- Dec. 23, 2025: "Don't worry, Chicago, we will be here for YEARS! ... Despite calls for violence against our agents, the brave men and women of the United States Border Patrol have come together and developed serious plans to help Chicago rid their streets of criminal illegal aliens. US 🇺🇸 We work for YOU."<sup>clxxxvii</sup>
- Dec. 30, 2025: "If you think we're done with Chicago, you'd better check yourself before you wreck yourself... Don't call it a comeback; we're gonna be here for years."<sup>clxxxviii</sup>

The misconduct by Commander Bovino's agents is perhaps anticipated or even provoked in light of his statements promoting dangerous tactics that are not considered best practice:

- Oct. 23, 2025: Reporter asks, "Firing from elevation is within DHS policy?" Bovino responds, "It doesn't matter where you fire from. An elevation is not a violation of policy. That is a less lethal device for area saturation. absolutely." Reporter asks, "Aiming above the waist is within policy?" Bovino responds, "It can be if someone strays into a pepper ball, then that's on them. don't protest and don't trespass."<sup>clxxxix</sup>
- Nov. 6, 2025: "Ali, you caught me. You know what? I forgot to bring my tear gas. I left it in the car. I'll be sure to attach tear gas to the vest here in the next. That's always the less lethal uh uh our less lethal tools such as the CS gas or any other less lethal tool is uh you know, as you said, it's a tool in the tool belt. We maintain those tools and we use them legally, ethically, and morally uh now as we always have."<sup>cxc</sup>

### ***Tricia McLaughlin, Former Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for Public Affairs***

Tricia McLaughlin served as DHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs from the beginning of the Trump Administration until February 2026.<sup>cxci</sup> In that role, McLaughlin oversaw the Department of Homeland Security's public outreach, including its media, digital, strategic and crisis communications efforts, and served as the principal advisor to Secretary Noem on all external and internal communications.<sup>cxcii</sup> As chief spokesperson for DHS, she directly delivered or authorized many statements providing misleading information about Operation Midway Blitz.

McLaughlin routinely issued statements using characteristically inflammatory language:

- "Any claims individuals have been "targeted" by law enforcement because of their skin color are disgusting and categorically FALSE. These types of smears are designed to demonize and villainize our brave ICE law enforcement. This kind of garbage has led to a 500% increase in assaults on ICE officers. Politicians and activists must turn the temperature down and tone down their rhetoric. DHS enforcement operations are highly targeted, and officers do their due diligence. We know who we are targeting ahead of time. If and when we do encounter individuals subject to arrest, our law enforcement is trained to ask a series of questions to determine status and removability. The real reason for the arrest of these U.S. citizens is they ASSAULTED and OBSTRUCTED law enforcement."<sup>cxciiii</sup>

As the Assistant Secretary responsible for all external communications, including social media, McLaughlin oversaw a DHS messaging campaign that used extremist and racist rhetoric. As one article described DHS' communications, "the characterization of immigration as an 'invasion,' federal calls to 'protect' or 'defend the homeland,' and the promotion of 'remigration' are among the examples that researchers cite when they claim that the administration has mainstreamed once-fringe concepts."<sup>cxv</sup>



Image 3 DHS and ICE Social Media Post to Instagram<sup>cxv</sup>



Image 4 DHS Social Media Post to X<sup>cxvi</sup>

McLaughlin promoted the narrative that federal agents were routinely under attack during Operation Midway Blitz. For example, in the case of the shooting of Marimar Martinez by CBP Agent Charles Exum, DHS issued a statement claiming that Border Patrol agents were "ambushed by domestic terrorists that rammed federal agents with their vehicles." McLaughlin oversees all such official DHS communications and the following quote was also directly attributed to McLaughlin where she also calls Martinez a domestic terrorist: "These attacks on our brave law enforcement officers must END. Secretary Noem has taken action to deploy additional resources to restore law and order. We will not allow domestic terrorists to attack our law enforcement. If you lay a hand on law enforcement, you will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."<sup>cxvii</sup>

Similarly, McLaughlin issued a statement, directly in her name, following the fatal shooting of Silverio Villegas González claiming the agent “followed his training, used appropriate force, and properly enforced the law to protect the public and law enforcement.”<sup>ccviii</sup> The statement went on to claim that Villegas González “drove his car at law enforcement officers. One of the ICE officers was hit by the car and dragged a significant distance.” Video evidence undermines this claim.

### ***Corey Lewandowski, Former Homeland Security Special Government Employee***

Corey Lewandowski served as an unpaid Special Government Employee throughout the first year of the Trump Administration until he was removed in February 2026.<sup>ccix</sup> DHS has provided little transparency about Lewandowski’s role at the agency, but he served as a top adviser to Secretary Noem and was often referred to as a ‘de facto chief of staff.’<sup>ccc</sup> Lewandowski reportedly had influence across much of DHS’ operations, including personnel, contracts and immigration enforcement operations.<sup>ccci</sup>

According to reporting by the New York Times, Lewandowski pressured ICE officials to increase arrests of immigrants and threatened to fire those who did not meet White House demands.<sup>ccii</sup> Lewandowski also apparently had discussions with Bovino about his proposal for “consensual encounters,” a practice of discriminatory profiling of individuals to stop and question them about their immigration status <sup>cciii</sup> that was widely used during Operation Midway Blitz. According to that same reporting, Bovino told Todd Lyons, Director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, that Bovino reported directly to Lewandowski, not Lyons.<sup>cciv</sup>

### ***Todd M. Lyons, Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (Acting Director)***

Todd Lyons became Acting Director of ICE in March 2025. It was announced on April 16, 2026, that Lyons would be resigning effective May 31, 2026.<sup>ccv</sup> In that role, Lyons leads agency personnel, including its law enforcement officers, criminal investigators, attorneys and support personnel and is responsible for an annual budget of nearly \$10 billion and the \$74 billion provided in to ICE in the One Big Beautiful Act.<sup>ccvi</sup> Acting Director Lyons leads the two main operational components of ICE: Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO).<sup>ccvii</sup> ERO manages all aspects of the immigration enforcement process, including identification and arrest, domestic transportation, bond management, and

supervised release. ERO also handles to the removal of individuals after a final order has been issued. HSI conducts federal criminal investigations of transnational crime.

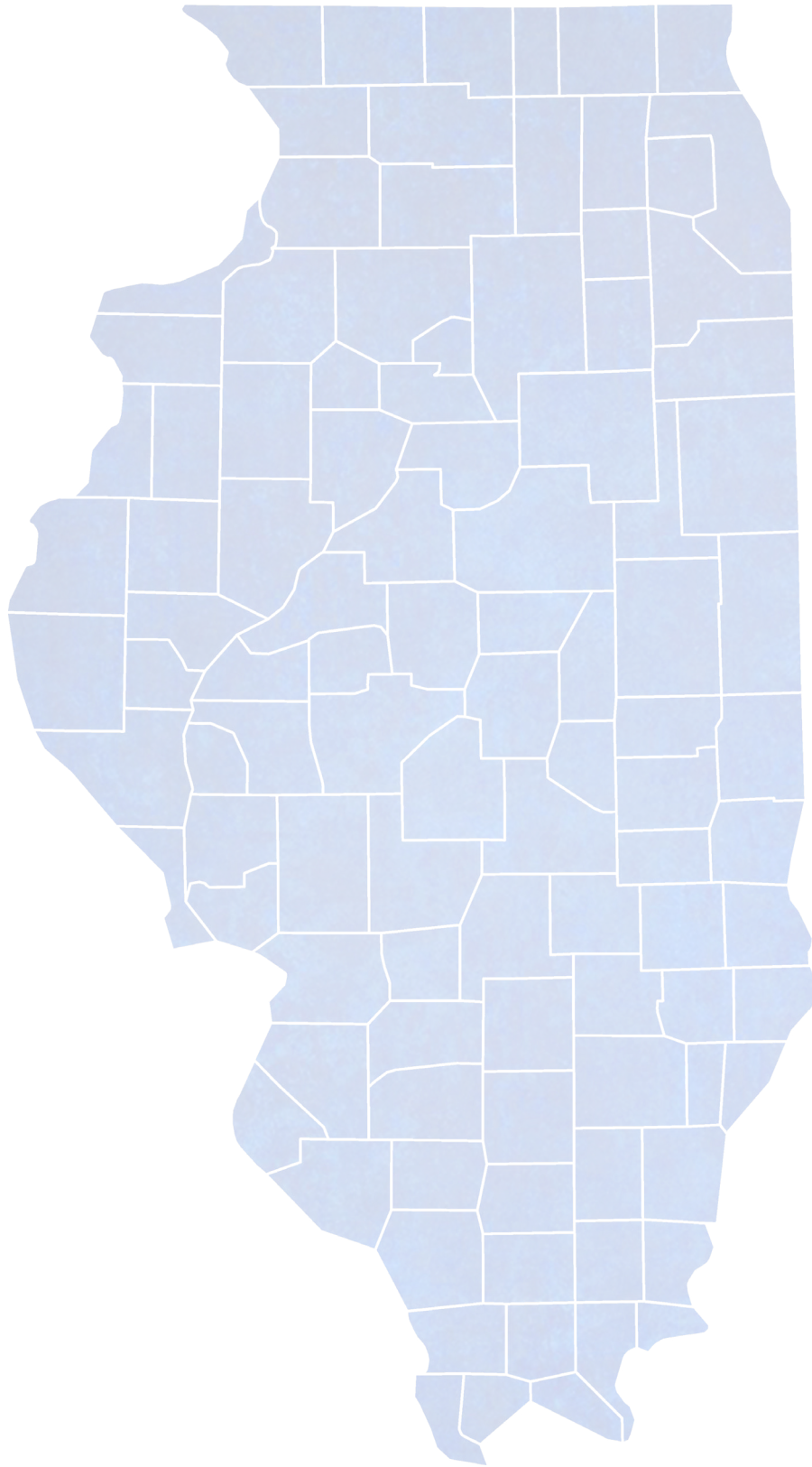
As Acting Director, Lyons is responsible for adopting and implementing the many policy decisions made by ICE to limit due process for individuals arrested and detained by the agency and to expand the number of people who were arrested, detained and removed. For example, Lyons is the signatory on the ICE memo issued in July 2025 eliminating bond hearings for most individuals in immigration detention.<sup>ccviii</sup> In this memo, Lyons “reinterpreted” decades of legal precedent to subject thousands of individuals to mandatory detention while their immigration cases remain pending; previously immigration judges could allow someone to be released on bond if they were not a public safety threat or a flight risk (see section 2.C).

In his role as Acting Director, Lyons is responsible for all ICE custodial facilities, including the Broadview detention center. Although Broadview was intended to be a holding facility where individuals would only remain for a few hours until processed, ICE changed its policy in June 2025 to increase the permitted time in a holding facility from 12 to 72 hours.<sup>ccix</sup> As a result, Broadview became a de facto detention center during Operation Midway Blitz where individuals stayed for days at a time. Reports emerged of inhumane conditions at Broadview that were pressuring people to sign voluntary deportation forms.<sup>ccx</sup> On November 5, 2025, U.S. District Court Judge Robert W. Gettleman ordered ICE, under Lyons’ leadership, to address the deplorable conditions.<sup>ccxi</sup>

Like other senior officials, Lyons rejected public concerns about agents’ interactions with members of the public outside the Broadview detention facility. In a letter to Broadview Mayor Katrina R. Thompson on September 26, 2025, responding to concerns about the actions of federal immigration outside ICE’s Broadview detention facility, Lyons stated, “There will be no change in our operational posture until these unlawful activities cease. The only siege in Broadview is the one being waged against the United States government. You can either continue to be a part of the problem or choose to be part of the solution...”<sup>ccxii</sup> Additionally, a federal court granted a temporary restraining order requiring ICE to remove a metal fence that had been erected outside the Broadview facility that had interfered with city officials’ ability to access public streets.<sup>ccxiii</sup>

## ***Rodney S. Scott, Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection***

Rodney Scott became Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection on June 18, 2025.<sup>ccxiv</sup> In this role, Scott has authority over all CBP policies, procedures and practices. Although CBP agents are used to operating in areas near the U.S. border, several hundred CBP agents were deployed to Chicago under the command of Bovino, who reports to Commissioner Scott. As described elsewhere in this report, CBP has a history of misconduct and CBP agents are not trained or accustomed to operating in urban or residential environments. In a recent congressional hearing, Commissioner Scott also claimed that CBP agents are “increasingly encountering situations in which agitators interfere with lawful enforcement actions.”<sup>ccxv</sup>



# CHAPTER 3:

## THE IMPLEMENTATION: A CAMPAIGN OF VIOLENCE, DETENTION AND CONTROL

### 3.A. OPERATION MIDWAY BLITZ AGENTS USED FORCE AS A FREQUENTLY EMPLOYED TACTIC, NOT AS A LAST RESORT

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*“This is what we’ve talked about in the past: that turn and burn mentality. We are going to turn and burn and we’re gonna go throughout Chicago with reckless abandon.”*

*– Gregory Bovino*

The use of force by ICE and CBP agents during Operation Midway Blitz was one of its defining features. The Cline Center documented 314 separate occasions during Operation Midway Blitz (between September 1, 2025 and January 30, 2026) where federal actors used physical violence in the Chicagoland area.<sup>ccxvi</sup> Trump Administration leadership characterized the conduct of immigration agents during Operation Midway Blitz as “exemplary.”<sup>ccxvii</sup> Through investigations, review of publicly reported incidents, collection of stories from the public, and expert testimony, the Commission has concluded that the use of force by federal immigration agents during Operation Midway Blitz fell far below standards of practice.

About a month after Operation Midway Blitz began, a coalition of journalists, religious leaders and protesters filed a lawsuit alleging that the federal government had deployed “a pattern of extreme brutality in a concerted and ongoing effort to silence the press and civilians.”<sup>ccxviii</sup> Within days, U.S. District Court Judge Sara Ellis issued a Temporary Restraining Order, enjoining federal immigration agents from using physical force, including chemical agents and other less lethal weapons, on members of the press, protesters, or religious practitioners unless they posed an immediate safety threat.<sup>ccxix</sup> Despite this order, plaintiffs continued to present the court with evidence that federal immigration agents were using excessive force. On November 9, 2025, Judge Ellis issued a scathing Preliminary Injunction opinion describing the many ways in which “federal agents’ use of force shocks the conscience.”<sup>ccxx</sup>

She wrote:

“... the Court notes that, in many instances, agents appear to actually inflame the situation with the use of less lethal force by, for example, deploying tear gas canisters as they prepare to leave a scene or for no legitimate reason, tackling non-threatening individuals who are complying with orders or who have not been given orders, and intentionally driving into people standing in front of agents’ vehicles.” *Chicago Headline Club v. Noem*, 810 F. Supp. 3d 842, \*289 (N.D. Ill. 2025).

Judge Ellis ordered the public release of body worn camera footage, DHS incident reports, written declarations and depositions of federal government officials, including the testimony of Commander Gregory Bovino, and other invaluable pieces of evidence. The public availability of these materials have proven essential to the public’s understanding of Operation Midway Blitz, as well as an integral asset to the Commission’s investigations.

## What Constitutes “Use of Force”?

The use of force by a law enforcement official encompasses many different types of conduct. Not all uses of force are unlawful, as law enforcement may be legally allowed to use physical force to carry out their duties in certain instances. Officers’ use of force is constrained, however, by internal agency policies, state and federal laws, and the U.S. Constitution. Examples of unlawful uses of force include dangerous and unjustified vehicle pursuits; indiscriminate use of weapons like tear gas, pepper spray and rubber bullets without providing sufficient warnings prior to use; excessive uses of physical force; and lethal shootings, like those of Marimar Martinez and Silverio Villegas González.

DHS and its components (including ICE and CBP) have several written policies governing when officers are permitted to use force. DHS policy requires that agents respect human life. It provides: “All DHS personnel have been entrusted with a critical mission: ‘With honor and integrity, we will safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values.’ In keeping with this mission, respect for human life and the communities we serve shall continue to guide DHS LEOs in the performance of their duties.”<sup>ccxxi</sup> The policy provides further: “To ensure that DHS LEOs are proficient in a variety of techniques that could aid them in appropriately resolving an encounter, Components shall provide use of force training that includes de-escalation tactics and techniques.”<sup>ccxxii</sup> According to use of force expert Seth Stoughton, Professor of Law and Faculty Director of the Excellence in Policing & Public Safety Program

at the University of South Carolina Joseph F. Rice School of Law, an agency that embraces a “sanctity of life” philosophy should train its officers to proficiency in non-force options that include waiting out a suspect, seeking cover, summoning assistance, and issuing clear verbal warnings and commands. Agencies should encourage these options to safely resolve situations, when feasible, to minimize harm to officers, subjects, and the public, and should be incorporated into post-incident reviews by agency leadership for performance improvement purposes.

DHS’s use of force policy issued in February 2023, provides that officers “may use force only when no reasonably effective, safe, and feasible alternative appears to exist and may use only the level of force that is objectively reasonable in light of the facts and circumstances” known at the time.<sup>ccxxiii</sup> A 2021 CBP policy provides that force is necessary only “when it is reasonably required to carry out” the officer’s law enforcement duties under the circumstances,<sup>ccxxiv</sup> and a 2023 ICE directive adds that there must “appear[] to be no reasonably effective, safe, and feasible alternative to the use of force.”<sup>ccxxv</sup> These policies permit the use of deadly force only when an officer has a reasonable belief that there is “an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury,”<sup>ccxxvi</sup> but caution officers to “avoid intentionally and unreasonably placing themselves in positions in which they have no alternative to using deadly force.”<sup>ccxxvii</sup>

Several incidents involving use of force reviewed by the Commission involved an initial traffic stop by an immigration agent. According to use of force expert Seth Stoughton, there are generally accepted practices that officers should aim to follow when conducting a vehicle stop. Officers should make every effort to stay out of the path of travel of the vehicle being stopped. Officers are trained not to position themselves or their vehicle in front of another car. When approaching a vehicle, officers are also trained to avoid aggressive behavior that could prompt the occupant to react. For example, officers should avoid placing their hands on or in the person’s vehicle. The goal, Stoughton said, is to give the vehicle’s occupants an opportunity to safely comply with the officer’s instructions without reacting due to fear. And in the event that a driver does react by attempting to flee, officers are trained to move out of the vehicle’s path for everyone’s safety. CBP Commander Gregory Bovino has claimed publicly that smashing someone’s window is “a safer tactic than letting someone drive away and then getting in a high-speed pursuit.”<sup>ccxxviii</sup> This is wrong, said Stoughton, and presents a false choice. Law enforcement can also let the driver go and locate them later, especially if the only reason for the stop was for a civil immigration violation.

DHS policies generally prohibit using deadly force solely to prevent a subject's escape or discharging firearms "solely to disable moving vehicles."<sup>ccxxix</sup> According to Stoughton, shooting at a moving vehicle can create unnecessary danger. First, shooting at a moving vehicle is unlikely to actually stop the vehicle, and is thus unlikely to actually address any threat presented by the vehicle's movement. Second, if the shooting does not incapacitate the driver, the driver may engage in even more desperate and dangerous flight after being shot at. And third, if the shooting does incapacitate the driver, the vehicle itself becomes dangerous as the driver loses control.

During the Trump Administration, CBP weakened its written policies regarding vehicular pursuits.<sup>ccxxx</sup> Among other changes, CBP's current policy does not explicitly limit vehicular pursuits in risky areas, such as densely populated areas, residential neighborhoods, or school zones. DHS also lifted a prohibition on the use of the precision immobilization technique (PIT), a pursuit maneuver in which an officer uses his vehicle to hit the rear panel of a target vehicle in order to force the target vehicle to turn 180 degrees and stop. This highly dangerous technique, especially at high speeds, can cause the target vehicle to spin out of control, roll over, or collide with other cars (or pedestrians).<sup>ccxxxi</sup> The impact of this policy change was observed during Operation Midway Blitz, as federal agents engaged in high-speed vehicle pursuits in residential neighborhoods on several occasions.

According to Stoughton, every vehicle pursuit is "like dynamite." They are inherently dangerous, and officers must balance the risks and benefits at the start and throughout every vehicle pursuit. That is why, he said, the generally accepted practice is for agents to be in contact with their supervisors during a pursuit so that the dangers of continuing a pursuit are constantly evaluated. Any failure by an officer to terminate a pursuit after being told to do so by a supervisor, would also likely be considered insubordination worthy of discipline or termination. According to Stoughton, conducting a high-speed pursuit without emergency lights or sirens, especially through a residential neighborhood is extremely dangerous, as it increases the risk of collision with other vehicles or bystanders.

The 2023 DHS written policy also establishes that officers "have a duty to intervene to prevent or stop a perceived use of excessive force" by a fellow officer.<sup>ccxxxii</sup> Various written policies also require officers to document their conduct during enforcement actions. For instance, an ICE directive requires officers to activate body-worn cameras as soon as possible at the start of an enforcement action.<sup>ccxxxiii</sup> ICE agents may not tamper with the camera and must report if they fail to activate it.<sup>ccxxxiv</sup> A CBP policy contains similar provisions for incident-

driven video recording—including vehicle and body-worn camera recordings—to begin as soon as possible at the start of an interaction between CBP officers and the public.<sup>ccxxxv</sup> Although body worn camera footage has not been available in every instance of misconduct alleged during Operation Midway Blitz, such footage has proven essential to transparency.

After the fact processes for determining what happened in an incident are a necessary standard practice for law enforcement agencies. According to Stoughton, generally accepted practice following an officer-involved shooting is to conduct a fact-finding process. Some uncertainty following an officer-involved shooting is expected, but you withhold judgment until the fact-finding process can be concluded. If you identify an inaccuracy, you don't keep acting like the inaccuracy is true. What is surprising in the case of Operation Midway Blitz is the consistent assertion of facts by DHS that are contradicted or called into question by evidence available to the public. That suggests there is no meaningful review after the fact, or they are continuing to assert facts they know are not true, said Stoughton.

The deployment of “less lethal crowd-control” weapons, including chemical irritants like tear gas and pepper spray, is also considered use of force. The Commission heard testimony from Dr. Rohini J. Haar, MD, MPH, Assistant Adjunct Professor of Epidemiology at the University of California, Berkeley, about the use of chemical irritants and other less lethal weapons during Operation Midway Blitz.<sup>ccxxxvi</sup> Chemical weapons like tear gas are inherently indiscriminate, she described, as law enforcement officers have little control over who is impacted once they have been deployed: tear gas cannisters and grenades release a cloud that will migrate. In evaluating the use of such weapons, Dr. Haar posed two questions: should the weapon have been used in the first place? And, if so, was it used as safely as possible? Important to both questions is whether officers provided clear instructions and warnings to bystanders so that any threats could be minimized before the deployment of chemical irritants. Dr. Haar reviewed videos and photographs of over a dozen incidents during Operation Midway Blitz where federal agents used chemical irritants or other less lethal weapons and concluded that the use of weapons was not indicated or justified in a single one.

## Legal Standards

Like any federal law enforcement officer, the conduct of federal immigration agents must be consistent with the federal laws, regulations and administrative policies that govern how they carry out their roles. When those officers engage in misconduct, they can be subject to an internal administrative investigation by the agency, which could result in employment

disciplinary action or termination. Certain egregious conduct might also be considered a violation of federal or state criminal law. This section provides an overview of various federal and state statutes that could apply when a federal immigration agent engages in misconduct.

## ***Federal Criminal Law***

Potential violations of federal criminal law are investigated and prosecuted by the U.S. Department of Justice. Misconduct by a federal immigration agent can violate several federal laws, including 18 U.S.C. § 242, which makes it a crime to willfully deprive a person of a constitutional or federally protected right. For this criminal law to apply, three elements must be satisfied: (1) the officer must have engaged in the misconduct while on duty, in uniform, or by using equipment or access available to them by virtue of their government position;<sup>ccxxxvii</sup> (2) the officer must have acted willfully (known their conduct was wrong and chose to do it anyway);<sup>ccxxxviii</sup> and (3) the officer must have deprived a person of a right established under the U.S. Constitution or federal law.<sup>ccxxxix</sup> Examples of misconduct that might be covered by this provision include retaliation against a protester or news reporter in violation of the First Amendment or use of excessive force against a person during a stop or arrest in violation of the Fourth Amendment.

In evaluating whether an officer's use of physical force is unconstitutionally excessive, thereby violating the Fourth Amendment, courts will use several factors to determine whether an officer's use of force was objectively unreasonable. Such factors include the severity of the crime at issue, whether the victim posed an immediate threat to the safety of the officer or others, and whether the victim actively resisted arrest or attempted to flee.<sup>ccxli</sup> Conduct that results in bodily injury or death or includes a dangerous weapon or fire is a felony offense under this provision. Additionally, federal immigration agents could be investigated and prosecuted under federal conspiracy statutes if multiple federal immigration agents agree to intimidate any person from exercising a right protected by the U.S. Constitution<sup>ccxlii</sup> or to violate another criminal law.<sup>ccxliii</sup> This could apply, for example, if multiple immigration officers conspired to make false arrests or use excessive force in violation of the Fourth Amendment or to deprive someone of their First Amendment rights.

Federal obstruction and witness intimidation laws may apply if an immigration officer attempts to cover up or make false statements about misconduct that could be federally investigated. One federal criminal statute, 18 U.S.C. § 1512, applies if an officer misleads investigators or uses intimidation, threats, or corrupt persuasion to prevent witnesses from giving a truthful

account.<sup>2</sup> Another federal criminal statute, 18 U.S.C. § 1519, applies when an officer makes knowing false statements or omits important relevant information in reports about an incident in order to impede, obstruct, or influence a federal investigation. This law can apply to an officer's destruction of records relating to an incident, such as video footage, messages, or other recorded communications.

## ***Illinois Criminal Law***

Conduct that violates Illinois criminal law, including conduct by federal immigration officers, is investigated by local law enforcement and prosecuted by the local states' attorney. Assault and battery statutes may apply where a federal immigration agent used unjustified nonlethal physical force. Pursuant to Illinois law, a person commits battery if they "knowingly without legal justification...cause[] bodily harm to an individual" or "make[] physical contact of an insulting or provoking nature with an individual," such as spitting on that person.<sup>ccxliii</sup> Such an offense may rise to the level of an aggravated battery if, among other things, the person committing the battery discharges a firearm, uses a deadly weapon, or wears a mask to conceal his identity; the resulting bodily harm is significant; or the victim is elderly, pregnant, or has a physical disability.<sup>ccxliiv</sup> A person commits assault if, without lawful authority, he knowingly engages in conduct that reasonably makes another person afraid of a battery.<sup>ccxlv</sup> An assault involving certain weapons or a victim with a certain status (such as a person with a physical disability or a state employee), constitutes an aggravated assault.<sup>ccxlvii</sup>

Additionally, Illinois kidnapping law applies where a person knowingly and secretly confines—that is, imprisons or restrains—another person against their will by deceit, enticement, or threat of force.<sup>ccxlviii</sup> The offense is enhanced to aggravated kidnapping when it is carried out by someone who wears a mask or conceals his identity. Similarly, the offense of unlawful restraint occurs where an offender knowingly, and without legal authority, detains another person.<sup>ccxlviii</sup> The offense constitutes aggravated unlawful restraint if it involves the use of a deadly weapon.<sup>ccxlix</sup>

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2. Although there must be a reasonable likelihood that these false statements would have reached federal authorities, *Fowler v. United States*, 563 U.S. 668, 677-78 (2011), the immigration officer need not intend to obstruct a particular federal investigation.

## Commission Findings

The Commission has identified numerous instances, based on the evidence currently available to the Commission, in which federal agents used unjustified and excessive force during Operation Midway Blitz. This includes excessive force when conducting immigration enforcement activities, as well as excessive force against bystanders, protesters and journalists. The Commission has documented the indiscriminate use of chemical agents by federal immigration agents, including incidents where children and Chicago Police Department officers were hit. The Commission has reasonable cause to believe that federal agents may have violated DHS policies, state or federal criminal law, and/or individuals' constitutional rights in many of these incidents. The Commission recommends further investigation by local and federal law enforcement agencies that have the authority to obtain additional evidence not available to the Commission.

The events highlighted in this report should not be construed as the only instances of misconduct committed by federal agents during Operation Midway Blitz. The Commission believes that the incidents reported below represent many more incidents in which federal agents used completely unnecessary force and caused injuries (often serious) to civilians through beatings, gassing with chemical irritants, and gunshots. In addition, most of the implicated agents lied about their conduct in official reports. Rapid responders, members of the public, and local journalists have done incredible work documenting the breadth of misconduct. The events highlighted here and in the Commission's Investigation Briefs<sup>3</sup> exemplify a pattern of behavior by federal immigration agents during Operation Midway Blitz.

### ***East Side – October 14, 2025: Vehicle Pursuit, Use of Excessive Force, Tear Gas***

The East Side neighborhood of Chicago is predominately (86%) Hispanic or Latino.<sup>cc1</sup> The events in East Side on October 14, 2025, demonstrate how federal immigration agents caused chaos during Operation Midway Blitz.<sup>4</sup> The events in the East Side neighborhood on October 14, 2025, demonstrate how misconduct by federal agents in attempting to detain someone often led to larger chaotic environments. At approximately 10:00 AM on October 14, 2025, three CBP agents, Benito Nuñez, Carlos Chavira, and Jesus Guillen were driving near Chicago's East Side neighborhood on a roving patrol.<sup>cc1i</sup> The agents were masked, fully armed,

3. Available at: <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.

4. For more information about this incident, please see the IAC's Investigation Brief re East Side Vehicle Pursuit, Ramming and Neighborhood Gassing, available at <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.

and dressed in green tactical uniforms with ballistic body armor. They drove an unmarked rental vehicle “searching for criminal activity” when they observed two men in a parked car outside of a corner store they concluded were “suspicious.”<sup>ccliii</sup> After an initial interaction in which agents claim the two men rammed their vehicle, the agents began a vehicle pursuit, reaching speeds of over 70 miles per hour through residential streets, without emergency lights or sirens. A helicopter was also following the car, negating the need for an on-the-ground vehicle pursuit. The pursuit lasted at least 18 minutes, despite a supervisor instructing the agents to stop the pursuit multiple times.<sup>ccliii</sup> Ultimately, the agents rammed into the other vehicle using a risky PIT maneuver even though the driver acknowledged he was not certified to do so, sending the other vehicle spinning into a parked car.



Image 5 CBP/CHC Litigation<sup>ccliv</sup>

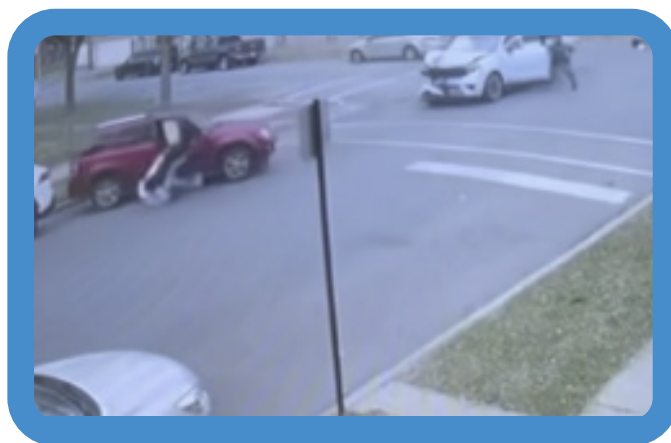


Image 6 ABC 7 Chicago<sup>cclv</sup>

Following this crash, agents pursued the two men on foot. An agent arrested one of the men at a nearby Walgreens store. Body worn camera shows the agent entering the store with his firearm raised at 10:38 AM. The agent wrote in his report that bystanders were “charging at him,” but body-worn camera footage shows that he had his gun raised even as bystanders kept their distance.<sup>cclvi</sup>

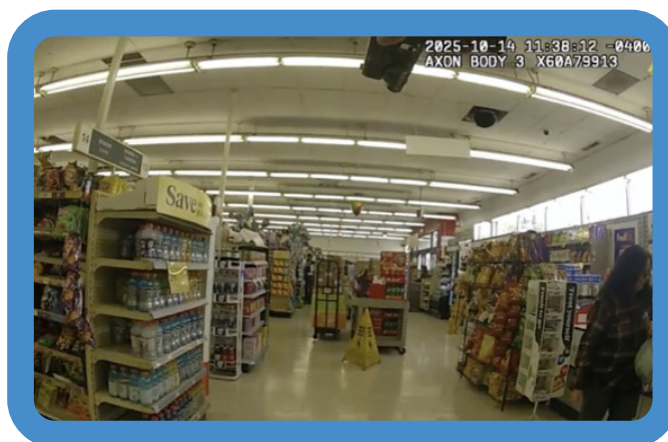


Image 7 CBP/CHC Litigation<sup>cclvii</sup>

Another agent arrested a 19-year-old male U.S. citizen exiting the Walgreens.<sup>cclviii</sup> The agent gave conflicting reports to his supervisor about why the man was arrested, first reporting he had arrested the man for “nothing,” but then saying the man had tackled him.<sup>cclix</sup> Video footage from a bystander shows that the agent pulled him directly from the doorway of the Walgreens; there is no video evidence the agent had been “tackled.” Nevertheless, the 19-year-old man was detained for several hours before being released without any charges related to the arrest.



Image 8<sup>cclx</sup>

Meanwhile back at the scene of the car crash, a crowd of residents and protesters gathered and began confronting the agents over the dangerous pursuit. The crowd, which grew to about 50 people, remained at the scene of the crash for almost two hours as CBP agents waited for tow trucks to arrive.

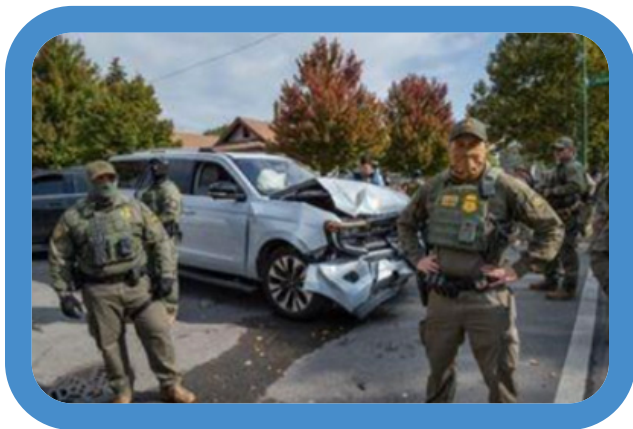


Image 9 Agents on scene of ramming waiting for tow trucks to arrive<sup>cclxi</sup>



Image 10 Agents deploy gas to move a vehicle through a crowded street<sup>cclxii</sup>

Approximately 51 federal agents arrived at the scene, and several Chicago Police Department officers responded to a 911 call by one of the federal agents about the crash and developing crowd. A few physical confrontations erupted between CPB agents and the crowd, with three U.S. citizens being arrested for alleged assault and released later that day.

At 11:51 AM, one male U.S. citizen was arrested after federal agents deployed tear gas as they attempted to move one of their vehicles through a crowded street into the police perimeter. During the arrest, agents threw the man to the ground, and one agent pressed his knee to the man's face to pin him while other agents handcuffed him.<sup>cclxiii</sup>



Image 11 Agent presses knee on man's face<sup>cclxiv</sup>

Later, at approximately 12:25 PM, agents arrested a second man and a teenager after individuals in the crowd threw objects toward the agents. After multiple agents held the man down on the ground for handcuffing, agents yelled at the man to stop resisting, but the man was not moving or attempting to escape.<sup>cclxv</sup> After the man complained multiple times of not being able to breathe, the arresting agent simply responded with "You're not breathing 'cause you're talking," and "You're fine, relax."<sup>cclxvi</sup>



Image 12 An agent arrests a man who complained that he could not breathe when agents took him to the ground.<sup>cclxvii</sup>

As federal agents prepared to leave the scene, they devised an exit strategy to use large amounts of chemical gas to move their vehicles through the public crowds. Although CPD officers verbally requested that federal agents not use tear gas, moments later, federal agents deployed a barrage of tear gas at residents, protesters, journalists and CPD officers creating a scene of chaos as they left the East Side neighborhood.<sup>cclxviii</sup> In some cases, agents deployed gas canisters at protesters and residents who were walking away from the agents.



Image 13 Agent throws a gas canister into the crowd as other agents drive away.<sup>cclxix</sup>



Image 14 Chicago Police Officers discussing exit plans with federal agents.<sup>cclxx</sup>



Image 15 Federal agents deploy smoke bombs at 105th & Ave N on Oct. 14, 2025.<sup>cclxxi</sup>

As further explained in the Commission's *Investigation Brief re East Side Vehicle Pursuit, Ramming, and Neighborhood Gassing*,<sup>5</sup> the Commission has determined that agents endangered the public with their reckless vehicle pursuit, kept a U.S. citizen in custody for hours without probable cause, deployed excessive amounts of chemical gas against non-violent residents, protesters, journalists and law enforcement officers. CBP agents on the ground and senior DHS officials also inaccurately described the events of October 14 in written reports and official statements. The incident reports filed by the CBP agents concealed key details about the incident that led the crowd to gather in the East Side neighborhood in the first place: they failed to report the high-speed pursuit; they failed to report that agents had disobeyed orders from a supervisor to stop the pursuit; and failed to report the agents had used an unauthorized ramming maneuver.<sup>cclxxii</sup> In a press release the following day, DHS claimed federal agents had used an "authorized precision immobilization technique (PIT) maneuver," and failed to mention that they had been told to stop their pursuit prior to the PIT maneuver or that the driver was not certified to do so.<sup>cclxxiii</sup>

### **Lakeview – October 24: Teargas**

On October 24, 2025, in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood, at approximately 11:50 AM, federal agents drove two unmarked SUVs the wrong direction (north) on Lakewood Avenue to stop in front of a home where four men were eating lunch outside of a home covered in scaffolding.<sup>6</sup> During the arrest of those men, a crowd of people began to gather on Lakewood Avenue, some of whom were blowing whistles and others demanding that the agents release

5. Available at <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.

6. For more information see the *IAC Investigation Brief re Lakeview Discriminatory Stops and Indiscriminate Tear Gas*, available at: <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.

the men they had arrested and leave the neighborhood. Because the agents' vehicles were facing north on a southbound street, the agents attempted to reverse their vehicles down the street heading south. CBP agents claimed that a civilian vehicle was in the street preventing them from leaving the scene. Witness testimony and cell phone video, however, indicate that there appeared to be sufficient room for the agents to drive their vehicle away from the crowd. However, as the crowd grew, and without any apparent immediate threat or warnings to the crowd, agents deployed at least three canisters of tear gas from their vehicles toward the crowd. The agents were not clearing a path for their vehicles to pass, because they threw the canisters in the opposite direction from which their vehicles were moving, calling into question any possible justification for the deployment. One CBP agent can be heard on body-worn camera footage telling another "Throw it for fun."<sup>cclxxiv</sup> Witnesses described symptoms such as coughing, nausea, vomiting, gagging, skin irritation and tearing eyes.

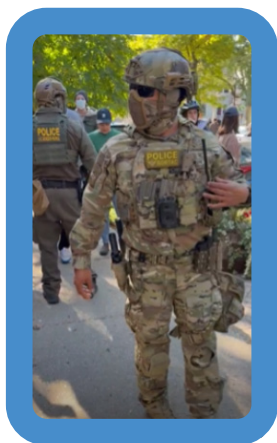


Image 16 - Submitted to Commission by Leo Feler

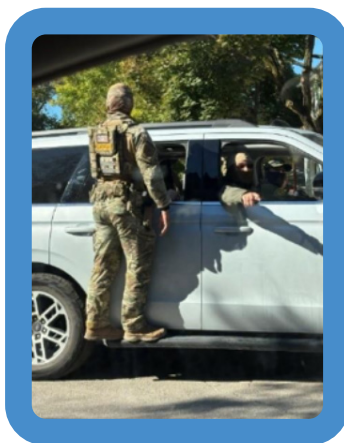


Image 17 Submitted to Commission by Dallas Knapp

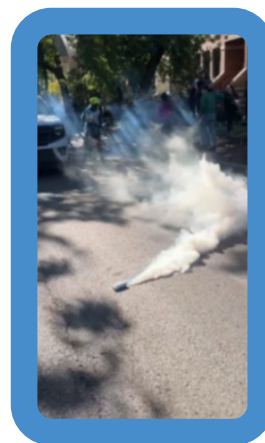


Image 18 U.S. District Court for Northern District of Illinois<sup>cclxxv</sup>

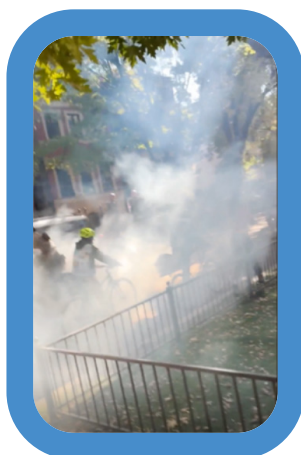


Image 19 Submitted to Commission by Bruce Turner



Image 20 Submitted to Commission by Jacob Oelsner

“They had a path to leave, there was absolutely no reason for them to use a chemical agent”

– Witness to Oct. 24 Lakeview Teargas,  
Participant at Northside Community  
Listening Session

### ***Melrose Park – November 2: Physical Force***

On November 2, 2025, at approximately 9:30 AM, three CBP agents were patrolling Melrose Park, a village in Cook County, in an unmarked vehicle to ‘search for criminal activity.’<sup>7</sup> The agents observed Ricardo Aguayo Rodriguez, 54, riding a bicycle and attempted to stop Rodriguez who was unknown to the agents at the time.<sup>cclxxvi</sup> When Rodriguez saw the agents approaching, he dropped his bicycle and ran through an alley. Agents claimed that the stop was a “consensual encounter,” but Border Patrol Agent Jesus Guillen chased Rodriguez down the alley without any questioning. Rodriguez fell between a parked car and building, and when he attempted to stand up, Agent Guillen placed his bodyweight on Rodriguez, forcing them both to fall on the ground. While they were tangled on the ground, Agent Guillen shot pepper spray at Rodriguez’s face without any verbal warning and wrapped his legs around Rodriguez. Agent Guillen reports in his incident report that Rodriguez then placed his arms close to Agent Guillen’s firearm, so Agent Guillen punched Rodriguez in the head three times.<sup>cclxxvii</sup> Agent Guillen also reported that one of his punches hit Rodriguez above the eye because Rodriguez “was struggling,” causing a “small laceration.” Two agents from the Quick Reaction Force then arrived to help handcuff Rodriguez and take him into custody. Rodriguez had begun to bleed before the Quick Reaction Force agents arrived and was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment. He was not presented for prosecution for assault or any other crime.

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7. For more details documented by the Commission about this event, please see the *IAC Investigation Brief re Arrest and Beating in Melrose Park*, available at: <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.



Image 21 Chicago Tribune<sup>cclxxviii</sup>

In the incident report, Agent Guillen reported that Rodriguez had “moderate injuries” including a “cut above his right eye.”<sup>cclxxix</sup> Rodriguez’s family, however, reports that his injuries were much more extensive.<sup>cclxxx</sup> They reported to the Commission that Guillen beat Rodriguez with his fists and pepper spray bottle and wrapped his arm around Rodriguez’s neck in a control hold, making it difficult for Rodriguez to breathe. Rodriguez reportedly pleaded with Guillen to stop as he tried to protect himself from Agent Guillen’s strikes. His family also told the Commission that one or more of the agents who helped handcuff Rodriguez kicked him on his side while handcuffed. They reported that Rodriguez suffered multiple broken teeth, broken ribs, a dislocated collar bone, and serious injuries to his hand and other parts of his body, much more than the “small laceration” claimed in Guillen’s report. DHS later released a statement claiming that the agents were conducting an enforcement operation to arrest Rodriguez, which contradicts the incident report where they state they were conducting a roving patrol searching for criminal activity. The DHS statement also claimed Rodriguez had a criminal record, but the family disputes that Rodriguez had any recent criminal history. Rodriguez filed a civil suit in November 2025, disputing DHS’ account of the incident and stating that Rodriguez had surrendered and posed no threat to Agent Guillen when he punched him in the head and put him in a chokehold. As further described in its *Investigation Brief re Arrest and Beating in Melrose Park*,<sup>8</sup> the Commission has determined there is reasonable cause to believe that the agents violated Rodriguez’s Constitutional rights and multiple agency policies.

8. Available at: <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.

## ***West Town – October 10, 2025: Excessive Use of Force to Effectuate Arrest***

On October 10, 2025, in Chicago's West Town neighborhood, U.S. citizen Dayanne Figueroa was driving in the West Town neighborhood on her way to work after dropping her child off at school when she encountered an unmarked silver Jeep Wagoneer being driven by CBP agents stopped on the 1600 block of West Hubbard Street.<sup>9</sup> The Wagoneer was driven by CBP Agent Matthew Sulek, with Agents Oscar Meza, Michael Turner, and Andrew Torabpour as passengers.<sup>cclxxxix</sup> The agents, along with three additional agents (Joseph Brenna IV, Martin Davalos, and Alexander Mills), had just effectuated the arrest of a man and several people were honking their car horns, yelling at agents, and video recording the man's arrest.<sup>cclxxxii</sup> One bystander had approached the agents' vehicle and hit the front car hood with her hand. The agents' vehicle moved forward toward the woman, causing bystanders to yell at the agents. Figueroa drove her vehicle into the right lane of the street around the right side of the agents' vehicle, and as the agents pulled away from the bystander who had hit the vehicle with her hand, the agents accelerated into the right lane, colliding with Figueroa's vehicle.<sup>cclxxxiii</sup>

Three masked CBP agents wearing vests labeled "POLICE" stepped out of the Wagoneer with weapons drawn and pointed at Figueroa's vehicle, claiming that they had been "rammed." In his incident report describing the events, Agent Matthew Sulek claimed Ms. Figueroa "rammed her vehicle into the right rear passenger side of our vehicle."<sup>cclxxxiv</sup> But several bystanders began yelling things like, "Hit and run! That's a hit and run," and, "You hit her! You guys hit her!" Two of the masked agents approached Figueroa in her car. They did not identify themselves. The two agents opened her driver's side door and were joined by a third masked agent, who approached the open driver's side door and motioned for Figueroa to get out of her car. When Figueroa tried to shut her car door instead, one of the agents stepped in front of the open door to prevent its closure. The agent holstered his weapon. Agents Torabpour and Brennan then pulled Figueroa out of her car by her legs, causing her shoes to fall off, as a third agent stood watch with his weapon drawn. Figueroa, who is 4 feet 11 inches tall, screamed and kicked her legs as the two agents pulled her from her car. The agents pulled Figueroa to the ground and used their knees to pin her face-down on the street and handcuff her wrists behind her back. Another agent took photos of Figueroa as she struggled with the agents. A video of the incident is available [here](#).

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9. For more information about this incident, please see the *IAC Investigation Brief re Arrest and Detention of Dayanne Figueroa*, available at: <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.

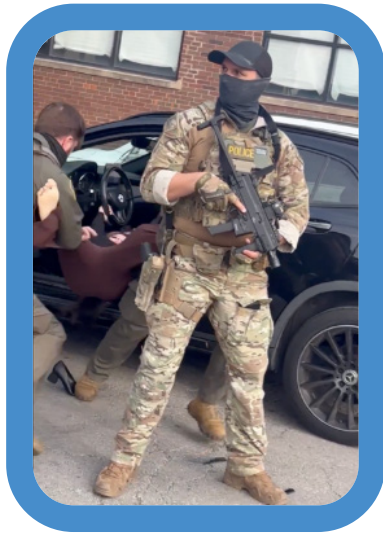


Image 22 Chicago Tribune<sup>cclxxxv</sup>

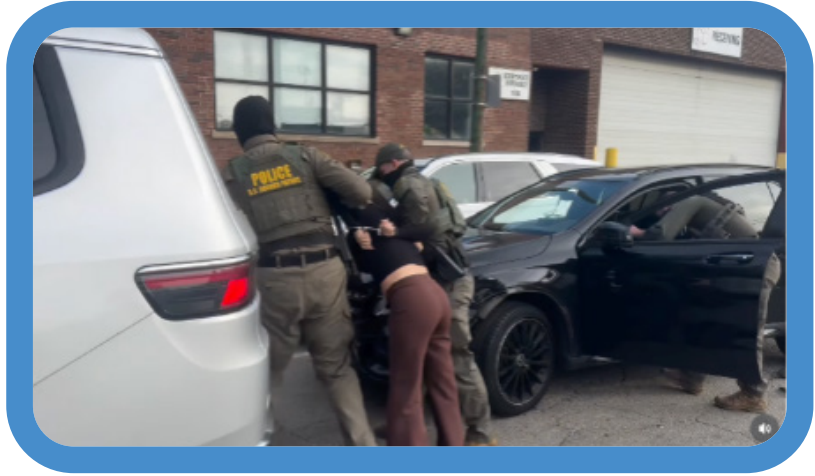


Image 23 Chicago Tribune<sup>cclxxxvi</sup>

The agents took Figueroa, handcuffed, to the unmarked red van. They put her in the backseat of the van, alongside two other handcuffed male arrestees. The agents drove off leaving Figueroa's car on the street—unlocked, windows down, keys inside, and her son's car seat visible in the back seat. Bystanders called 911 to request help from local law enforcement in parking her car. As a result of the incident, Figueroa experienced nerve damage to her wrists, bruises and other physical injuries to her leg and wrists, a broken tooth, and inflamed kidney. She also began to suffer from panic attacks, anxiety and PTSD. DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin later stated that Figueroa had been "arrested for assault on a federal agent,"<sup>cclxxxvii</sup> although no federal charges have been filed, and several aspects of the agents' accounts<sup>cclxxxviii</sup> are contradicted by bystander video and witness accounts.

As further documented in its *Investigation Brief re Arrest and Detention of Dayanne Figueroa*,<sup>10</sup> the Commission has determined that there is reasonable cause to believe that federal immigration agents stopped and arrested Figueroa without reasonable articulable suspicion or probable cause; used excessive force in forcibly removing Figueroa from her vehicle; submitted official incident reports with material inaccuracies; and ignored Figueroa's requests for medical treatment.

10. Available at: <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.

## ***Evanston – Oct. 31, 2025***

On Halloween morning, October 31, 2025, CBP agents, including Gregory Bovino, conducted roving operations across Chicago’s northern suburbs, Evanston and Skokie.<sup>11</sup> These patrols occurred despite a request from Governor Pritzker that DHS suspend enforcement operations during Halloween weekend.<sup>ccclxxxix</sup> Around 9:30 AM, several CBP agents detained three landscapers, one of whom was released only after insisting he was a U.S. citizen.<sup>ccxc</sup> Beginning around 11:00 AM, reports began to circulate amongst Evanston rapid responders that CBP agents were in Evanston and Skokie neighborhoods conducting arrests.<sup>ccxci</sup> Helicopters could be heard overhead. Around that same time, Evanston resident Kelly Mack recorded a neighbor talking to two federal agents in military fatigues and face masks near the intersection of Colfax & Bennett where Lincolnwood Elementary School is located.<sup>ccxcii</sup> Federal immigration agents shoved her neighbor multiple times and remained standing in the street directing vehicles through the intersection, including other vehicles of federal immigration agents. One such vehicle stopped, and an agent in military fatigues exited holding a PepperBall launcher. “I was scared because I knew the agent was holding a weapon just feet away from a kindergarten classroom,” said Mack.<sup>ccxciii</sup> A video of the interaction recorded by Mack, which was submitted as evidence in *Chicago Headline Club v. Noem*, is available [here](#).<sup>ccxciv</sup>

Shortly before noon, Evanston-Skokie School District 65 ordered all schools to conduct indoor recess, and Evanston Township High School closed its campus.<sup>ccxcv</sup> District 65 school board member Andrew Wymer and others began following agents as they patrolled Evanston and Skokie streets, honking and blowing whistles to warn neighbors.<sup>ccxcvi</sup> Approximately five cars of local residents began following and documenting the activities of a caravan of federal agents. Multiple witnesses described that the federal agents were driving erratically, running red lights and stop signs near schools during school hours.

Around 12:15 PM, the group of observers saw CBP Agent Timothy Donahue drive a federal SUV west on Oakton Avenue and attempt to make a fast turn on a red light onto Asbury Avenue in Evanston. The intersection is about a block away from Chute Middle School. Agent Donahue abruptly braked as he made the turn, causing a civilian driver to rear-end him. A DHS statement claimed that agents “were being aggressively tailgated by a red vehicle” and crashed into their car when the agents attempted to make a U-turn.<sup>ccxcvii</sup> Witnesses tell

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11. For more information about this incident, please see the *IAC Investigation Brief re Evanston Halloween Violence*, available at: <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.

a different story. Dan Abu-Absi was across the intersection from the collision stopped at the stop light and heard the roaring of an engine and then saw an SUV come through the intersection at a “high speed,” creating distance with the car behind him, then stop “for no reason.”<sup>ccxcviii</sup> “It was a classic brake check move, but more extreme than I’ve ever seen,” he recalled. Sarah Hines, who was stopped at the adjacent red light, saw the federal vehicle “fly through the intersection” and heard the “slamming of brakes and then a collision.”<sup>ccxcix</sup>



Image 24 Richard Cahan/Evanston Roundtable<sup>ccc</sup>

After the collision, the scene at Oakton and Asbury became even more chaotic. Approximately 10 agents and 20 members of the public were present in the aftermath of the crash.<sup>ccci</sup> Video captures agents immediately walk up to the vehicle and forcibly extract the driver.<sup>cccii</sup> After some struggle, they placed the motorist in their SUV. To Abu-Absi, “it just seemed like a moment of just pure injustice because they caused the accident in the first place<sup>ccciii</sup> Jennifer Moriarty, an Evanston resident, U.S. citizen, and attorney, approached with her phone out to record what was happening to the driver after watching agents “rip[] her out of her car and put her on the ground.”<sup>ccciv</sup> Before she could start the recording, an agent grabbed Moriarty by the neck and threw her to the pavement, knocking a shoe off her foot.<sup>cccv</sup> She was handcuffed by an agent sitting on top of her. When she asked to put her shoe on, the agent picked it up and threw it.<sup>cccvi</sup> Moriarty was taken into custody and placed with the motorist in the back of the SUV.

Another bystander, Marcello Africano, a U.S. citizen, had been helping his brother move nearby and ran to the scene after the accident. [Video](#) shows Agent Donahue punching Africano in the head, landing him on the pavement.<sup>cccvii</sup>

According to an incident report, Officer Jose Martinez was attempting to restrain Africano when Agent Thomas Parsons came to assist him.<sup>cccviii</sup> Agent Parsons grabbed Africano's head and punched him twice in the head with a closed fist while his head was against the ground, then pressed his face into the pavement while kneeling on his back.<sup>cccix</sup> At one point while on the ground, Agent Parsons appears to put Africano in a "guillotine chokehold" by constricting his arm around Africano's neck. Agent Parsons claimed in his incident report that Africano had assaulted him by grabbing his genitals; this is not observed in any available video reviewed by Commission staff.<sup>cccx</sup>

Witnesses described a brutal scene. Hines watched agents striking Africano's head while he was prone, arms behind his back, as he strained his neck yelling "I can't breathe, help me."<sup>cccxi</sup> Moriarty also heard Africano say this and saw an agent twist Africano's leg as if attempting a spiral fracture.<sup>cccxii</sup> Another witness, Kerry Littel, described Africano as looking "dazed" and "in need of medical attention."<sup>cccxiii</sup> Africano repeated throughout the ordeal: "I was just helping my brother move and we saw an accident."<sup>cccxiv</sup> He ended up in the federal vehicle instead.

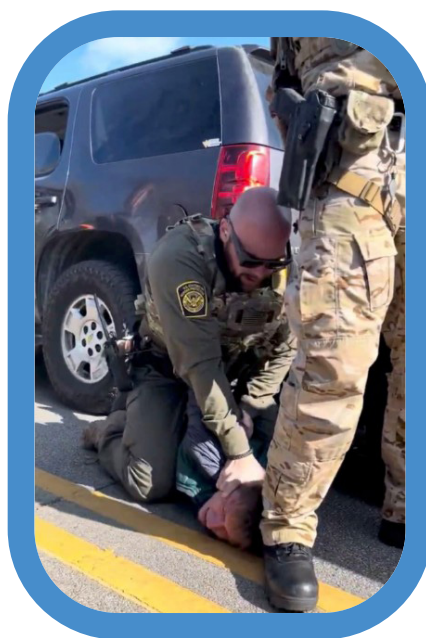


Image 25 U.S. District Court for Northern District of Illinois<sup>cccxy</sup>

DHS later claimed that Africano "physically assaulted a Border Patrol agent and kicked an agent. As he was being arrested, he grabbed the agent's genitals and squeezed them."<sup>cccxvi</sup> The Commission has identified no video to support this claim.

“It was such an incredibly disturbing demonstration of utter violence. It never felt like there was an operation being conducted. It felt like mayhem and chaos. There was no chain of command. They were yelling at each other. Guns were pulled.”

– Sarah Hines <sup>ccc xvii</sup>

As Agent Donahue drove away, Evanston resident Frederick Goodwill was shouting at Agent Donahue’s passing SUV and saw Agent Donahue point at him.<sup>ccc xviii</sup> Available video shows Goodwill shouting at the passing SUV while leaning toward it, and apparent spittle leave his mouth that appears to fall far short of the departing vehicle.<sup>ccc xix</sup> On Agent Donahue’s BWC, a voice is heard yelling “no pardons!” before Agent Donahue states, “that mother f\*\*\*er spit on me!”<sup>ccc xx</sup> Another agent, Edward Maxa, immediately turned and shot Goodwill directly in the face with pepper spray from close range, without warning. When reviewing this incident at the December 18, 2025, hearing, Dr. Rohini Haar testified that it was a misuse of a chemical irritant: “One, they sprayed without any real threat present. This person is not obstructing anything or causing any harm. But two, he’s also spraying this poor gentleman in the face, which... can cause significant eye trauma and is completely unnecessary here.”<sup>ccc xxi</sup>

Another Evanston resident, David Brooks, was among the growing crowd watching the violence unfold.<sup>ccc xii</sup> As he filmed Agent Donahue shove one of the civilians into the car, Agent Donahue yelled: “Step back or I’ll f\*\*\*ing shoot you.”<sup>ccc xiii</sup> Donahue drew his pistol and aimed it at Brooks and others standing nearby at least twice within 45 seconds. IAC Witness Hines said she was “absolutely sure that someone was gonna get shot.”<sup>ccc xiv</sup> Multiple witnesses independently described the agents as operating without any chain of command: “They were all yelling at each other. Nobody seemed to know what was going on.”<sup>ccc xv</sup>



Image 26 U.S. District Court for Northern District of Illinois<sup>cccxxvi</sup>

Over the next hour, Agent Donahue – with the red vehicle driver, Moriarty and Africano in his vehicle – drove through Evanston and Rogers Park. Moriarty says that on multiple occasions Donahue slammed his brakes, attempting to cause another car to hit his SUV, and jumped out of his car multiple times to approach another vehicle with mace drawn. According to Moriarty, by the third time this happened, another agent in the vehicle admonished him to not get out of the car.<sup>cccxxvii</sup> Eventually, all three were taken to the Chicago FBI Headquarters and released after five and a half hours, without any formal processing or explanation for their arrest. Neither the driver or Moriarty were charged with any criminal offenses. Africano was charged with one count of assaulting a federal officer but his case was later dismissed.

As further described in the Commission's *Investigation Brief re Evanston Halloween Violence*,<sup>12</sup> the Commission has determined it has reasonable cause to believe that Agent Donahue's forcible extraction of the driver does not comport with standard law enforcement practice; Agent Donahue and Agent Parsons each use physical force against Africano without justification; agents used unreasonable force in arresting Moriarty; Agent Donahue drew and aimed his service pistol at unarmed protesters on multiple occasions; and Agent Maxa's use of pepper spray within inches of Goodwill's face was unjustified and delivered without any prior verbal warnings.

12. Available at: <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.

## The Shootings

During Operation Midway Blitz federal agents shot Silverio González and Marimar Martinez, only one of whom is alive today to tell their story.

### ***Silverio Villegas González***

On September 12, 2025, Silverio Villegas González was shot and killed during a traffic stop by ICE agents in Franklin Park.<sup>13</sup> An analysis of video footage of the shooting from the New York Times is available [here](#). Villegas González was a Mexican national who had been in the United States since 2007. On September 12, he was stopped by ICE agents while driving to work just after he had dropped off his seven-year-old son at elementary school and his three-year-old son at day care. Villegas González is survived by his two sons and his partner of roughly two years; his body was repatriated to Michoacán, Mexico, where Villegas González was mourned by additional family and community members. The account below of his fatal shooting is largely based on surveillance footage from nearby businesses, bystander videos, and the body-worn camera footage of a responding Franklin Park police officer. Although a 2025 ICE policy<sup>cccxxviii</sup> requires agents to activate body-worn cameras during an enforcement action, it is unclear whether the agents involved were wearing body-worn cameras at the time of the incident and no such footage has been publicly released.

Shortly before 9:00 AM, two ICE agents in an unmarked vehicle followed Villegas González for a short period of time before turning on their vehicle's emergency lights. Villegas González pulled over into the right-most lane of traffic on Grand Avenue, and the agents stopped in front of Villegas González's car, blocking the car's path forward and partially blocking a second lane of traffic. The two ICE agents, both armed and wearing protective vests, exited their vehicle and walked up to Villegas González's car, one on the passenger side and the other on the driver's side. Surveillance video from the area shows the agents leaning on the car window frames, appearing to talk to Villegas González. The agent at the passenger side can be seen reaching into the car window.

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13. For more information, see *IAC Investigation Brief re Fatal Shooting of Silverio Villegas González*.



Image 27 Happy Nails Surveillance Footage/New York Times<sup>cccxxix</sup>  
Image 28 Happy Nails Surveillance Footage/New York Times<sup>cccxxx</sup>

About eight seconds after the stop began, Villegas González began to drive his car in reverse. Both agents appear to keep their hands on the car's window frames, until the agent on the passenger side stepped back from the car and drew a firearm. Villegas González reversed approximately 50 feet before then driving his car forward, away from the agents and into an open lane of traffic on Grand Avenue. Surveillance video shows that the agent on the passenger side ran after the car, pointing his firearm at the rear of the car and then lowering it; no view footage is available of the agent on the driver's side. Within six seconds after Villegas González began moving his vehicle, separate surveillance footage captures the sound of two gun shots. Villegas González's car continued moving forward for about 170 feet until, about three seconds later, it crashed into the undercarriage of a parked delivery truck.

When paramedics arrived, they treated Villegas González at the incident scene before transporting him to the hospital. He was pronounced dead at 9:48 AM, within an hour of the shooting. A Cook County Medical Examiner's report concludes that Villegas González was fatally shot at close range, with one bullet entering through the back of his neck and remaining in his chest cavity, and another bullet grazing two of his fingers.

The available evidence does not clearly establish which of the two agents shot and killed Villegas González, though video footage and later DHS statements about the incident indicate that it was the agent on the vehicle's driver's side. Franklin Park Police officers, along with other federal agents, responded to the scene of the shooting. Body-worn camera video from one responding Franklin Park officer captures several statements from the two ICE agents involved in the incident. As shown on the video, one of the agents told the police officer that

Mr. Villegas González had “tried to run us over.” The other agent, who can be seen on video with a tear in his pant leg, stated that he had been “dragged a little bit” during the incident. The agents pointed out a left knee injury, elbow injury, and some lacerations to his hands, but one agent described the injuries as “nothing major.”



Image 29 Franklin Park Police BWC/Chicago Sun-Times<sup>cccxxxi</sup>

As with many other incidents, DHS defended the agents’ conduct and blamed Villegas González. The day of the shooting, DHS issued a press release claiming that Villegas González had “refused to follow law enforcements [sic] commands and drove his car at law enforcement officers.”<sup>14</sup> The press release added, “One of the ICE officers was hit by the car and dragged a significant distance. Fearing for his own life, the officer fired his weapon.” The press release further characterized the incident as occurring during an enforcement operation against “a criminal illegal alien with a history of reckless driving;” but between 2010 and 2019, Villegas González was cited for four traffic violations, only one of which was a moving violation. The misstatements continued the following week when DHS issued a press release again referring to Villegas González as “a criminal illegal alien” and claimed he had “resisted arrest, attempted to flee the scene and dragged [an ICE] officer a significant distance.”<sup>15</sup> The press release reiterated the claim that Villegas González “drove his car at law enforcement officers” and that the officer who killed him had done so out of “fear[] for his own life and broader public safety.” It further suggested that the shooting officer had received hospital treatment for “multiple injuries” sustained during the incident.

14. Press Release, U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Security, DHS Statement on ICE Officer Seriously Injured in Line of Duty and Shooting in Chicago During Traffic Stop (Sep. 12, 2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/09/12/dhs-statement-ice-officer-seriously-injured-line-duty-and-shooting-chicago-during>.

15. Press Release, U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Security, DHS Sets the Record Straight on Gross Smears Against ICE Officer Who Was Seriously Injured in Line of Duty and Shooting in Chicago During Traffic Stop (Sep. 19, 2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/09/19/dhs-sets-record-straight-gross-smears-against-ice-officer-who-was-seriously-injured>.

These statements are inconsistent with video evidence that suggests neither agent was in the path of Villegas González's vehicle or in harm's way when the two shots were fired. Instead, evidence suggests that one of the agents fired at Villegas González to disable his moving vehicle. A 2023 DHS use-of-force policy prohibits immigration agents from shooting a firearm "solely . . . [t]o disable moving vehicles."<sup>cccxxxii</sup> It further states that deadly force, such as the use of a firearm, may only be used to prevent escape if the agent reasonably believes "that the subject poses a significant threat of death or serious physical harm to the [agent] or others and such force is necessary to prevent escape." A 2023 ICE directive on firearms and the use of force echoes these limitations on ICE agents' use of deadly force.<sup>cccxxxiii</sup>

As further documented in its *Investigation Brief re Fatal Shooting of Silverio Villegas González*,<sup>16</sup> the Commission has determined that there is reasonable cause to believe that federal agents shot and killed Villegas González without apparent justification as he drove away from them and for tactics employed during the traffic stop that increased the risk of physical harm.

### **Marimar Martinez**

Barely three weeks after Villegas González was shot, CBP Agent Charles Exum shot Marimar Martinez without justification.<sup>17</sup> As they did with Villegas González, DHS leadership lied about the events, defended their agents, and blamed the shooting victims. But unlike Villegas González, Ms. Martinez lives to share her story.

On the morning of October 4, 2025, Marimar Martinez was driving through the Brighton Park neighborhood on the southwest side of Chicago to donate clothes to her church when she spotted an SUV with an Uber light in the windshield, no front license plate, an out-of-state rear plate, and a uniformed CBP agent visible inside.<sup>cccxxxiv</sup> As a concerned community member who had previously alerted neighbors to ICE presence, she decided to follow the vehicle.

Martinez had been following the vehicle for about 15-20 minutes, alerting the community by honking and shouting "La Migra" when body worn camera footage captured CBP Agent Charles Exum stating: "It's time to get aggressive and get the f\*\*\* out" and "they're trying to box us in."<sup>cccxxxv</sup> As the vehicles got to the intersection of W 39th Place and S Kedzie Ave, Martinez's Nissan Rogue was 2-3 feet to the left of Agent Exum's SUV. Video evidence and

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16. Available at <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.

17. For more information about this incident, please see IAC Investigation Brief re Brighton Park Shooting and Chemical Weapons Violence.

witness testimony indicate that Agent Exum turned the steering wheel to his left, crashing into Martinez's vehicle.<sup>cccxxvi</sup> Martinez froze, slammed her brakes, and her vehicle came to a stop, as did Agent Exum's about 1-2 car lengths away. Martinez, acutely aware that agents had shot Villegas González in his vehicle less than a month before, drove her vehicle forward to escape.<sup>cccxxvii</sup> Agent Exum fired five shots into Martinez's vehicle, striking her and causing seven bullet wounds.<sup>cccxxviii</sup> Martinez drove herself to a mechanic shop and called 911 before losing consciousness.

DHS leadership immediately began defending Agent Exum and disparaging Martinez. On the day she was shot, DHS issued a statement claiming that "Border Patrol law enforcement officers were ambushed by domestic terrorists that rammed federal agents with their vehicles."<sup>cccxxix</sup> The statement also claimed Ms. Martinez was "armed with a semi-automatic weapon."<sup>cccxi</sup> CBP Commander Gregory Bovino sent Exum a congratulatory email while Martinez remained hospitalized, offering to extend his retirement age due to his "excellent service in Chicago."<sup>cccxli</sup> A text message from Agent Exum to another agent boasted that leadership was supportive: "Big time. Everyone has been including Chief Bovino, Chief Banks, Sec Noem and El Jefe himself ... according to Bovino."<sup>cccxlili</sup> BWC footage and witness statements contradict Agent Exum's claim that Martinez rammed her vehicle,<sup>cccxliv</sup> and criminal charges filed against Martinez by the U.S. Department of Justice were dismissed in November 2025 with prejudice.<sup>cccxlvi</sup> The press release labelling Martinez a "domestic terrorist" remains on DHS' website despite the case being dismissed.

As news spread, community members gathered at the intersection where Martinez was shot (39th and Kedzie).<sup>cccxlv</sup> Federal agents, including a BORTAC unit from El Paso and an armored vehicle with an agent on top pointing a weapon down at civilians, also arrived. At least 15 separate deployments of tear gas and pepper spray were documented in Brighton Park that day.<sup>cccxlv</sup> In one of those deployments, agents threw tear gas cannisters out of their vehicle windows at people as they drove through the crowd. In reviewing another incident from that day at the Commission's Dec. 18, 2025, hearing, Dr. Rohini Haar concluded that agents had shot a projectile at the feet of individuals who were neither advancing or approaching the agents: "...there's no imminent threat to public safety and there's no one being violent here except the [federal immigration] officers."<sup>cccxlvii</sup> Twenty-seven Chicago Police Department Officers were injured by the deployed chemical weapons as well.

“Never had I imagined that we would have federal – the federal government or federal agents in the streets in complete military gear, pointing guns, throwing tear gas, spraying civilians, protesters, that all we had in our hands was maybe a mask or a whistle.”

– Brighton Park Witness<sup>cccxlviii</sup>



Image 30 Submitted to Commission by Paul Goyette

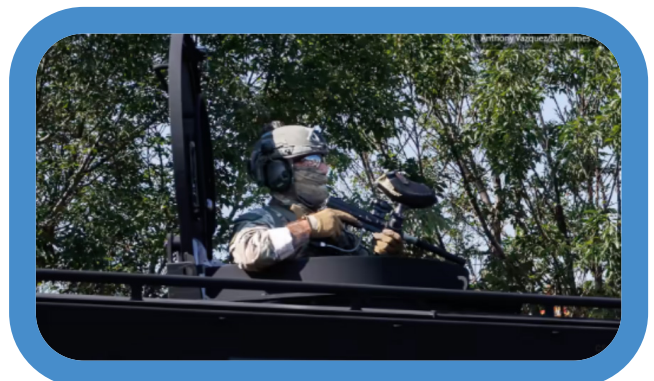


Image 31 Submitted to Commission by Paul Goyette



Image 32 Submitted to Commission by Paul Goyette



Image 33 Submitted to Commission by Paul Goyette

As further documented in its *Investigation Brief re Brighton Park Shooting and Chemical Weapon Violence*<sup>18</sup>, the Commission has determined it has reasonable cause to believe that Agent Charles Exum shot an unarmed civilian without apparent justification; evidence was deliberately tampered with and destroyed; federal agents produced materially inaccurate official reports; and chemical agents were deployed indiscriminately in a residential neighborhood without warning.

## A Pattern of Use of Force

***"I had a nightmare of someone pointing a gun at me"***

***– Southwest Side Listening Session***

The events described above demonstrate a repeat pattern of unlawful use of force by federal administration agents. CBP Agents shot two individuals during Operation Midway Blitz: one victim was killed (see *González Investigation Brief*)<sup>19</sup> and the other faced an attempted prosecution by the federal government (see *Martinez Investigation Brief*). The Commission has identified at least two instances where federal agents appear to use some type of chokehold maneuver, also considered lethal force, to detain individuals (see *Melrose Park Investigation Brief and Garfield Park Investigation Brief*). Under Illinois law and DHS policy, law enforcement may only use this technique when lethal force is justified. In Garfield Park, agents claimed they saw two Black males commit a robbery at a worksite, but CPD officers released the man immediately after he was placed in their custody, calling into question agents' claims that they were pursuing a suspect in a robbery. And like many other incidents, DHS denied the evidence seen in video footage, claiming "This is FALSE, the man was not choked."<sup>cccxlx</sup>

There are numerous examples where federal agents used excessive force against observers or protesters by tackling them and pinning them to the ground, for no other reason than punishing or retaliating against them, like Marcello Africano and Jennifer Moriarty on October 31 in Evanston (see *Evanston Investigation Brief*); numerous young men in East Side on November 14 (see *East Side Investigation Brief*); and Angel Martinez in Elgin on December 6 (see *Elgin Investigation Brief*). Agents also used violent force to extract Dayanne Figueroa (see *Dayanne Figueroa Investigation Brief*) from her vehicle by her feet on October 10 and to remove the men eating lunch on North Lakewood Avenue on October 24, causing one of the

18. Available at: <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.

19. IAC Investigation Briefs available at: <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.

workers to cut himself during the arrest (see *Lakeview Investigation Brief*). In Logan Square on October 3, an agent exited his vehicle to beat a motorcyclist with a baton in order to get him to move his vehicle (see *Logan Square Investigation Brief*).

Evidence indicates that Agent Exum may have rammed his vehicle into that of Marimar Martinez despite his allegations that *she* had rammed his vehicle (see *Martinez Investigation Brief*). This inaccuracy is very similar to what happened to Jesus Luis Acosta Gutierrez in Elgin, where the event data recorder from Gutierrez's vehicle contradicts the agent's claim that Gutierrez had rammed agents' vehicle into a tree (see *Elgin Investigation Brief*).

The Commission has also identified numerous incidents where agents used their vehicles in unsafe ways. In East Side on October 14, agents engaged in a high-speed pursuit, in an unmarked vehicle without sirens or emergency lights, through a residential neighborhood despite being told to terminate their pursuit by a supervisor, culminating in a highly dangerous PIT maneuver (see *East Side Investigation Brief*). In Evanston on October 31, an agent antagonized other drivers by 'brake checking' cars behind him and exiting his car to confront other vehicles (see *Evanston Investigation Brief*).

One of the most prominent aspects of Operation Midway Blitz was the routine use of chemical agents – such as tear gas, pepper spray, and pepper balls – by federal immigration agents. Although they are often called "crowd control" or "less-lethal" weapons, Dr. Rohini Haar testified to the Commission that "Frequently they're not used on crowds, they're used on small groups or individuals. And they're not really used to control crowds, but potentially to disperse, punish or suppress."<sup>cccl</sup> She also described the extremely painful injuries they can cause: injuries to eyes, mouths, lungs, skin and nose; blunt trauma, and damage to respiratory and cardiovascular systems. And although these injuries may be considered medically temporary, they can last for several days or hours. Additionally, improper deployment within close range or against vulnerable individuals can create permanent, or even lethal, injuries.

The Cline center has documented the deployment of chemical weapons on at least 63 different occasions during Operation Midway Blitz.<sup>cccli</sup> This number is particularly striking compared to the finding that peaceful protest was the norm during Operation Midway Blitz: of the 126 unique protest events documented by the Cline Center, 87.3% were peaceful and they found no reports of larger-scale political violence, such as riots, or more organized forms of political violence anywhere in Chicagoland during Operation Midway Blitz.<sup>ccclii</sup>

Chemical agents were used on October 3, 2025, outside Funston Elementary School in Logan Square.<sup>20</sup> This incident, like many others documented by the Commission, involved federal agents tossing cannisters of tear gas into a crowd without giving any clear dispersal orders and without giving bystanders an opportunity to leave the scene. In a statement, DHS claimed that agents deployed tear gas and pepper balls after “repeated vocal attempts to disperse the crowd.”<sup>cccliii</sup> Bodycam footage and witness statements, however, indicate that no dispersal order was heard prior to the deployment of chemical irritants.

Similar events occurred in Old Irving Park on October 25, 2025, just as neighbors were gathering for an annual neighborhood Halloween parade.<sup>21</sup> That morning, three vehicles of federal agents were patrolling the Old Irving Park neighborhood near Grace Street and Kildare Ave.<sup>cccliv</sup> Around 9:47 AM, two agents exited their vehicle and chased after Luis Villegas who was working on the front lawn of Brian Kolp.<sup>ccclv</sup> The agents tackled Villegas and escorted him in handcuffs towards one of their unmarked vehicles.<sup>ccclvi</sup> A crowd then began to gather, and within minutes, agents were exiting their vehicles with gas masks and yelling “back up, you guys are gonna get gassed.”<sup>ccclvii</sup> As agents began reversing down the street, a 67-year-old man who was driving home from a morning run pulled in front of one of the unmarked vehicles. Several agents immediately ran toward the car. One agent pulled out his rifle and approached the front door of the man’s car yelling at him to drive away. The man yelled back and exited his vehicle. The agent immediately grabbed and threw him to the ground – he sustained several broken ribs and internal bleeding as a result. At the same time, another agent grabbed and tackled a woman who yelled at agents to get off of the 67-year-old man – she also suffered several broken ribs. At 9:55 AM, an agent yelled “gas, gas, gas” and threw a tear gas cannister behind the agents’ vehicles.<sup>ccclviii</sup> A woman and her two-year-old daughter were exposed and suffered symptoms from the gas.<sup>ccclix</sup>

The Commission documented similar unjustified uses of teargas and pepper spray in East Side (Oct. 14), Lakeview (Oct. 24), Elgin (Dec. 6), Brighton Park (Oct. 4), Little Village (Oct. 22, Oct. 23, Nov. 8) and Old Irving Park (Oct. 25). These incidents are mere examples, not the sum total of incidents involving teargas or pepper spray by agents.

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20. For more information about this incident, please see the Commission's *Investigation Brief re Gassing and Baton Strikes in Logan Square*.

21. For more information, see the *IAC Investigation Brief re Old Irving Park*.

The Commission also found that several federal agents used force repeatedly over the course of Operation Midway Blitz. Although law enforcement officers are authorized to use force when necessary and objectively reasonable to seize a person as a general matter, the repeated use of force may indicate a broader problem involving the particular officer using force, the unit the officer is assigned to, or the agency at large. The circumstances surrounding the repeated use of force by federal agents during Operation Midway Blitz indicate that systemic deficiencies existed and contributed to the constitutional violations and other harms the Commission uncovered. In many of these instances, a Border Patrol supervisor was present or in the field with the federal agents and condoned or endorsed the federal agents' problematic behavior and, in some cases, helped conceal the misconduct in official reports. By continuing to allow federal agents with repeated problematic behavior to interact with the public, DHS placed individuals and communities in Chicago at risk of serious harm.

For instance, Border Patrol Agent Timothy Donahue used excessive force multiple times in a span of four weeks during Operation Midway Blitz. Most of these uses of force occurred following roving patrols where Agent Donahue drove in an unmarked car looking for individuals on the street to question their citizenship status. The Commission has identified the following incidents where Agent Donahue appeared to be involved:

- On September 27, 2025, Agent Donahue tackled and arrested Unraveled journalist Steve Held, who was pepper sprayed and held without charges while covering protests at the Broadview detention center.<sup>ccclx</sup>
- On October 3, 2025, while patrolling Little Village with Supervisory Border Patrol Agent Thomas Parsons, Agent Donahue threatened to arrest a father and son if they did not answer questions about their citizenship status.<sup>ccclxi</sup> The father and son were crossing a street when Agent Donahue first encountered them. When the son stood in front of his father to protect him from being interrogated, Agent Donahue pulled the son's arm and slammed his body to the ground. Agent Donahue then handcuffed and arrested him, together with his father.
- On October 8, Agent Donahue approached a man at a bus stop to question him about his citizenship status in Libertyville.<sup>ccclxii</sup> After a foot chase, Agent Donahue arrested the man. During transport, Agent Donahue turned around and sprayed the handcuffed man with pepper spray while Agent Donahue drove in heavy traffic. The man was in the backseat with another federal agent, and Agent Donahue claimed that he heard

the man unbuckling his seatbelt. Agent Donahue then pulled the vehicle over, walked around to open the passenger door, and hit the man's leg three times with his knee. Agent Donahue claimed that the man had his leg partially out of the vehicle..

- On October 15, while on a roving patrol in South Chicago with other federal agents, Agent Donahue encountered a man who was walking on a sidewalk.<sup>ccclxiii</sup> Agent Donahue and the other federal agents quickly exited and approached the man. As the man backed up, Agent Donahue and the other federal agents grabbed him, handcuffed him, and forcefully shoved him into the unmarked vehicle. Once in the vehicle, the federal agents questioned the man about his identity and citizenship status. When they learned that the man was a United States citizen, they released him on the street about a half mile from where federal agents arrested him.
- On October 21, Donahue conducted a Kavanaugh Stop of a U.S. citizen named Jordan. Agents took photos of him during the encounter, which Jordan described as "incredibly scary" and that resulted in him carrying his passport wherever he goes.<sup>ccclxiv</sup>
- On October 31, Agent Donahue was driving in a SUV with Supervisor Parsons in Evanston when he slammed on his brakes to intentionally cause a collision with a vehicle behind them.<sup>ccclxv</sup> After taking the driver of the other vehicle into custody, pushing her into the back of his vehicle, Agent Donahue unholstered his firearm and pointed it at several bystanders, threatening "Step back or I'll f\*\*\*ing shoot you." Agent Donahue then punched another bystander in the head, knocking him to the ground. Agent Donahue and Supervisor Parsons forcefully pinned them man to the ground, while Supervisor Parsons slammed the man's head on the pavement.

On December 17, Agent Donahue returned to Evanston, observed by multiple witnesses at a gas station, alongside Bovino. In some of the incidents, Agent Donahue claimed to be a paramedic, dismissing complaints of pain and injury from individuals who he had struck and threatened. At the time of Operation Midway Blitz, Agent Donahue had been a Border Patrol agent for six years, stationed in the El Centro Sector with Bovino. Other federal agents identified by the Commission who used force more than two times during Operation Midway Blitz include Agent Jesus Guillen, Christopher Escobedo, and Moses Espinoza.

### 3.B. ROVING PATROLS WERE A STRING OF DISCRIMINATORY ARRESTS, NOT TARGETED ENFORCEMENT

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At the start of the Trump Administration, officials touted targeted ICE enforcement with a heightened focus on “collateral arrests.” Officials hit the airwaves warning that anyone swept up during a targeted ICE operation was fair game for arrest and removal. On January 26, 2025, ICE launched “Operation Safeguard” in Chicago where Dr. Phil and Tom Homan showcased the approach as more aggressive but still focused on known targets with criminal records. They went to great pains to emphasize that they were not conducting broad sweeps of people who were questioned on the street.<sup>ccclxvi</sup> However, despite having a target list of about 300 individuals with criminal histories, the operation only yielded about 50 arrests. When Homan’s “collateral arrest” approach failed to make the impact that the White House demanded, the Administration turned to CBP Commander Gregory Bovino to supercharge its mass deportation effort. They took his fringe, “turn and burn” approach and made it the centerpiece knowing that it was constitutionally-suspect and race-based. They launched Operation at Large in Los Angeles in early June 2025 with Bovino at the helm. The harms of this defective approach became apparent quickly and, by early July 2025 it was stopped by the district court, before the Supreme Court intervened in *Vasquez Perdomo v. Noem*.

The Administration adopted Bovino’s fringe approach and unleashed it on Illinois. Border Patrol agents, known for their aggressive enforcement, soon began conducting roving patrols in neighborhoods across Chicago and Illinois and disguised their race-based stops as “consensual encounters” and forcibly stopped and questioned people who looked Latino, spoke Spanish or accented English, who gathered in certain locations, or held certain low wage jobs. The encounters were consensual in name only because agents used a show of force, actual force, or pursuits to stop individuals. This tactic was used over and over.

This practice relied on discriminatory targeting based on race and went beyond DHS’ statutory authority. In many incidents, agents chased, tackled, or handcuffed individuals before agents even asked about their immigration status. It was an “arrest first, ask questions later” strategy. Agents also mischaracterized the interrogations they did do as “consensual encounters” even though they were actually coercive, and people were not actually free to leave.

## Legal Standard For Civil Immigration Stops and Arrests

Stops and arrests for civil immigration violations are governed by federal law and the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which protects against unreasonable searches and seizures. Legal Expert Nicole Hallett, Clinical Professor of Law, testified to the Commission that federal courts have routinely held that the Fourth Amendment applies in the enforcement of civil immigration law. Tactics by ICE and CBP officers during Operation Midway Blitz, however, demonstrated “blatant racial profiling.”<sup>ccclxvii</sup>

Under federal regulations and Fourth Amendment case law, immigration officers can conduct a ‘brief’ investigatory stop to question someone if they have a reasonable suspicion, based on specific articulable facts, that the person is unlawfully present in the United States. 8 CFR §287.8(b)(2); *United States v. Brignoni-Ponce*, 422 U.S. 873, 884 (1975). The U.S. Supreme Court has long held that such a stop may not be solely based on an individual’s race or ethnicity. In 2025, however, the U.S. Supreme Court stayed a lower court’s order that would have prevented ICE and CBP officers from questioning individuals based on discriminatory factors such as race, ethnicity, language, accent, or working in jobs that were “attractive to illegal immigrants” like day labor, landscaping and construction. *Noem v. Vasquez Perdomo*, No. 25A169 (U.S. Sept. 8, 2025).<sup>ccclxviii</sup> Although the Court did not officially overrule its precedent that immigration agents cannot stop individuals based on race, DHS called the decision a victory and relied on language from Justice Kavanaugh in a concurring opinion that seemed to condone such tactics.<sup>22</sup>

Theoretically, a consensual encounter is something even less restrictive than a “brief investigatory stop.” In a brief investigatory stop, for which officers must have reasonable suspicion, individuals are not free to leave. But in a truly consensual encounter, the questioning is “voluntary,” and the individual is free to leave at any time. CBP agents routinely characterized their activities as “consensual encounters” during Operation Midway Blitz, despite many indications that individuals were not free to leave or consensual at all – suggesting that officers were actually temporarily detaining people in an ‘investigatory stop’ or actually making an arrest.

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22. Justice Kavanaugh more recently has arguably walked back DHS’s apparent read of *Noem v. Vasquez Perdomo*, No. 25A169 (U.S. Sept. 8, 2025) as greenlighting their actions in Operation Midway Blitz, discouraging reliance on the court’s orders regarding “interim applications of substantial import and difficulty.” *Id.* at 6.

To make an arrest, the Fourth Amendment requires that immigration officers have probable cause (more than just a reasonable suspicion) to believe that the individual is in the United States unlawfully. *Brignoni-Ponce*, at 882. For matters of *civil immigration law*, the federal Immigration and Nationality Act<sup>ccclxix</sup> also requires a second type of probable cause. If they do not have a previously issued warrant for that person's arrest,<sup>23</sup> immigration officers must also have probable cause to believe that the person is likely to escape before a warrant for their arrest can be obtained.<sup>ccclxx</sup> Importantly, this statutory provision means that ICE agents who stop someone on the street for questioning cannot make a warrantless arrest solely on the basis that they believe the person is unlawfully present in the United States, they must also believe that the person is an escape risk. Although CBP may claim they can rely on a stronger presumption in favor of stopping and questioning an individual when they encounter that individual near the U.S. border and ports of entry (such as airports) that same authority cannot extend broadly to the rest of the country. The INA also places additional restrictions on when agents can conduct consensual encounters and brief investigatory stops.

## DHS Lifted Prior Safeguards To Facilitate Roving Patrols

Beginning in 2025, Administration officials began making statements indicating they were looking for ways to avoid the Fourth Amendment and other legal requirements in immigration enforcement actions. CBP Commander Gregory Bovino inaccurately stated they need “reasonable suspicion to make an immigration arrest...You notice I did not say probable cause, nor did I say I need a warrant.”<sup>ccclxxi</sup> This misinterpretation of the law would drive Operation Midway Blitz’s “roving patrols” of CBP and ICE agents who drove around Chicagoland communities looking for people to arrest, seemingly based on their race, appearance, language, workplace, or other racially discriminatory factors without a warrant.

These teams stopped people for questioning in an apparent effort to avoid the Fourth Amendment standards described above and to cause chaos in the targeted communities. Bovino trained CBP teams to use “consensual encounters”,<sup>ccclxxii</sup> a tactic he used in prior operations<sup>ccclxxiii</sup> and which appealed to the White House in the summer of 2025.<sup>ccclxxiv</sup> Real “consensual encounters” are voluntary interactions between law enforcement and members of the public, during which the person feels free to leave. In contrast, during Operation Midway Blitz, the CBP teams, often masked, dressed in military-style uniforms and openly carrying firearms, demanded information and gave chase to and arrested people who refused

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23. Congress has authorized ICE agents to obtain an administrative warrant from certain DHS supervising officers, rather than having to obtain a judicial warrant from a federal court. 8 CFR §241.

to answer questions. By falsely calling these interrogations “consensual encounters” in their incident reports, CBP agents avoided articulating the basis for the stop. This approach goes even further than the use of racial discriminatory factors to satisfy reasonable suspicion for an investigatory stop, a practice DHS claimed was endorsed by Justice Kavanaugh in his concurring opinion in *Noem v. Vasquez Perdomo*, No. 25A169 (U.S. Sept. 8, 2025). In the wake of that decision, DHS posted to X that “DHS law enforcement will continue to FLOOD THE ZONE in Los Angeles. This decision is a victory for the rule of law.”<sup>ccclxxv</sup>

This played out during Operation Midway Blitz, as Professor Hallett told the Commission, that “in case after case, ICE or CBP detained people first and asked questions later.”<sup>ccclxxvi</sup> The roving patrols made warrantless arrests without meeting the requirements of the Fourth Amendment or the Immigration and Nationality Act. Since 2022, ICE’s compliance with the standards for a warrantless arrest has been governed by the *Castañon Nava* consent decree which was entered in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois to address allegations that ICE agents were making warrantless arrests without assessing flight risk (the second probable cause requirement).<sup>ccclxxvii</sup> As part of the consent decree, ICE agents were required to document the facts and circumstances surrounding vehicle stops and warrantless arrests, and to identify themselves as federal immigration agents when conducting enforcement actions. ICE unilaterally stopped compliance with these requirements on June 11, 2025.<sup>ccclxxviii</sup> In addressing this action by ICE, Judge Jeffrey Cummings, stated “ICE admits that it is no longer complying with the Agreement’s requirement that its officers document probable cause of the likelihood of escape when warrantless arrests are made...”<sup>ccclxxix</sup>

DHS also rescinded a long-standing DHS policy that generally prohibited immigration enforcement agents from conducting civil immigration arrests at or near “sensitive locations.”<sup>ccclxxx</sup> Sensitive locations included courthouses, schools, healthcare facilities, places of worship, places where children gather, social services establishments, disaster/emergency response sites, wedding, funeral, religious ceremonies and parades, demonstrations and rallies.<sup>ccclxxxi</sup> Without these restrictions, ICE and CBP agents could now enter and arrest individuals anywhere in the community.

ICE leadership issued a memo on May 12, 2025, concluding that ICE officers could enter a suspect’s home to make an arrest without obtaining a warrant from a federal judge.<sup>ccclxxxii</sup> This memo contradicts prior case law finding that an administrative warrant was not sufficient to conduct an arrest in someone’s home.<sup>ccclxxxiii</sup>

Immigration agents also executed traffic stops during Operation Midway Blitz. Although DHS has not revealed how or why it was executing those traffic stops, a federal judge in the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon described the tactic used in that state: “officers surveil apartment complexes in the early morning hours, scan license plates for details about the vehicles’ owners, and wait for them to get into their vehicles.”<sup>ccclxxxiv</sup> Similar stories were shared in Illinois, with individuals being stopped while they were in or walking to their vehicles.

- A woman and her husband arrived in the United States in November 2023 and applied for asylum that same month. They both received work authorizations in late 2024 and have been working ever since – her husband as a food delivery driver. On October 23, 2025, her husband was sitting in a car with a friend near their home in the Bridgeport neighborhood when they were surrounded by several men wearing military-green uniforms. They demanded identification, and without presenting any arrest warrant or explanation, arrested them both. – Participant at Southwest Side Listening Session
- A woman and her husband (CL) entered the United States on a tourist visa and applied for asylum in 2016. They each received work authorization shortly thereafter and have worked legally while their asylum case remains pending. Their second child was born in the United States and is a U.S. citizen. On October 23, 2025, CL was retrieving something from his car outside their home in the Bridgeport neighborhood, when a gray SUV pulled in front of his car and three men wearing military-green vests, two of whom wore masks, carrying a taser and assault rifle surrounded him. They asked for identification but refused to allow CL to go back into the house to retrieve it. He was arrested, taken to Broadview and then a facility in Michigan where he remained until he was granted bond a month later – Participant at Northwest Side Listening Session

DHS undertook these policy changes to empower CBP and ICE to move beyond targeted immigration enforcement to indiscriminately round up individuals, furthering the administration’s goal of harming Chicago area communities.

## Findings

There are many examples of ICE and CBP agents stopping individual for questioning without any basis, in potential violation of their constitutional rights. Examining these incidents raise serious doubts about whether individuals who were stopped for “voluntary” questioning were in fact free to leave, and whether officers had sufficient probable cause to arrest them, potentially violating the Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable searches and seizures.

## *Lakeview October 24, 2025*

On the morning of October 24, 2025, in Chicago's Lakeview and Lincoln Park neighborhoods, several cars of CBP agents, wearing masks and without identifying badges, went on a roving patrol in the residential neighborhoods of Lakeview and Lincoln Park.<sup>24</sup> In less than an hour, the agents stopped and questioned individuals at five different locations. The Commission is not aware of any facts to indicate that agents could have believed these individuals had committed any criminal activity. Nor did agents have any reasonable suspicion, based on articulable facts, that these individuals were in the United States unlawfully. The only apparent basis for stopping these individuals was their apparent race, ethnicity or workplace. It does not appear from the circumstances of these stops that the individuals were free to leave.

- 10:48 AM: agents stopped a U.S. citizen in a Home Depot parking lot on West North Avenue. When asked if he was a U.S. citizen, the driver, who appears to be Hispanic, replied, "Of course I am." The agent then asked, "Alright, where were you born?" The driver responded, "Here." The agent then asked, "Here? Where is here?" to which the driver responded "Here bro. ... Doesn't my voice sound like I'm over here man for real." The agent responded, "Yeah, yeah." The driver then said, referring to the random stop, "That's like the most racist sh\*\* I've ever seen." The agent responded, "No, not racist, just asking you a question just like ... asking." There are no indications agents had a reasonable suspicion of criminal activity or unlawful presence in the United States and appeared to stop the individual for questioning solely based on their apparent race.
- 11:30 AM: Six agents exit vehicles to approach two construction workers outside of a restaurant near W. Diversey Parkway and N. Pine Grove Avenue. When one of the workers headed for the restaurant door upon seeing the agents, the agents ran after him, grabbed him, held pepper spray to his face, and placed him in their unmarked vehicle in handcuffs without asking any questions to the man. There is no indication that agents had a reasonable suspicion of criminal activity or unlawful presence in the United States and appeared to approach the individual for questioning solely based on their apparent race and work at a construction site. Additionally, there is no evidence that agents had sufficient probable cause to justify an arrest or that agents were justified in using pepper spray.

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24. For more information about this incident, please see the IAC Investigation Brief re Lakeview Neighborhood Discriminatory Stops and Indiscriminate Use of Tear Gas.

- 11:44 AM: agents stopped a man for questioning who was crossing a street in front of the agents' vehicle at a red light. The man, appearing to be confused, ultimately responds that he is a U.S. citizen and the agents return to their vehicle and drive away. There does not appear to be a reason for the CBP agents to stop this individual other than the individual's apparent race or ethnicity.
- 11:49 AM: Agents question a U.S. citizen unloading work tools from a commercial van on a residential street as well as another worker behind a residential fence in the yard. When the worker replies that he is a U.S. citizen, the agents return to their vehicles. Once again, there is no indication that the agents had reason to believe these individuals might be unlawfully present in the United States other than their apparent race or ethnicity.
- 11:50 AM: two cars of agents exit their vehicle and approach a group of 4 men eating lunch in front of a home covered in scaffolding. There is no evidence that the agents had any reasonable suspicion that the individuals were unlawfully present in the United States, other than their apparent race or ethnicity and the fact that they were near a construction site, that might justify an attempt to question these individuals. The men began to run away from the agents who then gave chase. Two CBP agents jumped over a locked gate and fence onto a private multi-unit residential property, chasing the men into a garage, into the backyard of the residence, and over a fence onto a private desk. They agents gave no warnings, had no documentation or warrant, never asked for any identification, and had no indication of criminal or suspicious activity or any reason to believe the individuals were unlawfully present.

## *Elgin – Ruben Pimental & Jesus Luis Acosta Gutierrez*

On November 1, 2025, CBP agents detained a U.S. citizen named Ruben Pimental outside his parents' home in Elgin, Illinois, even after Pimental told them he was a U.S. citizen.<sup>ccclxxxv</sup> Pimental had just arrived at his parents' home and was standing on the sidewalk when masked federal agents drove by in a black SUV. From inside their vehicle, the agents asked Pimental if he was a U.S. citizen. He replied yes, but two armed and masked agents in military fatigues got out of their vehicle, approached Pimental, and asked him to show proof of his citizenship. Pimental refused and stepped off the sidewalk onto the grass in front of his parents' home. Pimental and the agents argued about whether he was required to provide proof of citizenship. One of the agents pointed a taser at Pimental; when he refused to provide identification, the agent told Pimental to put his hands behind his back, pushed him to the ground, and handcuffed him. Neither the video nor witness accounts indicate Pimental made any verbal or physical threats. Pimental was placed in the back of a large black SUV, and remained in handcuffs until federal agents were allowed to examine his ID. The facts surrounding Pimental's questioning undermine any possibility that this was a "consensual encounter" as agents arrested Pimental for not providing identification even though he answered their question; similarly, there is no indication that officers could have had probable cause to believe he was in the U.S. unlawfully as he had already answered their question that he was a U.S. citizen. Pimental's mother Veronica now suffers from anxiety and panic attacks when she thinks about this incident. Any time she hears someone yelling outside or honking, she is worried. She now carries her passport with her whenever she leaves the house.

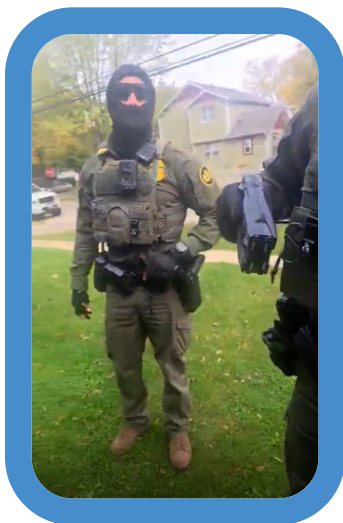


Image 34 Provided to the Commission by Veronica Pimentel

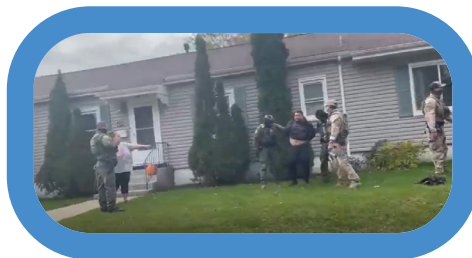


Image 35 Provided to the Commission by Veronica Pimentel

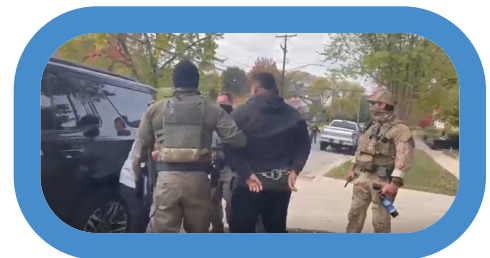


Image 36 Provided to the Commission by Veronica Pimentel

As described further in the Commission's *Investigation Brief re Federal Occupation of Elgin, Illinois*<sup>25</sup> the federal law enforcement occupation of a residential neighborhood on Maple Lane in Elgin, Illinois, on December 6, 2025, all started after federal agents attempted to pull over Jesus Luis Acosta Gutierrez, a Venezuelan national who had Temporary Protected Status and had filed an asylum application in April 2024. It is unclear whether agents had identified Gutierrez prior to stopping his vehicle or what basis agents had to stop him in the first place. DHS issued a press release calling Gutierrez a "suspected TdA gang member."<sup>ccclxxxvi</sup> Gutierrez denies any affiliation with Tren de Aragua and DHS' own documents undermine any inference that Gutierrez is a member of a violent gang. His immigration file shows that he surrendered to Customs and Border Patrol when he crossed the U.S. border, and federal agents concluded he had no criminal history and did not need to be detained pending the outcome of deportation proceedings.<sup>ccclxxxvii</sup> It seems highly unlikely that a gang member would have repeatedly notified the federal government of his presence and exact location in the U.S. by complying with the TPS program and filing an application for asylum. What seems more likely, is that federal agents identified and targeted Gutierrez solely because of his apparent Latinx race or because they ran his license plate and saw that he was from Venezuela. In an interview with Commission attorneys, Gutierrez stated that it has been devastating to have been falsely and publicly accused of being a member of Tren de Aragua.<sup>ccclxxxviii</sup> "I am not a criminal," he repeatedly stated. "I took out my social security card to pay taxes, took out my work permit, took out my license to drive. I have no crimes." He asked the IAC, "Please help me clear my name."

### ***Castañon Nava Consent Decree Violations***

Beginning with Operation Safeguard in January 2025 and continuing with Operation Midway Blitz, the *Castañon Nava*<sup>26</sup> plaintiffs documented hundreds of instances where CBP or ICE agents made warrantless arrests that may have violated federal law or the Fourth Amendment. Plaintiffs alleged that over the first two weeks of Operation Midway Blitz, federal agents had made nearly 550 arrests, approximately half of which were warrantless arrests which plaintiffs alleged likely failed to comply with the probable cause requirements.<sup>ccclxxxix</sup> By October 7, 2025, ICE itself acknowledged there could have been as many as over 1,800 violations,<sup>cccxc</sup> but by February 2026, it was believed that only 360 of those individuals still remained in ICE custody, as many individuals elected to leave the country rather than remain in detention.<sup>cccxc</sup>

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25. Available at: <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.

26. See Section 3.B and the Commission's Initial Status Report for more background on *Castañon Nava v. DHS*.

On February 27, 2026, U.S. District Court Judge Cummings released 36 individuals from ICE custody on grounds that they had been arrested without a sufficient warrant or probable cause.<sup>cccxcii</sup> That litigation continues as additional warrantless arrests are reviewed by the court. A few examples, however, illustrate a pattern that was likely much more widespread:

- "...CBP agents operating an unmarked vehicle observed three suspects (including JGT) loading garbage into a truck parked in an alley. The agents pulled up being where they were parked and exited the vehicle. The suspects stopped working, appearing nervous. An agent approached JGT and engaged in a conversation with him. JGT admitted that he was born in Venezuela...Records check confirmed that JGT's temporary protected status (TPS) was terminated... The fact that JGT appeared nervous and stopped working when the agents approached is insufficient to establish probable cause... "(internal citations omitted)<sup>cccxciii</sup>
- "...CBP agents were operating in an unmarked vehicle in Rosemont, IL when he observed a suspect (AI). AI noticed that the agents drove by and watched as he abruptly changed direction while continuing to watch the car drive by. He turned around so that the agents could get out of the car and question AI. AI voluntarily admitted that he was not a citizen or national of the U.S.... The agent ran a records check on AI, then placed him under arrest after the check indicated that he was illegally in the U.S. without proper documentation...Defendants assert that there is probable cause because the agent noticed that AI abruptly changed the direction he was walking and continued to watch the agent's car as it drove by. At most, this fact is 'merely suspicious' and it falls short of showing a 'substantial probability' that he is likely to escape as is required for probable cause... the Court finds that plaintiffs have proven by a preponderance of the evidence that defendants' agents lacked probable cause to believe that JGT was likely to escape before a warrant could be obtained for his arrest."(internal citations omitted)<sup>cccxciv</sup>
- "...CBP agents were patrolling in an unmarked vehicle in Chicago when they parked and intended to engage in a conversation with a suspect (LVS). During the agent's

attempt to begin a conversation with LVS, she began to cry and asked him not to arrest her. She stated that she was here illegally in the U.S. and that she was a citizen of Mexico. The agents then arrested LVS... Defendants assert that probable cause exists because LVS began crying when the agent approached and begged him not to arrest her and the agent indicates that she tried to flee and refused to obey instructions... The I-213's specific narrative of what occurred during the encounter does not indicate that LVS tried to flee or that she refused to obey instructions. Moreover, the fact that LVS started crying and begged not to be arrested does not support a finding of probable cause that she would be likely to flee before agents could obtain a warrant for her arrest... the Court finds that plaintiffs have proven by a preponderance of the evidence that defendants' agents lacked probable cause to believe that LVS was likely to escape before a warrant could be obtained for her arrest." (internal citations omitted)<sup>cccxcv</sup>

## The Fear of Being Racially Profiled and Stopped/Arrested was Widespread

The Commission also heard directly from individuals about experiences where they or their family members were stopped for questioning by agents while going about their lives, and their perception that it was because of their race. At the West Side Listening Session, one man from the Uptown neighborhood described being accosted by ICE agents while he was sitting down at a gas station. They asked for ID, but he was not given a chance to show it to them before they started to escalate. He felt stereotyped, embarrassed, and like he was being treated like a criminal even though he is a citizen. One woman from Mexico attended the Franklin Park listening session with her sister-in-law and uncle. Together they shared the story of her sister and another family member who were arrested on September 17, 2025, in a parking lot by masked agents without a warrant. The family could not locate her for 32 hours until she was able to make a collect phone call.

One couple shared their story with the Commission at the Franklin Park Listening Session. A woman from Honduras and her husband from Mexico live on Chicago's northside. Their two daughters were born in the United States and have many family members here. They were victims of fraud in 2016 and applied for U-Visas, which authorize crime victims to obtain legal residency. Pending the outcome of that application, they were granted work authorization. He works in landscaping and she often assists with his work when she can. On October 21, 2025, she went to help her husband with a landscaping job on a quiet street. She saw two

vehicles, one of which was blocking the street, and agents approached her and her husband. The agents, who were masked and did not identify themselves, asked for their papers, and arrested them both. They were both taken to the Broadview ICE detention facility then transported to different detention facilities. Most of the women that were transported with her were also going through the immigration process – they were not undocumented. In Indiana, she witnessed bullying and intimidation. She was not permitted to shower for three days. She was not given a bra or panties, so wore only a jumpsuit. While there, she was held in a room with 32 other women. Because she could not climb to the top bunks, she sometimes had to sleep on the floor. She remained in detention until January 2026, when she was required to pay a \$15,000 bond in order to be released. Federal agents took her REAL ID when she was arrested and she has not gotten it back. She now carries around copies of her U-VISA work authorization, but does not have a court date until 2028. She is in debt for paying the bond, has suffered a great mental trauma, lost confidence, and has nightmares of being arrested again. Her husband was released from detention in December, the same day as his immigration hearing. He does not have a further court hearing date and is unclear on the status of his own immigration case. Before their detention she and her husband were saving money to buy a home. Now they are in debt paying for her bond, and neither she or her husband have work.

Another 24-year-old participant at the Franklin Park listening session told the story of their father: “I am here today because my father was a victim of this administration’s domestic terrorism. On October 20th of 2025, he committed the crime of being Latino.” About four blocks from their home in Melrose Park, he was “ambushed by a group of men in masks... They didn’t make him aware of why they were detaining him and they never made themselves identified... He was thrown to the ground and thrown in the back of a van where they drove around the west suburbs of Chicago and drove around for 1.5 hours looking for people who looked like him. When the van was full, they took him to the Broadview Processing Center... Luckily his arrest was taking on video, recorded by a bystander. I assume someone who lived on the block recorded it...They posted it on Facebook and within minutes it had gone viral and people were sending it over to his family members...” After the family saw the video, they had to determine where the father was taken, he was never given the opportunity to make a phone call. They went to Broadview, demanding information from the agents, and he was released later that day. His shoulder was injured during the arrest. When he was released, he had no way of knowing his family was outside waiting for him; he was afraid that no one would be there to pick him up and he would have to walk home.

The Executive Director of the Indo-American Center shared stories at the Northside Listening Session of individuals being stopped on questions. On Diwali, immigration agents were patrolling up and down Devon Street, part of a vibrant South Asian community (often called “Little India”), where one man recalled being asked by agents if he was Indian. A South Asian woman also shared that she was stopped by CBP agents who asked her for ‘papers’ while delivering a DoorDash order.

The Commission heard stories of individuals being stopped for questioning in a Home Depot parking lot, while at the beach, while completing a Door Dash order, and while heading into church. Many individuals spoke about the fear that they or their family members would be targeted while going about their daily lives. At the West Side listening session, a mother of three U.S. citizens described conversations with her children: I told them that if they encounter an ICE officer, they need to identify themselves as U.S. citizens. Her children responded that the ICE agents don’t care and will target them based on how they look.

### 3.C. DHS USED PARAMILITARY TACTICS TO OCCUPY AND IMPOSE CONTROL IN CHICAGOLAND

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***“The persistent intensity of regular ICE immigration enforcement operations may very well have the intended effect of normalizing this level of violence.”***

**– United States District Judge Mustafa T. Kasubhai (D. Ore)**<sup>cccxcvi</sup>

The Commission heard expert testimony at its January 30, 2026, hearing about the ways that DHS’ tactics during Operation Midway Blitz were designed to undermine democratic legitimacy in Illinois. Professor Robert A. Pape, Director of the Chicago Project on Security and Threats, described how DHS used Operation Midway Blitz as a “testing ground for a new model of federal power – one that blurs the line between law enforcement and political control.”

As Professor Pape described, democracy requires legitimacy: the belief by the people that the state is exercising power with restraint and accountability, and a sense that the government is using force to protect the people, not itself. It is the perception by the community that dictates whether state forces are “enforcing the law” or “imposing control.” To Professor Pape, the dramatic increase in non-felony arrests by ICE and CBP during Operation Midway Blitz is important to the public’s perception of whether state force is proportionate and targeted. In other words, even if ICE and CBP had authority to arrest individuals without criminal records,

the legitimacy of the exertion of authority is undermined if the public sees those arrests as unfairly targeting certain individuals.

In Professor Pape’s expertise, four key dimensions help explain why the scale and saturation of Chicago by federal agents during Operation Blitz felt like a federal occupation and control of Chicago. And the perception of an occupation, is not just “noise” – it is the reality through which democratic legitimacy can stabilize or collapse. In one poll taken during Operation Midway Blitz (September 16-29, 2025), 54% of Chicagoans agreed with the statement that Trump wants to impose new political leadership on Chicago.<sup>cccxcvii</sup>

Dimensions of Occupation	Operation Midway Blitz
1. Scale and saturation of forces creates an atmosphere of enforcement that feels like federal control of civic space.	Sustained, multi-agency deployment across neighborhoods felt like federal immigration agents rivaled the visibility of local law enforcement.
2. Individuals infer intent of law enforcement forces from their appearance and action.	Optics of militarized tactical gear, armored vehicles, surprise residential raids and tear gas influences whether people perceive a military force as protecting them or controlling them.
3. Occupation is felt most acutely when force operates above elected local institutions and there is a feeling of a loss of local control.	Opposition from city and state leaders, lack of local consent or accountability, and court intervention only after harm occurred contributed to a sense of losing local control.
4. When enforcement disrupts everyday life, it stops feeling targeted and starts to feel collective in nature.	School attendance, business revenues, medical clinics, churches and workplaces all experienced disruption due to Operation Midway Blitz.

Operation Midway Blitz is rife with examples that support this sense of occupation. Professor Pape described how rhetoric by federal leaders also contributed to this perception. Statements by administration officials consistently framed enforcement as a moral struggle, pitted heroism against “enemies” of the state, and linked mass immigration enforcement to a national identity. In a polarized environment, moralized narratives like these amplify perceptions that force is being used to impose political control rather than enforce neutral laws.

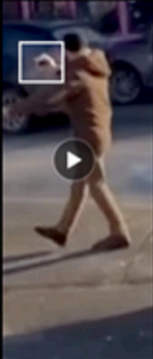


*“We should use some of these dangerous cities as training grounds for our military... We are going into Chicago very soon.”*

*– President Trump, September 30, 2025*

Research on political violence shows that when state force is framed as an existential struggle, civilian resistance becomes more likely. And Professor Pape described a predictable cycle, wherein ICE and CBP conduct surprise community raids, communities spontaneously protest those raids, and then ICE and CBP use force to suppress the opposition. Spontaneous protests like those observed during Operation Midway Blitz are not isolated incidents or evidence of criminal intent by protesters, but evidence of the public protesting the perceived illegitimacy of the ICE and CBP activities.

Along with this moralized rhetoric, statements by federal officials that conflict with the available evidence diminishes their credibility with the public. As an example, Professor Pape demonstrated how DHS claims about the shootings of Alex Pretti, Renee Goode and Marimar Martinez conflicted with the video evidence made available to the public.

**REALITY GAPS DIMINISH CREDIBILITY** CPOST

DHS Claims	Video Evidence	1	2	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bovino: “an individual <b>approached</b> U.S. Border Patrol <b>with a 9mm semiautomatic handgun</b>”</li><li>Noem: “an individual <b>arrived at the scene to inflict maximum damage</b> on individuals and to kill law enforcement.”</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>But footage shows Pretti <b>approached with a cellphone</b> [1]</li><li>Pretti <b>never reached for his weapon</b> even when pepper sprayed [2]</li><li>Pretti was <b>disarmed before</b> he was shot [3]</li></ul>			

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Image 37 Hearing Slide Provided By Professor Robert Pape

Similarly, DHS claims that they were arresting the “Worst of the Worst”, was refuted by the ICE’s own data.

**NOT THE “WORST OF THE WORST”**

**CPOST**

SECRETARY KRISTI NOEM  
Homeland Security

**ARRESTED:  
WORST OF THE  
WORST**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is highlighting the worst of worst criminal aliens arrested by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Under Secretary Noem’s leadership, the hardworking men and women of DHS and ICE are fulfilling President Trump’s promise and carrying out mass deportations - starting with the worst of the worst - including the illegal aliens you see here.

**DHS Claims**

- DHS Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin: **“This operation will target the worst of the worst criminal illegal aliens in Chicago.”**

**Evidence from ICE Data**

- But ICE’s own data, shows that **97% of people detained during Midway Blitz did not have a violent criminal conviction**, and 65% have no prior or pending criminal conviction of any kind

Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/immigration-arrests-operation-midway-blitz-few-criminal-records/>

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Image 38 Hearing Slide Provided By Professor Robert Pape

The pervasive use of tear gas and other chemical agents during Operation Midway Blitz is also suggestive of a federal effort to suppress dissent. Although federal immigration agents routinely claimed they were using chemical agents for their own safety, Dr. Rohini Haar testified to the Commission that such weapons are often used “not really to control crowds, but potentially to disperse, punish, or suppress.”<sup>cccxcviii</sup> In her research, Dr. Haar has described an increasing trend in which law enforcement has responded to public protests “in a manner that undermines fundamental human rights, including freedom of peaceful assembly and association and freedom of expression, among others - often leading to escalations in violence through unwarranted, inappropriate or disproportionate uses of force.”<sup>cccxcix</sup> This trend, she described, “is not exclusive to authoritarian governments; democratic governments have often responded with unlawful violence to lawful acts of protest.”<sup>cd</sup>

## Societal Instability During Operation Midway Blitz

The Cline Center for Advanced Social Research at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign made similar findings in its study of Operation Midway Blitz. The Center documented acts executed or ordered by federal officials during Operation Midway Blitz that had the potential to produce societal instability (“destabilizing governmental acts”).<sup>cdi</sup> The Center documented 510 destabilizing governmental acts as part of Operation Midway Blitz. They also found federal actors used some form of physical violence in 314 of those events.

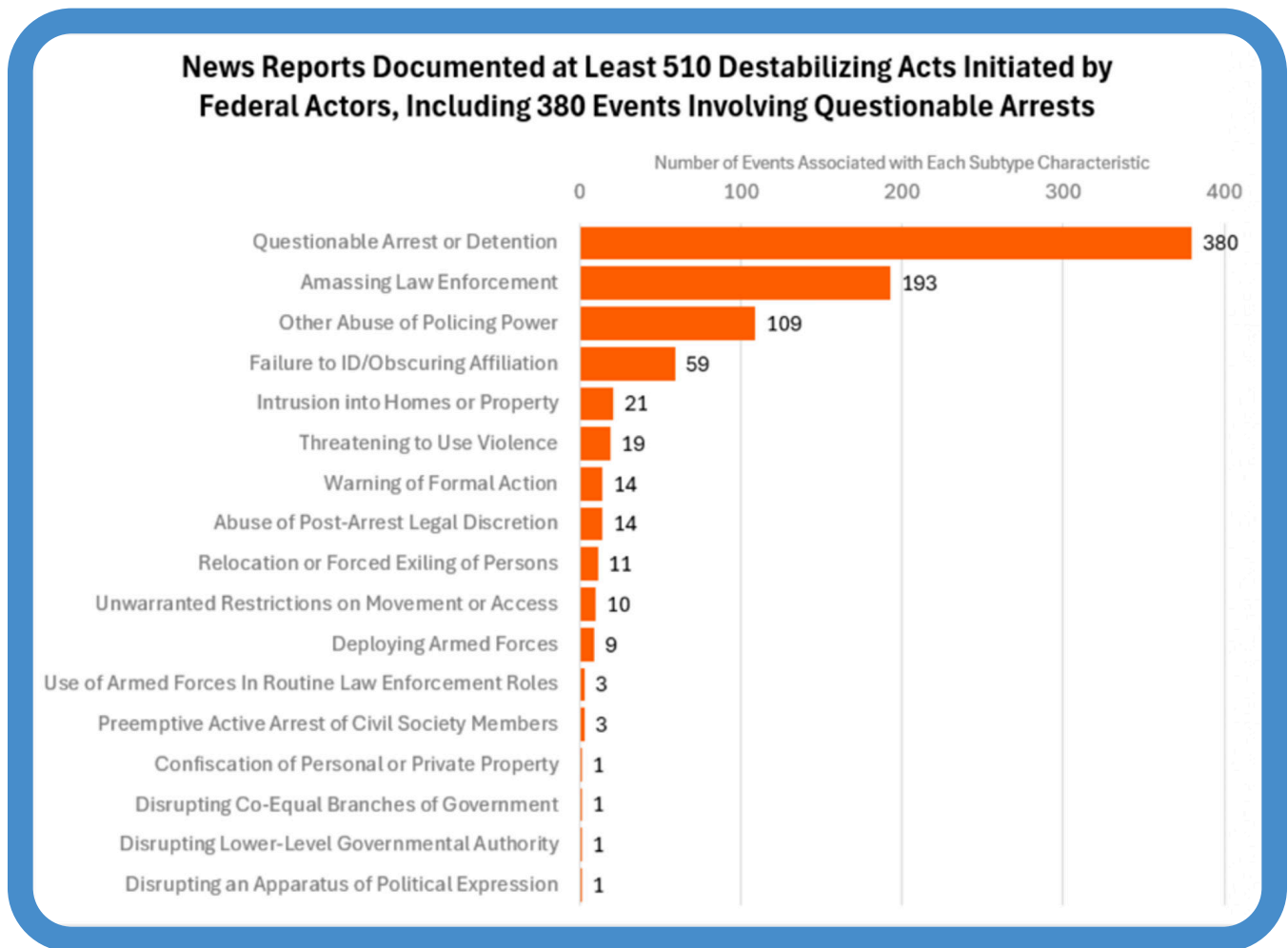
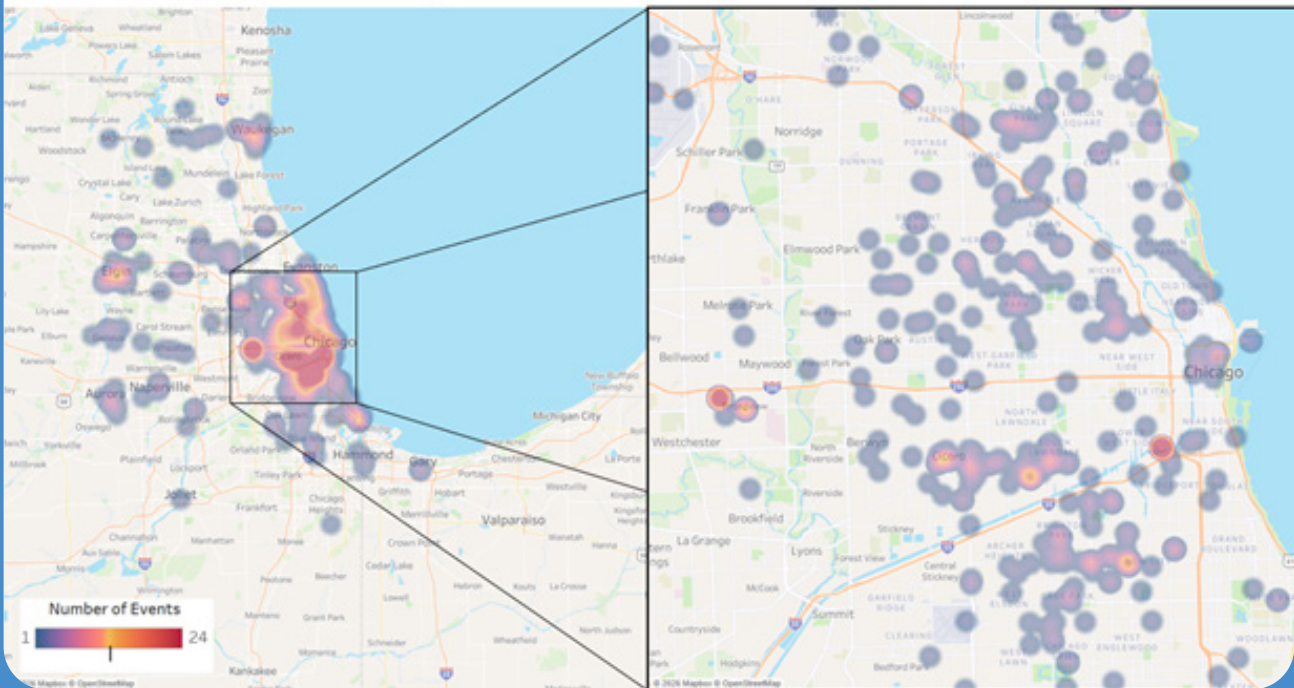


Image 39 Provided by Cline Center

These destabilizing events were documented across the Chicagoland region, yet there was a noticeable concentration in Cicero, Broadview, Albany Park, Little Village, Back of the Yards.<sup>cdii</sup>

**Destabilizing Acts by Federal Actors Were Concentrated in Broadview and Cicero As Well As in Albany Park, Little Village, Back of the Yards, and Other Neighborhoods of Western and Southern Chicago**



**Figure 1.7** showing the geographic distribution of 510 destabilizing governmental acts initiated by federal actors between September 1, 2025 and January 30, 2026. *Source: Cline Center Firewatch Project*

The Cline Center’s findings are also consistent with Professor Pape’s testimony that spontaneous protests are a predictable response to surprise community raids. The Cline Center documented at least 126 events of civilian-initiated political expression (i.e. protests) and identified no large-scale or organized forms of political violence.<sup>cdiii</sup>

## Little Village Occupation – October 22 and 23, 2025 and November 8, 2025

Little Village, or “La Villita,” is known as the “Mexico of the Midwest.”<sup>27</sup> It has an estimated 100,000 residents, most of whom identify as Latinx. With over 1,000 businesses and over 100 restaurants, the 26th Street commercial corridor in Little Village is the heartbeat of the neighborhood. It has consistently generated over \$900M in annual tax revenue for the City of Chicago, earning one of its many nicknames of the “second Magnificent Mile.” The two-mile stretch is the primary source of over 1,800 employees, supporting roughly 30,000 jobs in the area. Each year, thousands of customers from across the region flock to 26th Street to experience the diverse consumer goods and services it offers.

<sup>27</sup>. For more information, see *IAC Investigation Brief re Little Village Occupation*

This history made Little Village a prime target of some of Operation Midway Blitz's most visible and performative immigration enforcement efforts. Throughout Operation Midway Blitz, federal immigration agents, often with former Commander Gregory Bovino leading the way, conducted roving patrols, deployed tear gas, and executed racially motivated stops and warrantless arrests in Little Village.

Over the course of two days particular days – October 22 and October 23 – dozens of CBP agents occupied the streets of Little Village. CBS News Chicago reporter Victor Jacobo aptly summarized the events that occurred along the two-mile stretch of 26th Street on October 22, 2025. As he waited for the start of a press conference by community groups, Jacobo received an alert that federal agents were present in Little Village. According to Jacobo, what followed was a “miles-long, chaotic scene.”<sup>cdiv</sup>

That morning, federal agents, including CBP Commander Gregory Bovino, were seen in large numbers roaming through the Little Village neighborhood. One video, available [here](#), shows at least 10 agents, all masked except for Bovino, and many brandishing military-style weapons, engaging with bystanders who are recording their activities around 10:00 that morning.<sup>cdv</sup> As one of the agents gets in an argument with a bystander, who appears to be a Latinx female, who was recording the agents, another agent aggressively approaches her and tackles her to the ground as at least 7 agents stand nearby, many brandishing military-style rifles. Just prior to the arrest, Bovino joked with the protesters not to tell anybody he was there and saying “we’re happy.”<sup>cdvi</sup> Other incidents that morning include:

- A white SUV travelled near 26th Street and Kedzie before abruptly pulling onto a side street and chasing two men unloading merchandise from a van. Video is available [here](#).<sup>cdvii</sup>
- A black SUV blocks a vehicle and four federal agents, three of whom are brandishing weapons aimed at the vehicle, exit to apprehend the driver. Video is available [here](#).<sup>cdviii</sup>
- Nearly a dozen agents, all of whom are masked except for Bovino, at least two brandishing military-style weapons, stood on a corner while their vehicles blocked traffic after detaining at least one individual. Video is available [here](#).<sup>cdix</sup>

The agents' activities culminated that morning when federal agents drove into the parking lot of a Home Depot/Sam's Club shopping plaza located at 26th Street & Ogden Avenue. In their incident report, the agents stated that they went to the shopping plaza because a blue truck was following them, trying to “ram them” and “playing chicken.”<sup>cdx</sup> A collision then

allegedly occurred between the blue truck and another vehicle, at or near the intersection of 26th Street & Ogden. According to the federal agents' incident report, the driver of the blue truck was taken into custody around 11:09 AM.<sup>cdxi</sup> At approximately 11:15 AM, officers from the Cicero Police Department (Cicero PD) arrived on the scene.<sup>cdxii</sup> A crowd of protesters and observers had begun to form at the intersection.<sup>28</sup> At 11:26 AM, federal agents were advised that Cicero PD would "hold the scene" to allow the agents to leave the site.<sup>cdxiii</sup> At 11:32, the agents begin to leave the intersection.<sup>cdxiv</sup> As they began to leave, Federal Agent Shane Popke sprayed pepper spray out the window of one of the vehicles as it was leaving, affecting at least two protesters.<sup>cdxv</sup> According to Agent Popke's incident report, three to four "rioters" approached the vehicle, shouting obscenities in a "threatening manner" and one individual "aggressively [kicked] the side of the vehicle" where he was seated, so he rolled down the window and "delivered a short 1 second [sic] spray of MK-9 OC aimed at the rioter's face."<sup>cdxvi</sup> Of the dozens of videos available of the encounter, none shows that incident as described by Agent Popke. The two individuals who were hit with the "1 second" spray said that they were not threatening the agents and were simply standing near the federal agents' vehicle. In statements later that afternoon, Bovino claimed "I was just out with agents, just a couple of minutes ago on the streets of Chicago, and we had a little protest there in the Little Village area out of Chicago just now. And I watched our agents operate with extreme professionalism."<sup>cdxvii</sup>

The occupation resumed the next morning, October 23, 2025, and would end with another violent interaction with protesters along 26th Street. Documented events that morning include:

- At 9:03 AM, federal agents returning to the Home Depot/Sam's Club shopping plaza and stopping a U.S. citizen for questioning about the individual's immigration status.
- At 9:09 AM, federal agents abruptly stop traffic and exit their vehicles to threaten drivers with arrest for allegedly following them.
- At 9:30 AM, five vehicles of federal agents, including Bovino, blocked traffic at the intersection of 26th and Springfield Avenue. Agents exited the vehicles, including Bovino, stood in the middle of the intersection and then along the sidewalk as other agents form a barrier around him.

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28. A compilation of video is available [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYbNjWuIGs). [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel] (Oct. 22, 2025) *Chicago Protest Results in Confrontation with Border Patrol Agents, Anti-Ice Chants After Detainment*, [Video] YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYbNjWuIGs>.

- At 9:35 AM, agents, including Bovino, exit their vehicles at the intersection of 26th Street and Avers to approach a large crowd of protesters. One agent aggressively approaches the driver of a truck who is driving away, but pulls the driver out of the vehicle and throws him to the ground where he is arrested.

Bovino and federal agents then arrived at the Discount Mall shopping plaza at 27th and Sacramento around 9:50 AM. As documented in great depth in the *Chicago Headline Club* litigation and in the IAC's *Investigation Brief re Occupation of Little Village*<sup>29</sup> for the next 45 minutes, federal agents deployed tear gas, pepper balls, and flashbangs against an active, but non-violent crowd.

Commander Bovino was not finished with Little Village however. He returned again on November 8, patrolling back and forth along the 26th Street Corridor between Little Village and Cicero for four to five hours. At every stop along the way, chaos and terror followed. With Bovino at the helm, federal agents deployed tear gas, pepper balls, and pepper spray against protestors and residents, including a 1-year-old baby. They also pointed guns at photographers and bystanders, detained individuals without justification, raided businesses without warrants, and generally spread panic throughout the community. As demonstrated in earlier operations in Little Village, federal agents sought to sow fear through shows of indiscriminate force. Bovino and his squadron of federal agents continued using the same discriminatory and aggressive tactics on November 8, 2025. It was on November 8 that Pastor Matt DeMateo, who testified to the Commission, personally observed and recorded Bovino pull the pin on the cannister of a gas grenade and motion as if to throw it towards a group of people several yards away. Shortly thereafter, he came upon Rafael Veraza who had just been hit by pepper spray fired into the window of his vehicle by federal agents, hitting him and his 1-year-old daughter.

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29. Available at: <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.

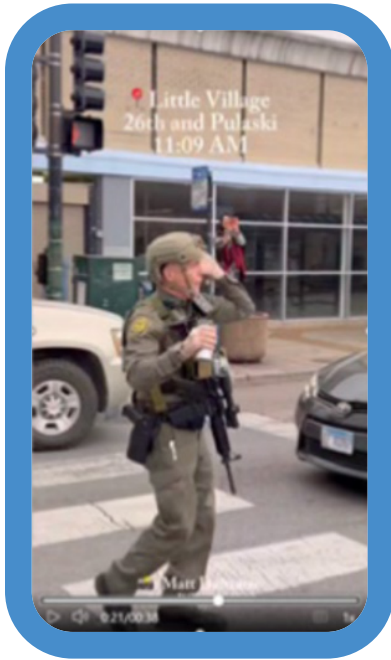


Image 40 Submitted to Commission by Matt DeMateo

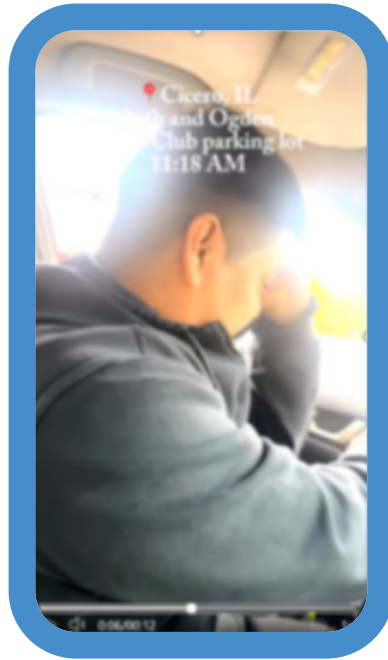


Image 41 Submitted to Commission by Matt DeMateo

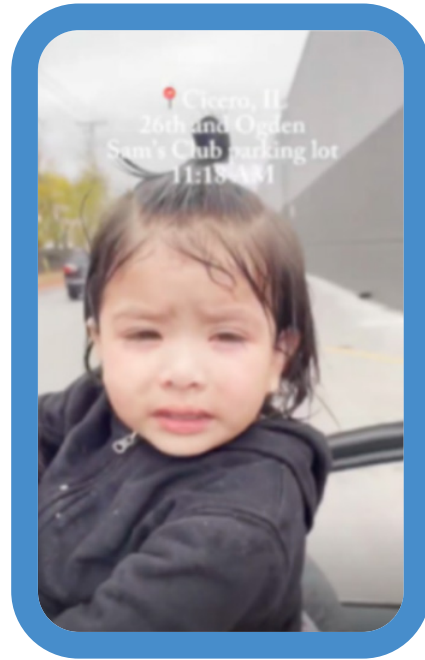


Image 42 Submitted to Commission by Matt DeMateo

Additionally, that day the Commission determined that:

- At 9:22 AM, a line of 8 vehicles of federal agents, including Bovino, pulled up outside of Carniciera y Tacquera Aquascalientes, entered the store wearing masks and carrying handguns and rifles, and attempted to arrest individuals before the owner turned them away.
- At 9:30 AM, federal agents engaged in a tense confrontation with protesters at the intersection of 26th and Kedzie.
- At 11:09 AM, federal agents again had a confrontation with protesters while approximately 10 CBP vehicles idled in the street. Matt DeMateo captures video of Bovino threatening to throw a gas cannister into a crowd (see above), and another agent deploys a chemical irritant.
- Between 11:09 and 11:30 AM, federal agents detain several people, including one U.S. citizen in the Sam's Club/Home Depot shopping plaza where protests had erupted in October.

To end their morning in Little Village, around 12:00 PM, federal agents attempted to detain an 11-year-old girl near the intersection of 23rd and Sawyer. Reports indicate that this attempt led to an altercation with a male relative, and observers began to record the federal agents. Federal agents threatened those recording them with pepper spray and tear gas.

These incidents are only a sample of what occurred in Little Village during Operation Midway Blitz, but they illustrate the pervasive presence of militarized federal immigration agents, creating an overall sense of occupation and fear.

## The Tactics Used by Federal Agents Contributed To a Sense of Occupation

**“My neighborhood was under occupation, my block was under occupation.”**

**– Elena Gormely, Roger’s Park Resident at Northside Community Listening Session**

Many of the tactics being deployed by immigration agents during Operation Midway Blitz were designed to scare citizens and non-citizens alike and are counterproductive to public safety. Deborah M. Fleischaker, a principal consultant at Blackbird Ventures, LLC, with 14 years of experience working at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, told the Commission that “What is happening in Chicago is not simply a federal policy dispute. It’s a demonstration of what occurs when immigration enforcement abandons its constraints and begins operating in ways that destabilize communities, rather than protect them.”<sup>cdxviii</sup>

ICE agents concealing their identities is a prime example of paramilitary style tactics that created a sense of occupation. As Professor Pape testified, the pervasive use of masks created a perception that the state did not want to be truthful about incidents where agents used force. In its research about destabilization of democracies, the Cline Center considers the “failure to identify as law enforcement or obscuring affiliation” as a destabilizing governmental act.<sup>cdxix</sup> According to Expert Garrett M. Graff, the use of masks that has been seen over the last year is a departure from DHS’ practice over the past two decades. And despite DHS and ICE press releases claiming that agents are wearing masks to protect themselves from harassment, one study found that this threat was largely unfounded.<sup>cdxx</sup>



Image 43 Illinois Attorney General's Office Complaint<sup>cdxxi</sup>

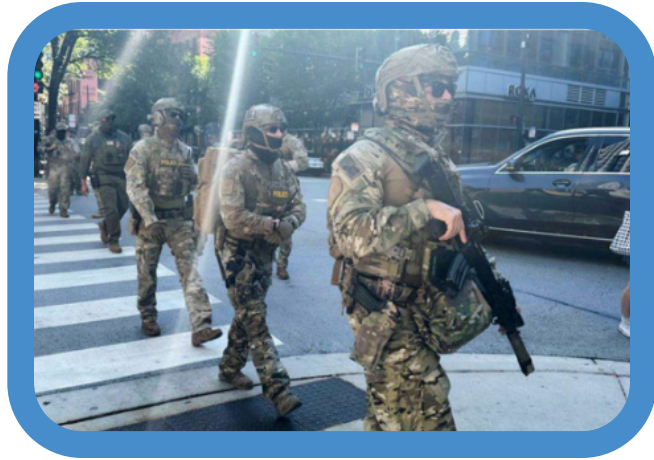


Image 44 Illinois Attorney General's Office Complaint<sup>cdxxii</sup>

Nearly every incident documented by the Commission involved agents wearing masks to conceal their identity and using unmarked vehicles. DHS agents often wore plain clothes without any visible indication of their law enforcement agency, or military fatigues. Agents also drove unmarked rental vehicles, including without any license plate. In video footage of the shooting of Marimar Martinez, agents were driving a vehicle with an Uber light in the window, which can only be assumed was another effort to conceal their identity.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the failure to activate body-worn cameras undermines transparency and accountability, which are essential to legitimate law enforcement. As Deborah Fleischaker described, “Body-worn cameras are a proven tool for advancing that transparency. They protect both officers and the public by creating a record of encounters, documenting compliance with law and policy, and resolving disputes about what occurred...It sends a clear signal that arrest quotas and community sweeps are more important.”<sup>cdxxiii</sup> As Professor Pape described, when federal force is exercised without credible oversight, transparency or restraint, legitimacy erodes, and when presidential authority loses legitimacy, escalation usually follows.<sup>cdxxiv</sup>

CBP and ICE agents also routinely used tactics to intimidate individuals who were engaged in First Amendment protected activity, like protesting or attempting to document agents’ activities. On September 18, 2025, around 6:30 a.m., one woman was in her vehicle observing several federal agents near a Burlington Coat Factory in the Humboldt park neighborhood. One of her friends was in another car nearby filming the agents’ activities when agents approached that vehicle and told them to stop recording their activities. There is no indication that the observers were interfering with any law enforcement activity. As she started to exit

30. Illinois Accountability Commission, *Investigation Brief re Brighton Park Shooting and Chemical Weapons Violence*, available at <https://ilac.illinois.gov/>.

the parking lot, she noticed several plainclothes officers and several more vehicles so decided to begin recording them herself. When the agents noticed that she was recording them, two agents exited their vehicle with their phones up to record her. One of the agents approached her vehicle and appeared to record her license plate and then approached the driver's side of the car to record her face. She said "Hi, excuse me" to the agent, who replied "have a good day" and continued to record her. After the interaction, she said she was in shock.

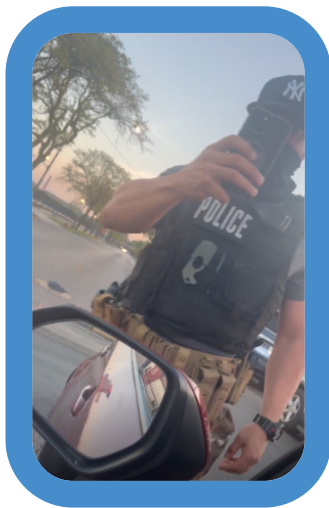


Image 45 Submitted to Commission via IAC Portal

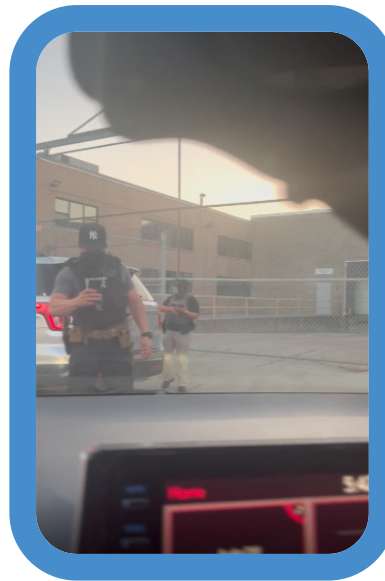


Image 46 Submitted to Commission via IAC Portal

The Commission heard numerous stories from individuals who were observing the activities of federal agents and saw federal agents record them. One woman at the Northside Listening Session said she was observing federal immigration agents in Evanston on November 7, when she saw the agents taking photos of her from the back of their vehicle: "They called me by my government name, which kind of rattled me, because how did they get that?" Another rapid responder at the West Side Listening Session said they were driving in the Chicago area suburbs behind a vehicle of federal agents unknowingly. An agent jumped out of their car and started recording her and taking pictures of her car and license plate. That same woman shared a story of a young man who was beaten badly because he was recording ICE; federal agents allegedly took him from his car, drove his car to a park, and threw the keys away.

In the narrative like on social media, they would say things like ‘protesters doing this, protesters doing that.’ I was like, ‘I’m not a protester. I’m just a community member.’ Like, it wasn’t a protest at that point.”

– Southwest Side Listening Session

The Commission also heard from a gentleman who went to a nearby medical clinic in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, after seeing a neighborhood alert of ICE activity.<sup>cdxxv</sup> He parked in the parking lot, exited his vehicle and pulled out his phone to record the agents who were standing near the entrance to the clinic. Two plain-clothed agents began approaching the gentleman with an aggressive demeanor telling him he had to leave. They also appeared to take a photograph of the man’s license plate before the man left. He described feeling intimidated by the actions of the agents. Unable to sleep that evening due to the stress of the interaction, he later went onto the app that had prompted him to go to the medical clinic and saw a new report that a drone had been sighted near his home address that night, raising suspicions about whether he had been surveilled following his interactions with agents earlier that day.

These accounts of federal agents using surveillance to intimidate observers and protesters are consistent with allegations in various lawsuits that have been filed against DHS. The Illinois Attorney General has alleged that DHS has used the Mobile Fortify application in Illinois to scan individuals’ faces and obtain their identity without their consent, including U.S. citizens in contravention to laws and policies restricting the use of face recognition technology.<sup>cdxxvi</sup> A federal lawsuit filed in Maine alleges that DHS agents have engaged in acts of intimidation, including recording and collecting biometric and license plate data, in order to chill the exercise of individuals’ First Amendment rights.<sup>cdxxvii</sup> These allegations include that DHS has amassed and maintained a government database in order to quell dissent, and that agents drove past individuals’ homes in retaliation for observing immigration enforcement activities.<sup>cdxxviii</sup> One individual has also alleged that DHS had their Facebook group shut down that had been set up to allow residents of Chicago to share information about ICE sightings.<sup>cdxxix</sup>

These intimidation tactics had a real chilling effect. Several participants at community listening sessions described fear in protesting, observing, or recording federal immigration activities. One community organizer from the Humboldt Park Neighborhood shared “I don’t know how to organize my neighbors and put them in a situation where they can be handcuffed...We are basically just targets for their content, for their commercials.”<sup>cdxxx</sup>

## Militarization

DHS also used military equipment and tactics to exert its presence during Operation Midway Blitz. In the middle of the night on September 30, 2025, approximately 300 federal law enforcement agents raided an apartment complex at 7500 S. South Shore Drive in Chicago, Illinois.<sup>31</sup> Federal agents arrived in armored trucks and rappelled onto the roof of the 130-unit, five story building from a Black Hawk military helicopter. They were masked and heavily armed with automatic weapons, flashbang grenades, and breaching tools. CBP Commander Gregory Bovino was present and personally oversaw the operation and DHS released a stylized [video](#) shortly after.<sup>cdxxxi</sup>

A camera crew, including the national cable news network NewsNation, recorded agents as they went door to door through the building, forcing their way into apartments, battering down doors and cutting out deadbolts. Agents created a chaotic, terrifying scene by pointing military-style guns at residents, pulling them from their beds, restraining them with zip ties, and marching them out of the building. At least six residents reported that agents physically struck or kicked them, and another was bit by a law enforcement canine. All of this action was undertaken with children present.

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31. For more information about this incident, please see the *IAC Investigation Brief re South Shore Apartment Raids*.

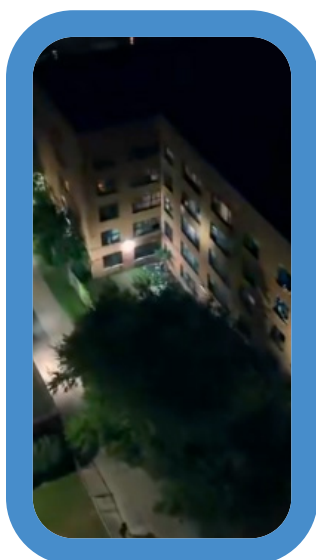


Image 47 Aerial view of apartment building with spotlights <sup>cdxxxii</sup>

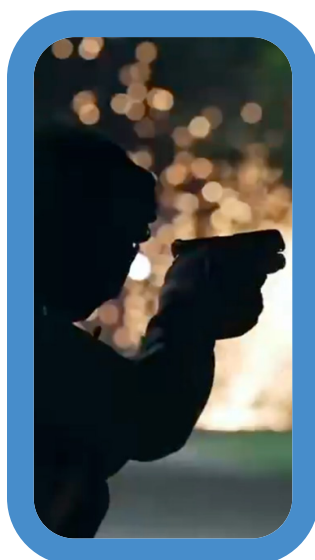


Image 48 Agent brandishing weapon outside apartment building <sup>cdxxxiii</sup>

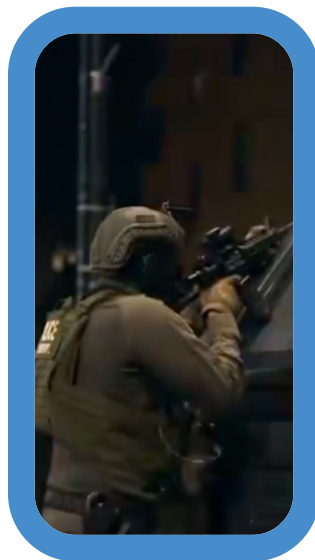


Image 49 Agent holding weapon outside apartment building <sup>cdxxxiv</sup>

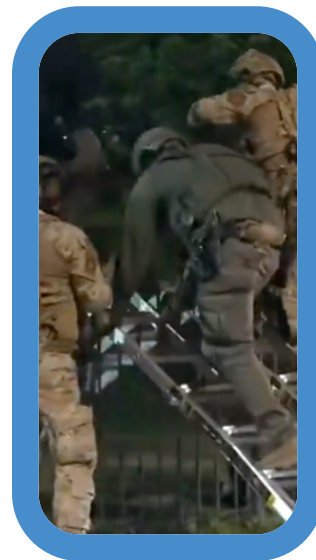


Image 50 Agents using ladder to scale a fence <sup>cdxxxv</sup>

Although DHS claimed that the operation was intended to apprehend members of the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua (TdA), and 37 people were arrested that night, DHS has not provided any information that criminal charges were filed against anyone as the result of that raid. As further explained in its *Investigation Brief re South Shore Apartment Raids*,<sup>32</sup> the Commission has determined that there is reasonable cause to believe that federal agents forcibly entered apartment units without warrants; detained individuals who were not suspected of engaging in criminal activity; arrested individuals suspected of being illegally present in the U.S. without the required flight risk assessments; made misleading statements about the raids; and may have violated agency policy by using dangerous and highly militarized tactics for the purpose of publicity.

This was not the only time during Operation Midway Blitz that it felt like military operations were underway. One witness captured photos of DHS agents carrying out an arrest at an apartment complex in Northbrook, Illinois on November 5, 2025. Agents carried rifle-style weapons and were accompanied by an armored vehicle and left an apartment door window smashed.

32. Available at: <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.



Image 60 Submitted to Commission via IAC Portal



Image 61 Submitted to Commission via IAC Portal



Image 62 Submitted to Commission via IAC Portal

On Mexican Independence Day, September 16, 2025, residents of Chippewa Drive in Elgin, Illinois, woke up to the sound of two large explosions.<sup>33</sup> Outside, they saw several armored vehicles, unmarked SUVs, and at least one military helicopter with a spotlight flying over the area.<sup>cdxxxvi</sup> Numerous masked agents, with military-grade weapons, roamed around.<sup>cdxxxvii</sup> Federal agents then used an explosive device to blast off the doors and then raided a small one-story home. Federal agents brought out several people who had been handcuffed and taken into custody. The entire operation lasted about an hour.<sup>cdxxxviii</sup> Two U.S. citizens were detained.<sup>cdxxxix</sup> Of those who were arrested, one man is a stroke victim who cannot speak.<sup>cdxli</sup>

One man was criminally charged as a result of the operation, for the crime of illegal re-entry, because he had been previously removed from the United States on three separate occasions.<sup>cdxlii</sup> When he appeared in federal court, however, United States Magistrate Judge Keri Holleb Hoatling concluded that there was no justification for detaining him.<sup>cdxliii</sup> The judge stated, "This is the shortest report I've ever seen on anybody. He has a criminal history of nothing. . . . There is no danger that I see to the community whatsoever."<sup>cdxliv</sup> The defendant was released from pretrial detention and deported within a week.<sup>cdxliv</sup> According to DHS, he was the prime target of the Chippewa Drive raid.<sup>cdxlv</sup> Of the other men who were detained, one had a 15-year-old conviction for aggravated DUI and driving without a valid license, while two others had no reported criminal background.<sup>cdxlvi</sup>

33. For more information about this incident, please see the IAC *Investigation Brief re Federal Occupation of Elgin, Illinois*, available at: <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report/investigation-briefs>.

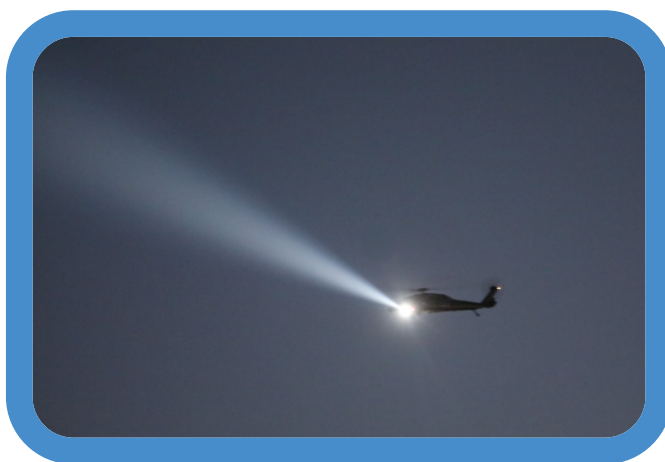


Image 54 Submitted to the Commission  
by Jim Andresen

That same day, Kristi Noem sent a message to the Mexican American community when she posted a video showing the aftermath of an explosive home raid. The video, which was posted on X, showed four individuals, in handcuffs, being escorted from a house in the dark of the night and being placed in ICE custody.<sup>cdxlvii</sup> Noem wrote: "President Trump has been clear: if politicians will not put the safety of their citizens first, this administration will. I was on the ground in Chicago today to make clear we are not backing down. Just this morning, DHS took violent offenders off the streets with arrests for assault, DUI, and felony stalking. Our work is only beginning."<sup>cdxlviii</sup>

Two days later, former DHS Secretary Kristi Noem posted a highly stylized [video](#) montage of the Chippewa Drive raid on social media.<sup>cdxlix</sup> The video showed Noem, former CBP "commander-at-large" Gregory Bovino, and footage from the helicopter, clips of the door being blasted off the home, and individuals being arrested. The video was set to a remix of Nirvana's "Smells Like Team Spirit," and included slow-motion effects and audio the detonation of explosives outside the home that was raided.<sup>cdl</sup>

### 3.D. INHUMANE DETENTION CONDITIONS AND CONFUSION COERCED INDIVIDUALS TO ABANDON IMMIGRATION CLAIMS EVEN IF THEY HAD A LEGAL PATHWAY

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According to DHS, 600,000 people were deported and an additional 1.9 million “voluntarily self-deported” in the first year of the Trump Administration.<sup>cdli</sup> From January 2025 to January 2026, the total number of detention beds available increased from 40,000 to 70,000.<sup>cdlii</sup> The Deportation Data Project has estimated that, nationwide, the number of detention beds used for people arrested within the interior of the United States more than quadrupled (4.5x) in 2025, and the number of people who were deported increased even more (5x).<sup>cdliii</sup> In the One Big Beautiful Act, signed on July 4, 2025, Congress appropriated \$170 billion to the Department of Homeland Security, nearly doubling DHS’ annual funding for the next four years, \$75 billion of which was appropriated to ICE.<sup>cdliv</sup> This surge of funding included \$45 billion to expand detention facilities.

#### A Policy Change to Increase Detention

While the increase in detention is certainly a reflection of the surge in arrests, it also was the result of a policy decision to keep more individuals in detention while their immigration cases remained pending. In July 2025, the Department of Homeland Security reinterpreted the Immigration and Nationality Act to take the position that all non-citizens who entered the United States “without inspection,” not just those arrested at the border, were subject to mandatory detention.<sup>cdlv</sup> This meant they were no longer eligible for a bond hearing before an immigration judge who could release them from detention while they awaited a decision on their removal case if they did not pose a harm or flight risk.<sup>cdlvi</sup> Although two Circuit Courts of Appeal have accepted DHS interpretation, the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals<sup>cdlvii</sup> and over 350 federal district court judges (across more than 2,400 cases) have disagreed.<sup>cdlviii</sup> The Deportation Data Project estimates that, overall the chance of release from ICE detention within 60 days decreased by 58% and the chance of deportation within those 60 days increased by 12%.<sup>cdlix</sup> For those without a criminal conviction and no prior order of removal, the release rate decreased by more than 75% and the removal rate doubled.<sup>cdlx</sup>

This reinterpretation has had a major impact on the immigration system. The Resurrection Project reported that it received 1,088 requests for representation for detained loved ones

from September to November of 2025.<sup>cdlxix</sup> As described further in Section 2.C, without access to a bond hearing, individuals filed federal habeas corpus petitions, flooding federal courts and straining immigration attorney resources.<sup>cdlxii</sup> As the number of individuals in federal immigration detention facilities increased throughout 2025, reports about poor conditions surfaced. With overcrowded conditions and limited options for relief while waiting for their immigration case to proceed, individuals chose to self-deport. The Deportation Data Project estimates that the number of individuals who agreed to voluntary departure increased 28 times in 2025.<sup>cdlxiii</sup> According to the American Immigration Council, for every person released from ICE detention pending a hearing, 14.3 were deported.<sup>cdlxiv</sup>

## Broadview Processing Center – A “De Facto” Detention Center

Many individuals arrested during Operation Midway Blitz, were initially detained at ICE’s Processing Center in Broadview, Illinois. Prior to Operation Midway Blitz, the Broadview Processing Center functioned as a “holding facility,” where individuals were processed following arrest before being transferred to a federal detention facility. DHS policy limited the amount of time individuals could be detained at processing facilities to 12 hours, until the Trump Administration issued a waiver in June 2025 allowing individuals to remain at such facilities for up to 72-hours, even though they are not equipped for long-termed detention.

A woman from Mexico said her husband was detained at Broadview where there were about 80 people sharing a toilet. He was transferred to Michigan where they shared food and were given dirty water. He became very ill. He feels that his dignity was stolen. She is afraid when she goes to work. She had to show her 11-year-old-daughter where her documentation papers are. We are living in a nightmare, we have no money, she said.

– Franklin Park Listening Session

On October 30, 2025, a class action lawsuit was filed alleging that the Broadview facility had become a de facto detention center where individuals were being kept for several days at a time.<sup>cdlxv</sup> They alleged that detainees were being held in overcrowded facilities and poor conditions:

“They are being confined at Broadview inside overcrowded holding cells containing dozens of people at a time. People are forced to attempt to sleep for days or sometimes weeks on plastic chairs or on the filthy concrete floor. They are denied sufficient food and water. They cannot shower, they are denied soap, hygiene items, and menstrual products, and they have no way to clean themselves. They are often denied a change of clothes. The temperatures are extreme and uncomfortable. Most nights are freezing cold, yet only some receive a thin foil blanket, sweater, or sweatpants to try to retain warmth. The lights are typically on all night.”<sup>cdlxvi</sup>

Judge Robert W. Gettleman issued a temporary restraining order directing ICE to improve conditions at the facility on November 5, 2025. By mid-November, as the surge of CBP and ICE officers were beginning to leave Chicago, the numbers at Broadview began to reduce as well.<sup>cdlxvii</sup>

A WBEZ and Chicago Sun-Times analysis of the first month of Operation Midway Blitz found that detainees at the Broadview detention facility were agreeing to self-deport more frequently than nearly every other detention facility.<sup>cdlxviii</sup> A report from the National Immigrant Justice Center described what may have led to these self-deportations:

“In these detention centers, people experience serious due process and human rights violations. Guards and ICE officials often hinder them from communicating with loved ones and lawyers. Some are subjected to hearings or are rapidly deported before lawyers can find them and offer counsel. ICE agents often pressure people to give up their claims and accept ‘voluntary departure’ or removal orders, despite qualifying for relief, to avoid prolonged detention in horrifying and deadly conditions.”<sup>cdlxix</sup>

One participant at the Franklin Park listening session described his own experience at Broadview where he was detained for 5 days. He is a recipient of a kidney transplant, so his wife brought his medication, which he must take every 12 hours, to Broadview. Throughout his stay we worried about access to his medicine and about being around a lot of illness with his weakened immune system. He described that there were 80 people in the room at Broadview, and people had to sleep on the floor or stand because there was not enough room. Agents

would shout and threaten to withhold food. One ICE agent told him he could sign a document, self-deport, and would be able to apply for a new visa in three days. After he refused to sign the document, he was transferred to the Montana facility in El Paso, Texas, where he was detained for 5 months and where he went seven days without his medication.

## Last Minute Transfers, Quick Deportations and Long-Term Detention

After an initial detention at Broadview, individuals were processed and transferred to long-term ICE detention facilities in other states, separating people from their families and lawyers often with little notice or information. The Commission heard the stories of many people who had been detained or had family members who were detained at Broadview who were transferred to out-of-state facility without being told where they were going or without having the opportunity to tell their family and counsel where they were being transferred. Many families didn't even know their family relatives had been arrested before they were transferred or deported.

When the Operation started, I got a call in the middle of work from an aunt and my cousins who could not find my uncle. They said they didn't know where he was, he had been missing for four days. I suggested they do a missing persons report, but they didn't want to contact the police because of their immigration status. He was detained on the way to work in Joliet. His car was abandoned for our days, and they towed it to Wacker Drive. We couldn't figure out where he was detained, even using his A#. He didn't get a phone call. By the time we had located him, he was deported within 24 hours. He had no due

process, no lawyer, he didn't have a criminal record. He owned a business, he has four kids. A great family man. He's someone you would say did everything right. And he was deported that fast.

– West Side Listening Session

Confusion about detainees' immigration cases was also a common theme among listening session participants, having to sort through complicated processes and misinformation. Many individuals spoke about having to identify and work with different lawyers after their family members were transferred to another state. "In the period following the arrest, we felt helpless as we struggled to obtain clear information regarding his status or the legal process," said a woman in written testimony to the IAC whose husband from Korea was still in detention.

Someone inside had signed the self-deportation and had not been sent to his country yet. If you went to court, they said we won't see you. Wait another two weeks. They are playing with your mind. If you have a lawyer, what they do is they move you to another detention center where there is no lawyer so they can't take care of you.

– Participant at South and Southeast Side Listening Session

Detainees at these other facilities experienced the same conditions reported at the Broadview facility. Participants at the Franklin Park listening session reported lack of access to medications, worms in food, bad water, spread of illness like COVID-19, violence by detainees and guards. One woman shared her husband's story at the Northside Listening Session; he had brain surgery and required medication for his survival. He was detained at his job, she said, and he did not receive his medication for days while he was in detention and later learned he was given the wrong medication.

Where my husband is detained (El Paso Texas), two weeks ago he called and told me they were on strike. The first meal had worms. No soap, no tooth paste. The water for showering is so hot it burns them. Three days ago they determined he had COVID. After my husband was stopped, I didn't know where he was for 15 days.

– Franklin Park Listening Session

Many participants also spoke about a further victimization of families trying to support families in detention. One woman from Guatemala at the South and Southeast Side Listening Session had a son who was detained for over 5 months. She said a bottle of water cost him \$10, a pair of pants cost \$40. Another participant described the difficulty navigating the different digital applications used by different facilities for putting money into the accounts for detainees so they could access clothing, phone calls, and toiletries. At the Franklin Park listening session, one participant shared that phone calls out of detention facilities were costing \$20 to \$50. A woman detained at a facility in Michigan who participated in South and Southeast Side listening session said she worked an 8-hour shift and was paid \$1/day. Meanwhile, she paid over \$3,000 to the commissary while she was detained. To have a video call, her family in Mexico had to pay 700 pesos (approximately \$39 USD).

One participant at the Northside listening session, a man from Mexico who has lived in Chicago for 17 years, said he lost 40 pounds over the 5 months that he was in detention. The experience made him feel like he was worthless, like he was not a person. He was eventually released with nothing in the middle of the winter. He wakes up at night thinking he is still in that place. He is afraid of darkness, cannot eat like he used to, is not the same person he was before.

## Detention Conditions “Shock the Conscience” of Federal Judiciary

The Commission’s review of caselaw demonstrates that federal judges around the country are finding unacceptable conditions at federal detention facilities, similar to those seen at Broadview. Not only are detentions lasting for weeks and months but individuals also experience extreme hardship through the day-to-day conditions of detention. As one Trump-appointed federal judge in New York opined, evidence of the condition of detainees in ICE’s holding facilities “shocks the conscience.”<sup>cdlxxx</sup> That judge described an individual held in a room with 8 other detainees with no heat, no showers, no beds, no change of clothes, and no toothbrushes, with lights remaining on at night and individuals receiving only two meals per day.<sup>cdlxxxi</sup>

A federal judge in California described similarly abhorrent conditions, finding that detainees were not provided with clean facilities, beds, mattresses, blankets, change of clothes, hygiene supplies, or adequate medical care, with some people being denied medical screenings, medication, and prompt medical attention.<sup>cdlxxxii</sup> Detainees were subjected to frigid temperatures and continuous 24-hour lighting. As the Judge in that case found, the conditions did not even meet the minimal constitutional requirements applicable to criminal detainees.<sup>cdlxxxiii</sup>

Another federal judge in West Virginia expressed his extreme concern at the detention circumstances of a husband and wife who “have been charged with no crimes, have no outstanding warrants for their arrest, are not members of dangerous gangs, and pose no asserted security threat to the United States.”<sup>cdlxxxiv</sup> The two individuals were long-time residents and workers who were previously lawfully released on their own recognizance pending adjudication of their asylum applications and who had appeared at every required proceeding.<sup>cdlxxxv</sup> Nevertheless, they were taken into custody during a routine traffic stop and detained. As the Judge described, the couple were dressed in orange jumpsuits and had been “shackled” and “restrained in heavy chains.”<sup>cdlxxxvi</sup> They had been “kept away from their children, forced to languish in detention hundreds of miles away from where they live and work” and were “confined for days alongside persons accused of or convicted of crimes.”<sup>cdlxxxvii</sup> As the Judge opined:

“This is not what civil enforcement looks like in a humane system of government under law. The Constitution does not permit such cruelty as a condition of civil enforcement. It does not permit the government to strip people of dignity simply because they lack lawful status. . . .

The structure of the Constitution assumes a government strong enough to enforce the law, but most importantly, restrained enough to remember the humanity of the people subject to it. A system confident in its authority does not need shackles and chains.” (internal quotations omitted)<sup>cdlxxviii</sup>

Being detained for even a short time under the conditions described would be intolerable, being detained in those conditions for months, without any individual determination that the detainment is justified, is unconscionable.

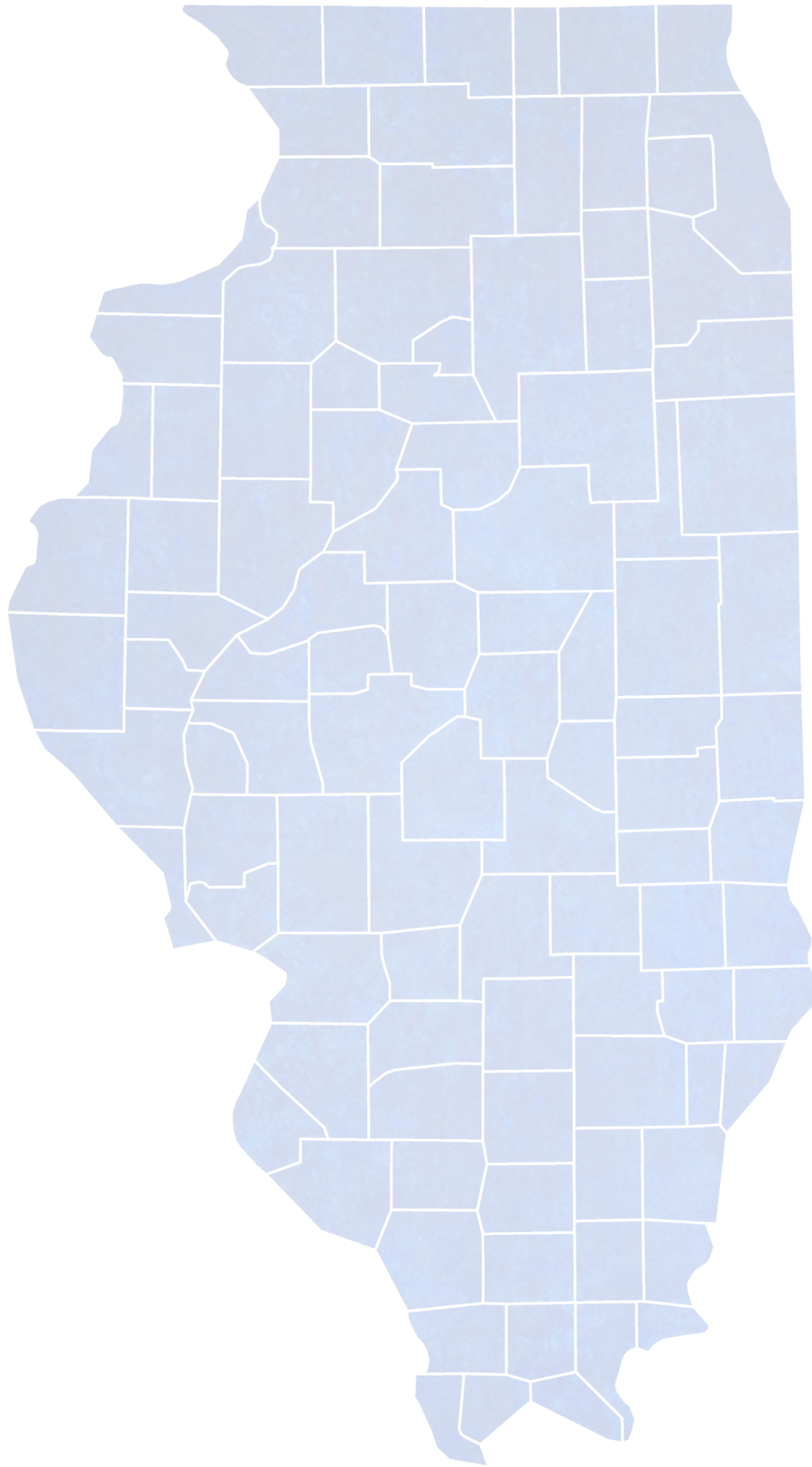
## Long-Term Impact

The impact of detention extended beyond the time that individuals were in custody, and extended to their families back home. Many families spoke about the dilemma to give up their immigration cases in order to leave custody more quickly and whether the rest of the family should leave their home in the United States along with them.

I live in Chicago and am going through a difficult process. My husband has been detained for six months in El Paso Texas (Montana facility). We are going through a lot, my children and me. I have two little ones that I have to fight for everyday. One of my children is telling me to go back. It’s hard to be separated from someone who you have spent your whole life with. And even more now that he has COVID – I don’t know what is going to happen with him. I have requested a lot of financial help because of my children. I feel that physically I am not okay: I

feel weak, I don't sleep. We came to this country legally and it has been so difficult. We waited one year and three months in Mexico. I had to work so hard to be able to come here. There is a foundation supporting us with a lawyer, but this has become very hard because every day this administration changes the rules. People have signed to leave, but he doesn't want to sign because he doesn't want to leave me. The detention center is filled with COVID and two people have been killed by beatings from the guard. There are guards that don't give them food, the food is bad, you have to drink water from the faucet and it is bad. There are people dying and their families don't even know they are dead.

– Participant at Franklin Park Listening Session



# CHAPTER 4:

## THE RESULT – DISRUPTION TO LIVES AND COMMUNITIES

“The most significant impact of ICE operations on our institutions has been fear; immediate, palpable and destabilizing.”<sup>cdlxxxix</sup>

### 4.A HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, SOCIAL WELL-BEING

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Operation Midway Blitz had a damaging impact on the physical health, mental health, and well-being of Illinois residents. Amongst immigrant and mixed-status family households, Operation Midway Blitz exacerbated and created new mental health issues, disrupted ongoing medical treatment and deterred many patients from seeking medical treatment.

The ubiquitous presence of immigrant agents during OMB disrupted the delivery of healthcare in two key ways, according to Dr. Minal Giri, a pediatrician specializing in asylum medicine and the Executive Director of the Midwest Human Rights Consortium.<sup>cdlxxx</sup>

First, the presence of ICE and CBP agents conducting enforcement activity in or around healthcare settings like hospitals, health clinics, and emergency rooms deterred families from seeking care, causing delays in medical treatment, missed immunization appointments, and worsening chronic conditions. In a survey of Chicagoland area institutions, many healthcare organizations reported an increase in clients from immigrant communities cancelling their medical appointments, not participating in community programs, or delaying getting medical care.<sup>cdlxxxi</sup>

*“We’ve seen increases in cancelled medical appointments and requests for telehealth, as immigrant families feared coming out and being exposed to enforcement actions.”*

*– NORC Survey Respondent*

How our community used to be before: visit your neighbor, go to work, now we are afraid to even go to the hospital

– Participant at Franklin Park Listening Session

In one survey conducted by Physicians for Human Rights, 84% of surveyed health care workers nationally reported a significant or moderate decrease in patient visits since the Trump Administration’s January 2025 executive orders on immigration.<sup>cdlxxxii</sup> This fear was not hypothetical: one family in Chicago was chased by immigration agents through the parking lot of a federally qualified health center in Chicago.<sup>cdlxxxiii</sup> Dr. Angela Sedeno, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist and CEO of Expanded Mental Health Services of Chicago, testified that federal agents deployed tear gas at the front door of a mental health clinic on October 3, 2025, exposing staff and clients as they came to work and therapy.<sup>cdlxxxiv</sup> Dr. Sue Haverkamp described one family that was too scared to visit the child’s neurology specialist at the hospital to refill the child’s anti-seizure medication so they found another doctor to refill the prescription.<sup>cdlxxxv</sup>

“I have had a high degree of no shows and have had to convert complex, suicidal, traumatized patients to online modalities which are less effective and take longer to establish rapport....”

– Dr. Sue Haverkamp

Second, when patients or their caregivers were detained or deported, they experienced a complete collapse of their medical treatment. Dr. Minal Giri described the difficulty of providing care to children whose parents were detained, having to discharge medically complex parents without any legal guardians available, and having to arrange emergency guardianships when their attention should be focused on the medical care of the child. Dr. Giri and her colleagues have documented incidents where parents were arrested during their child’s chemotherapy, DHS agents paraded through an emergency department with rifles, and a pregnant woman was brought into the hospital in shackles.<sup>cdlxxxvi</sup>

“When a parent is seized by ICE, a sick child’s entire care plan collapse. medications go unfilled, transportation to the hospital disappears, and insurance coverage lapses.

- Dr. Minal Giri<sup>cdlxxxvii</sup>

“Parents holding and supporting babies in the NICU is not only supporting the infants’ social-emotional development, research has shown that caregiver support improves medical progress....We are doing everything we can as a medical and psychosocial team, but nothing can replace parents being able to be with their babies.”

- Dr. Rebecca Ford-Paz<sup>cdlxxxviii</sup>

During Operation Midway Blitz, parents were faced with the unbelievable choice of disrupting their children’s medical treatment or facing a risk of illegal detention and arrest or deportation. Dr. Sue Haverkamp, Co-Chair of the Refugee and Immigrant Child Health Initiative of the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, described the family of a second grader with a congenital heart condition living in Evanston, IL, whose medical condition required ongoing specialty care and monitoring.<sup>cdlxxxix</sup> Due to fears about ICE and CBP, the father was considering relocating the family back to his country of origin, even though they might lack adequate access to medical care if they moved. The mother considered leaving the child in the U.S. with a legal guardian rather than move her medically fragile child abroad. The dilemma created profound anguish and strife in the family. The question of temporary guardianship in the event one or more caregiver is detained was a common refrain amongst clinicians. One family asked Dr. Haverkamp herself to be an emergency temporary guardian if the parents were detained, and another sought the help of an occupational therapist to become a legal guardian.

One single mother of a 15-year-old and a 20-year-old described her fear at the Franklin Park Community Listening Session that her children, who have hemophilia, would be kidnapped, beaten and denied medical attention. Another woman at the Northside Listening Session said her father was arrested by ICE while waiting for the bus on his way to his dialysis treatment. He then got sick while he was in detention and now faces barriers to treatment since he was deported to Mexico.

Operation Midway Blitz did not just prevent treatment, it created new trauma for families who may have already experienced violence and persecution prior to and during their immigration to the United States. Dr. Rebecca Ford-Paz described how forcibly displaced individuals are at increased risk for post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depressive and psychotic disorders and already experienced barriers to care without the chilling effects of Operation Midway Blitz.<sup>cdxc</sup> The forced separation of a parent and child – or even the threat of such separation – contributes to toxic stress, disrupted brain development and increased lifelong physical and mental health risks. The heightened stress and anxiety caused by the threat of separation and detention can exacerbate pre-existing mental health conditions and drive increased rates of depressions due to social isolation, inability to leave home, experiences of discrimination, and perceived social hatred. And children undergoing treatment at a hospital misinterpret the absence of their caregivers as their parents not loving them.<sup>cdxci</sup>

**“The number one thing we can do to buffer children against this type of toxic stress is to maintain that healthy caregiver attachment; that person who walks through the experiences with them, who navigates, who mitigates, who supports, and that is why we should not be separating these families.”**

**- Dr. Minal Giri<sup>cdxcii</sup>**

Dr. Sue Haverkamp shared the story of three children whose father was detained for months following alleged racial profiling and a forceful arrest.<sup>cdxciii</sup> The eldest daughter, a college student, suffered a relapse of an eating disorder, experienced significant weight loss, developed suicidal ideation, and experienced academic decline after his father’s detention.

The son with a complex medical need, began experiencing increased anxiety and refused to leave their home due to a fear that his mother would disappear as well. And the youngest daughter refused to go to school, experienced a recurrence of chronic pain, and started to exhibit behaviors of self-harm. When the father was released, without advance notice, he required his own immediate hospitalization.

Detention is causing further harms to individuals while they are in detention. Through the Midwest Human Right Consortium's referral network, Dr. Minal Giri oversees a referral network for forensic evaluation requests from attorneys for clients who are seeking humanitarian protection. These requests are more urgent and complex and are overwhelming referral systems. She has observed that those individuals with a history of trauma are further deteriorating while they are in federal immigration detention without medication, without treatment, and without their families. Her organization is seeing increased requests from lawyers to urgently document the conditions of their clients in order to secure their release from detention.

Detention also impacts the family of those who are held in custody. Children of those detained, including children who are themselves U.S. citizens, are experiencing anxiety, depression, sleep disturbance, regression and difficulties in school.

**“In session, children presented with hypervigilance and many reported nightmares, persistent worry about their parents’ safety, and fears of being followed.”**

**- Dr. Rebecca Ford-Paz<sup>cdxciv</sup>**

Dr. Ford-Paz, Dr. Haverkamp, and Dr. Giri each shared that many patients and clinicians were fearful to provide statements to the Commission for fear of retaliation by the federal government and were only willing to share their stories through others. They also shared that many healthcare institutions were reluctant to document and share stories about the disruption to medical care caused by immigration enforcement due to the fear of retaliation by the federal government.

Dr. Aimee Hilado, who coordinates trauma-informed clinical supports through the Coalition for Immigrant Mental Health (CIMH), shared with the Commission that clinical system themselves

have been strained by the cascading effects of enforcement. She shared that healthcare providers across CIMH's network report that standard clinical protocols are inadequate for the scale and complexity of enforcement-related trauma. Clinicians have had to rapidly adapt their practice, converting complex cases to telehealth despite its limitations for trauma work, navigating high no-show rates driven by fear of travel, and treating patients in survival mode.

In NORC's survey of Chicago area institutions, many organizational leaders expressed concern about the mental and emotional impact of Operation Midway Blitz on not just immigrant communities, but the staff who serves these communities.<sup>34</sup> They described that employees who shared cultural backgrounds with immigrants experienced fear and trauma due to the presence of ICE in their communities and workplace, which in turn impacted their workplace attendance and wellbeing.

***“Staff who live in some of the most heavily... had a dense, heavy federal enforcement present, those folks didn’t feel safe coming to work. It took a mental and emotional toll.”***  
– NORC Survey respondent

## 4.B EDUCATION & YOUTH STABILITY

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Approximately 18.3 million U.S. children (26% of all children under age 18) lived with at least one immigrant parent in 2024.<sup>cdxcv</sup> In 2023, approximately 4.6 million of children had a parent without lawful immigration status.<sup>cdxcvi</sup> One study from 2014 estimated that 145,000 Illinois families with children had at least one parent without lawful immigration status.<sup>cdxcvii</sup> Children in immigrant families live with persistent threat of their family members' arrest, detention or deportation.<sup>cdxcviii</sup> Operation Midway Blitz heightened that threat and had a noticeable impact on children.

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34. National Opinion Research Center (NORC), *How Federal Immigration Enforcement is Shaping Immigrant-Serving Organizations in Illinois*, (Apr. 7, 2026).

When I go out to work, I look out the window to decide if I should. When I go, I tell my children I hope to come back. I pray I can come back because I don't know what will happen to them if I don't.

– Participant at Franklin Park Listening Session

Federal agents have engaged in enforcement activity, including the deployment of chemical irritants in the vicinity of schools and in the presence of children. On October 3, 2025, federal agents tossed a tear gas cannister in front of Funston Elementary School in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood.<sup>cdxcix</sup> As described by Juliet de Jesus Alejandre, Executive Director of Palenque LSNA, this attack happened on a school day while kindergartners and first graders were out on recess on a sunny day.

“The presence of federal agents outside was the most dangerous day my students have ever faced at school.”

– Teacher at Funston Elementary School<sup>d</sup>

As parents feared for the safety of themselves and their children, attendance rates at Chicago Public Schools dropped after the announcement of Operation Midway Blitz. Attendance rates across the district dropped by 1.25% (more than double the drop seen in prior years), and communities with large immigrant or Latino populations saw even higher attendance drops.<sup>di</sup> In one survey, 57% of educators reported that they were worried about ICE detaining themselves, a child or a school employee at their school.<sup>dii</sup> Juliet de Jesus Alejandre shared the story of one father who “could not bring himself to allow his freshman son enrolled at our local high school to attend school for almost the entire period of the Midway Blitz Operation.”<sup>diii</sup>

“Our teachers stood in classrooms where children were absent for weeks. We shifted operations. We cancelled events. We changed how we exist.”

- Testimony of Seth Lavin

Children’s distress response systems develop in response to their perception of whether the world feels safe or dangerous, particularly their sense of whether their caregivers can protect them.<sup>div</sup> When a child repeatedly feels the risk that their caregiver could disappear, it destabilizes their world. The NORC survey of Chicago-area institutions echoed this point. Community organization leaders emphasized that anxiety of immigration enforcement extends into and beyond community programming, classrooms, and homes. Leaders noted that young people exhibited subtle changes in behavior, concentration, or health that indicated deep levels of distress. Fears of how this deep sense of distress and toll on children’s bodies and minds also bring about an anticipated fear of the long-lasting impacts of these traumas.

“You could try to tell a child who’s afraid to come to school [that] it’s just specific targeted people. But we know that wasn’t true. You could say they won’t come after grandparents or kids or people dropping children off at school, but they did. So, what do you tell a mother who’s afraid to step on the sidewalk? What do you tell somebody who holds their breath each time a car turns down the street? What does it feel like for your child to ask who care for them if you are taken?”

- Testimony of Seth Lavin

“The hardest part of my day is answering my daughter’s questions at home due to what she hears at school. Reassuring her that she is safe is something a mother will do.... When she has to be transported somewhere else for after care, I think to myself, will everything be okay?”

– Public Comment of Kara Cortez  
at Feb. 24 Hearing

One 2010 study by the Urban Institute found that children of parents who were detained in a workplace raid experienced severe challenges, including family separation and economic hardship, that contributed to long-term adverse behavioral changes.<sup>dv</sup> Those effects were felt even when the separation from a caregiver was temporary. Parents reported that younger children had difficulties sleeping and eating, often cried and clung to their parents, while older children became aggressive and withdrawn.

One participant at the Northside Community Listening Session said that her 11-year-old daughter, who is a U.S. citizen, spent her entire summer inside because she is worried her mom will be taken. One day when ICE was near her daughter’s school, she called and spoke with her daughter who was crying and terrified. The mother was put in an impossible situation, because she could not go pick her up out of fear of being taken.

The NORC survey of Chicago area institutions also revealed the ways that the trauma of family separation manifests in increased community fear, anxiety and withdrawn public presence.<sup>dvi</sup> Leaders of these organizations observed families choosing isolation over the risk of exposure by avoiding their workplaces and picking their kids up from school, and delaying important visits to health facilities.

*“In our after-school program, we have children [who] experienced anxiety attacks. When parents come late for pick up children started crying saying ‘La Migra ya se los llevo’ (Migra took them).”*

*– NORC Survey Respondent*

Even if they did not directly know someone who was arrested or experienced violence by federal agents, many children were exposed to the violence of Operation Midway Blitz through news coverage, social media, and word of mouth. When children see coverage of traumatic events on social media, they have trouble differentiating between what has happened previously and what is currently happening.<sup>dvii</sup> As social media continues to cover the horrific events of OMB and other events around the country, children interpret those events as happening all day every day.

The kids are distracted at school because they are worried about their parents being taken. I have family members who are living in fear that they can be taken away. It’s effecting me in school. I feel distracted and not as focused as I used to be. Two months ago when there was huge activity in Melrose park, all members of the community didn’t want to be taken in. In school, many are afraid their parents will be taken. It’s horrible because no child or adult should live in fear. When there’s a lot of activity my parents

can't go outside to go to work because they will be stopped when driving. It's horrible. As a young person I feel sad. We shouldn't live a life in fear, we should live in joy as we work towards a better life and future.

– Student participant at Franklin Park Listening Session

Seth Lavin, the Principal of Brentano Math & Science Academy, relayed the story of a third-grade student who had stopped eating lunch because he was afraid to enter his code into the lunch machine because he was afraid that ICE would know where he or his family was.<sup>dviii</sup>

“The tactics used have caused pervasive fear and terror that no place is safe and no one is safe... These are concerns expressed by second graders at one of our local schools in reference to violence inflicted by ICE and CBP.”

– Public comment of Dr. Angela Sedeno at Feb. 24 hearing

Older students may also be 'parentified' when their caregivers are unable to take care of their usual responsibilities, either because they are in detention or because they withdraw from the public due to fear of immigration enforcement. Juliet de Jesus Alejandre described how high schoolers in Palenque LSNA's youth summer jobs were sharing grocery buying tips to help their friends who had to buy food for their families. She also shared the story of one thirteen-year-old daughter having to walk her toddler sibling to developmental therapy sessions. Despite the strength and courage it takes for high school and middle school students to step into these types of responsibilities, it also creates immense pressure and can be associated with higher levels of risky behaviors and less-than health coping mechanisms.<sup>dix</sup>

My son's friend, his mom passed away last year and that same year his dad was arrested. He has a brother with autism. He is 18 – what will he be able to do to take care of his brother? This is impacting the mind and hearts of our youth.

– Franklin Park Listening Session

“Focus is affected, and there [are] more complaints about tummy aches and headaches and the energy just being down.”

– Northwest side teacher<sup>dx</sup>

“I can only imagine that she could not fully exhale until both of her babies made it back home each time.”

– Testimony of Juliet de Jesus Alejandre

The repeated negativity that immigrant children have experienced during OMB is likely impacting how immigrant children view their place in this world. As Mariana Souto-Manning, President of the Erikson Institute, described to the Commission, children are learning that their identity must be documented defensively: some belong here, while others will have their belonging questioned. Children are being told that they do not belong here, and neither do their families.

“I know the kind of future this federal administration wants – it's one where children like ours no longer live here in the U.S.”

– Testimony of Juliet de Jesus Alejandre

The impact also extends to the educators and staff providing support to children. One participant at the Southwest Side Listening Session described a observing a high school principal console a student whose father had just been detained, a counselor waiting outside for support. The student just kept asking ‘Why?’ and asking about her mother and siblings as the counselor listened and tried to help find someone to pick her up. When the participant expressed admiration to the principal for how they handled the conversation, he replied “After the 20th time, one learns.”

“The counselors need counselors because of all the stories they’re hearing, having kids crying in their office.”

– Participant at Southwest Side Listening Session

## 4.C PUBLIC SAFETY & COMMUNITY TRUST

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A consistent narrative from federal administration officials was that the objective of Operation Midway Blitz was to improve public safety in Chicago and honor past victims of violence by removing criminals from the streets. Data refutes that claim, as Chicago’s violent crime rates were already seeing historic declines leading into the fall of 2025.

Prior to Operation Midway Blitz, Chicago was already experiencing significant and sustained downward trends in crime. From January to August of 2025, the number of homicides had dropped over 30%, shootings declined 36%, and all violent crimes dropped nearly 23%.<sup>dxii</sup> The summer of 2025 saw the fewest number of homicides in a decade: 123 in the summer of 2025, compared with 274 in 2021 and 242 in 2016.<sup>dxii</sup> This pattern was also true in those Chicago communities that were targeted by Operation Midway Blitz. Compared to 2024, Little Village, Humboldt Park, and Brighton Park also experienced reductions in the number of shooting victims.<sup>dxiii</sup>

These improvements in Chicago’s violent crime rates should be attributed to significant work by local government and community leaders, not Operation Midway Blitz. City of Chicago Deputy Mayor Garien Gatewood testified about the work of the People’s Plan for Community Safety – an initiative by Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson to interrupt and address acute

violence, focusing on high-promise populations, and to eradicate the root causes of harm, focusing on high-opportunity neighborhoods.<sup>dxiv</sup> Deputy Mayor Gatewood described how these efforts, grounded in data, strengthened the citywide violence intervention ecosystem, expanded crisis response and behavioral health supports, and increased youth employment, and produced real outcomes and safer neighborhoods. Programs like Metropolitan Peace Initiatives have relied on evidence-informed non-punitive public health approaches to reduce gun violence in Chicago, providing services that engage individuals with the highest likelihood of being involved in gun violence and seen demonstrable results.

Dr. Kathryn Bocanegra, PhD, LCSW, an expert in public safety research at the University of Illinois Chicago, testified about the distinction between different safety models. An enforcement safety model focuses on removal and deterrence, measures success through numbers of arrests and detention, and operates by expanding enforcement authority. In contrast, a holistic safety model focuses on preventive and reducing risk, measures impact on community safety and well-being, and integrates public health, behavioral health, restorative and violence reduction strategies.<sup>dxv</sup> She further described how important it is to consider how survivors of crime construe their safety after harm has occurred, and in Latino communities that experience trauma from firearm violence at disproportionate rates, reports confirm widespread fear and terror, rather than a feeling of safety.

**“The activities of the federal immigration enforcement expansion in Illinois is producing contrary effects to what best serves victims of violence. It is destabilizing communities...and producing more victimization.”**

**– Testimony of Dr. Bocanegra**

Research on immigrant community engagement offers a framework for understanding why enforcement-heavy approaches undermine rather than build safety. Communities experiencing what scholars call “antecedent threat” (a durable context of exclusion and risk from prior experiences with policing, criminal-legal systems, immigration enforcement, and other public institutions) do not simply withdraw from government when enforcement intensifies. Instead, they engage in a careful process of evaluating which government programs can meet essential needs while minimizing exposure to risk.

When enforcement operations like Operation Midway Blitz occur, residents interpret this as a signal that government contact is dangerous, and they adjust their engagement accordingly. Families continuously assess signals from needed public programs (how information is collected, where services are delivered, who administers them) to determine whether participation appears safe. This means that enforcement operations create ripple effects far beyond immigration authorities themselves. When federal agents conduct visible, militarized operations in residential neighborhoods, near schools, and around healthcare facilities, residents withdraw not just from immigration systems but also from police, hospitals, schools, and other public institutions.

Even citizens and green card holders don't want to apply for benefits. Out of fear, they are not applying.

– Participant at Northside Listening Session

So now we are scared to be at stores, lost the freedom to go outside. The issue is our lives have changed: home to work, work to home. I don't feel safe anymore like I used to. In Melrose Park, there is a pool and park and now it is empty. People are stopping to go to churches because they said they could now enter churches to take us. We hope we can overcome this fear.

– Participant at Franklin Park Listening Session

"...a dad [dropped] off his child at our center, and then driving off, [noticed] that he was being followed. Eventually, people came out and apprehended him, and it was documented...So

that's only half the story because what happens next is what people that don't have the attention span to understand. What happens to that individual? What happens to that truck? What happens to that child? What happens to that person's partner?"

– NORC Survey Respondent

This withdrawal makes communities less safe, not more. One Senegalese man, now a U.S. citizen living in Chicago, shared at the South and Southeast Side Listening Session that he felt unsafe here for the first time in 25 years. It reduces crime reporting and witness cooperation, disrupts healthcare access and preventive care, fractures the social infrastructure that prevents violence, and erodes the very community ties that support recovery from harm. The impacts documented in this report (declining school attendance, reduced healthcare utilization, business closures, reluctance to report crimes) are not separate problems but interconnected manifestations of how enforcement reshapes community members' assessment of whether engaging with any institution is worth the risk. Crucially, these patterns persist long after enforcement activity ends because the signals sent by militarized operations are durable. Rebuilding engagement requires more than messaging or outreach campaigns. It requires changing the structural signals embedded in policy design itself.

One participant at the Franklin Park listening session, a woman from Colombia, said that before Operation Midway Blitz, she felt immigrants had safety, her life was happy and she shared life with other families. She and her three children went to stores and parks, attended children's sporting events, and went to school and took English classes. After Operation Midway Blitz, she is afraid for her children. Her husband is currently

in a detention center in Michigan. She has had to hide several times, her children with her. Her children have witnessed officers arresting immigrant men. She suffers from panic attacks and worries that her children should not see their mother in crisis. We were so happy, she said. Children don't deserve this.

DHS also diverted essential federal law enforcement resources away from fighting gun violence in Chicago in order to support immigration enforcement. Deputy Mayor Gatewood testified that the collaboration between the Chicago Police Department and federal partners at the ATF through the Crime Gun Intelligence Center slowed down as ATF agents were deployed to support Operation Midway Blitz instead. In focusing on enforcement, rather than the root causes of gun violence, DHS diverted federal resources to immigration enforcement disrupted the important collaboration to remove guns from Chicago's streets.

“It became clear to me that the presence of ICE in our community; particularly during Operations like ‘Midway Blitz’ did not reflect a mission of safety or protection. Instead, it instilled fear.”

– Will County Community Listening Session

Operation Midway Blitz also fractured community relationships with law enforcement. As Dr. Bocanegra described, when survivors of violence anticipate negative collateral consequences (like risk of deportation) to engaging with law enforcement, this affects their reporting of crimes, witness participation, and long-term recovery, which all negatively influence the public safety outcomes that were the supposed intent in the first place.<sup>dxxvi</sup>

“When federal immigration enforcement operates unlawfully, the trust between community and all type of law enforcement is affected. We saw a direct impact to the years of progress we have made building trust between community and CPD.”

My grandson, who is 9, he sits down and says “grandma, I’m watching out for the police so they don’t take you.”

– Participant at Franklin Park Listening Session

Domonique McCord, Chief Program Officer at Metropolitan Peace Initiatives, watched the communities she supports “shrink into themselves.” Metropolitan Peace Initiatives is now having to do the work to return trust to communities that were targeted by Operation Midway Blitz. They saw how Operation Midway Blitz deepened the wounds of trauma and fear of those already at highest risk of experiencing gun violence.

“The sense of normalcy, security and trust has been broken, but we are here to support and restore.”

– Testimony of Domonique McCord

## 4.D ECONOMIC & HOUSEHOLD STABILITY

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Chicago is home to over 12,000 Latino-owned businesses, a number which increased by 17% from 2023 to 2024.<sup>dxvii</sup> Many of these businesses directly felt the impact of Operation Midway Blitz. As described by The Robinson Collective in a report documenting the impacts of Operation Midway Blitz, “Small business owners reported a sustained drop in foot traffic and in-store transactions that threatened their already fragile margins. In addition, key hiring

stalled and traditionally consistent, loyal employees disappeared.<sup>dxxviii</sup> One owner of several businesses in the West Loop and Uptown neighborhoods compared the impact of Operation Midway Blitz to the hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposition of tariffs in 2025.

“It felt like one of those same, kind of points. May not as painful as the COVID, but certainly, like... the unpredictability, the unstableness of your economic environment, the having to be a different type of leader to your team. All those things weighed heavily.”

– The Robinson Collective Report

Because of Operation Midway Blitz, some business owners cancelled planned openings and indefinitely postponed business expansions.<sup>dxxix</sup> Businesses locked their doors and refused to open them to anyone who might be an ICE or CBP agents.

When someone was snatched a North Halsted bar, all of the street vendors began scrambling. There is now only one taco stand left. Uber drivers have had to stop driving Uber. Many gentleman stopped going to work.

– Participant Northside Community Listening Session

The Commission heard testimony about the impact of Operation Midway Blitz on one of the city’s most successful commercial areas: Little Village’s 26th Street Corridor. This vibrant commercial area generates the highest tax revenues outside of the Michigan Mile, bringing in millions of dollars in sales tax to city and state budgets. Yet many shops had worse sales during Operation Midway Blitz than during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>dxxx</sup>

Domonique McCord shared her experience walking past 26th Street on her way to the Mexican Independence Day Parade, which was “eerily clear.” On a morning when people would be headed to the grocery store or church, she felt like she was walking through a ghost town. City Clerk Anna Valencia described seeing empty stores, restaurants, and gathering places when she went to speak with small business owners in Little Village in November 2025.

Marcela Rodriguez, Executive Director of Enlace Chicago, shared the experience of over 130 businesses in Little Village that reported immediate and sustained disruptions to their operations during period of enforcement activity. Businesses kept their doors locked whenever ICE and CBP were present, closed on days with zero foot traffic, reduced hours or closed due to staffing shortages, and cut employee hours due to revenue shortfalls. Seventy businesses reported sales declines of 40-70%, with some businesses reporting days with 100% loss of sales, and reductions continuing for 2-5 months. Tourism and destination-based commerce also suffered. Quinceañera dress retailers, that often have 60% of customers travelling from out of state, reported large numbers of appointment cancellations for dress fittings and sharp declines in sales.

“For small, family-owned businesses operating on thin margins, a sustained 40-70% revenue decline is not temporary hardship, it is existential.”

– Testimony of Marcela Rodriguez

Amidst this impact, the The Robinson Collective noted that small businesses, particularly along the 26th Street Corridor, “emerged as active and deliberate agents of community protection, assuming informal but consequential roles in shielding their patrons, employees, and neighbors from the reach of federal immigration enforcement.”<sup>dxxi</sup> As their employees, customers, and neighbors retreated, these small business owners helped transport their employees to and from work, hired more security guards to patrol their businesses, and provided space and resources for employees to bring their children to work who were afraid to leave them at home.

Unlike the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to governmental financial supports programs, Rodriguez and Valencia both noted that no consistent relief programs exist for businesses impacted by Operation Midway Blitz. To support these businesses, Enlace Chicago distributed

\$264,000 in direct financial assistance. City Clerk Valencia also noted that underlying infrastructure issues compounded the new problems brought on by Operation Midway Blitz. For example, many businesses did not have the ability to offer delivery or gift cards. Enlace Chicago noted this problem as well when it purchased gift cards from local grocery stores; only two of the six grocery stores it approached were capable of issuing gift cards.

**“Communities should not be forced to choose between public safety and economic survival. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that stability, dignity, and economic security are protected for all Illinois residents.”**

**– Testimony of Marcela Rodriguez**

**“When people are not able to go into work or shop at stores for fear of being picked up by ICE, they cannot participate in our economy.”**

**– Testimony of Anna Valencia, Chicago City Clerk**

The impact of Operation Midway Blitz was not limited to businesses in Little Village or other high immigrant population neighborhoods. Michael Salvatore, owner of Heritage Hospitality Group, operates businesses in areas of the city not directly targeted by immigration enforcement activity. Yet his employees were fearful to come to work or had to stay home and care for family members. He described employees who could not take public transportation because they were scared that ICE was camping out at train stations. His businesses shifted their operations to help staff feel safe; established protocols in the event of an immigration raid; made sure streets were clear when cooks left at the end of their shifts; and there were days when they did not have enough manpower to operate.

“The structural vulnerabilities this moment exposed in our neighborhood economies are profound. But the lasting instability created for our families and workers is something we are still feeling today.”

– Testimony of Michael Salvatore

“We had to establish unprecedented policies that kept our building and our staff safe, lockdown procedures that seem outside of what would be the norm for any organization.”

– Public Comment of Veronica Ortiz, Senior Director of Community Wellness, Enlace Chicago

Organizations providing services to immigrant communities also experienced barriers and disruptions during Operation Midway Blitz.<sup>dxxii</sup> In a survey of 54 organizations serving immigrant communities in the Chicago area conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) on behalf of the Commission, community leaders reported that some service programs experienced their lowest program participation since the COVID-19 pandemic. Philanthropic leaders reported having to exercise caution with providing funding due to the legal risks of funding immigration related activities; organizations described uncertain funding landscapes due to federal enforcement; and leaders reported efforts to share protective practices with community members about what to do if they encountered federal immigration enforcement.

“We created protocols to keep staff safe from unauthorized agents and trained staff on human and legal rights.”

– NORC Survey Respondent

In the survey, nearly 75% of organizations reported having to change their operations to shift their services in order to reach people where they felt safest. For example, organizations providing health care services described expanding telehealth and virtual visits, bringing food and medications directly to clients homes, and strengthening their systems to help clients stay connected to services without risking their safety. Organizations also reported establishing systems to monitor the impacts of immigration enforcement on their clients and service delivery.

“We converted services to telehealth and provided transportation alternatives like Uber for those wary of public transit.”

– NORC Survey Respondent

Household instability and food insecurity in Chicago also increased as households struggled during Operation Midway Blitz. Many families recede from public life when they are fearful of immigration enforcement. Even before federal immigration enforcement surges began, many immigrant families reported they were worried about driving a car, going to work, or attending community events because they did not want to draw attention to themselves or their family members.<sup>dxxiii</sup>

My community before was peaceful. We could go to the park to play soccer, share with others there. But no one is there. We could go to the library, to the movie theater, but now the streets are empty. And if we needed to find work, we would go and easily find it. And now we are afraid they will capture us.

– Participant at Franklin Park Listening Session

The Robinson Collective spoke to a custodian for a large contractor in Chicago, who is a legal resident but said his fear outweighed the need to make money: "It terrified me. I stopped going to work for awhile... I spent all of my savings just hiding at home... Now, I have to work twice as much, three times as much, to replace the money I lost in those weeks."<sup>dxxiv</sup>

"Before the raids, I went to work every day. No fear, just work, all the time. I went to groceries and out to eat sometimes...now I don't spend any money because I know I may need all of it, everything I have, to move someplace else or be deported. I buy food and thats it. My friends ask do you want to go out, no, do you want to go see a movie or go to dinner? No. I go to work. I go home."

– The Robinson Collective Report

Through its Emergency Family Support Fund, Enlace Chicago provided emergency assistance to 84 families totaling \$112,500 that could be used for rent and utilities, groceries, clothing and some legal fees. Enlace also distributed \$10,000 in gift cards from two local grocery stores to help households while also injecting revenue back into the local economy. The Sanctuary Working Group, a collective of 30 organizations dedicated to supporting vulnerable immigrants in the Chicagoland area, also shared with the Commission that in 2025, they distributed over \$23,000 in direct housing support, and between December 2025 and January 2026, they distributed \$85,000 in housing support and USCIS fees.<sup>dxxv</sup> Many other organizations had similar funds to support their community members.

“What they really want to take is our culture, our joy and our humanity. And instead, they’re leaving trauma and heartbreak in its place.”

- Testimony of Anna Valencia, Chicago City Clerk

“During Midway Blitz, we saw landscapers, contractors, and day laborer gathering places targeted. Specifically, this leaves incredibly vulnerable single mothers and other caregivers alone, unable to pay rent or afford groceries, scared to go anywhere away from their children, thus they be separated further from their family.”

– Public Comment of Emily Wheeler,  
Sanctuary Working Group

## 4.E BUILDING A FRAMEWORK TO ADDRESS THE HARM

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The harms documented by this Report reveal a fundamental challenge: how can state and local governments rebuild trust and engagement with communities that have experienced enforcement operations as signals of danger? Rebuilding trust requires policy design that addresses three interconnected principles:<sup>dxxvi</sup>

### **A. Adopting Safeguards to Minimize Potential Harms**

Reducing antecedent threat requires embedding institutional safeguards directly into programs, supports, and policies. These safeguards include limiting the collection and retention of sensitive personal data, establishing clear firewalls between service-providing agencies and enforcement authorities, and ensuring that participation in public programs cannot trigger surveillance or punishment. Governments can also reduce perceived threat by delivering services through trusted intermediaries such as nonprofit organizations, libraries, schools, or community centers rather than exclusively through formal government offices. When residents see that participation in a program will not expose them to enforcement risks, engagement becomes more likely.

### **B. Reducing Administrative Burdens to Expand Access to Essential Program**

Administrative burden people encounter when interacting with government programs (understanding eligibility rules, gathering documentation, completing complex applications, navigating stress or stigma) reduce participation and disproportionately affect marginalized communities. Reducing these burdens through simplified forms, flexible documentation rules, multilingual assistance, and accessible enrollment options removes barriers to participation. When accessing public programs becomes straightforward and low-risk, residents are more likely to view government as a viable pathway for meeting essential needs.

### **C. Adopting Universal Framing**

Policies framed narrowly as benefits for stigmatized populations can heighten visibility and perceived risk for participants. Universal framing, by contrast, positions programs as resources available to all members of the community. This approach reduces stigma, broadens public support, and minimizes the perception that participation marks someone as a regulatory target. Universal framing also communicates membership in the local polity. When policies are framed as inclusive civic resources rather than exceptional accommodations, they signal that marginalized people are legitimate members of the community whose needs and participation matter.

# CHAPTER 5:

## THE RESPONSE: WHAT COMES NEXT

**“Supporting the rights of immigrants is part of protecting democracy and civic infrastructure.”<sup>dxvii</sup>**

The damage of Operation Midway Blitz is apparent and the threat of future occupation by federal agents continues to loom. As community, government and civic leaders think about how to move forward, the Commission wants to remind us all that Illinois has the resolve and tools to carve a path forward. As Professor Pape said to the Commission: “Chicago is not just another city experiencing immigration enforcement. Chicago matters because it is not fringe. It is diverse, institutionally strong, and politically engaged.”

Despite recent changes in personnel at the federal level, namely the departures of Secretary Noem, Commander Bovino, and Lewandowski, institutional failings in accountability have left gaping holes in the ability to move forward. And there is no reason to expect that DHS will change its course without real institutional accountability and reform.

In forming its policy recommendations for the state, federal and local entities to prevent a future Operation Midway Blitz and to repair those holes in accountability, the Commission is mindful that the threat of future re-deployment of CBP agents or the National Guard under the guise of immigration enforcement continues to chill civic life. Just because Commander Bovino is gone, does not mean people are not still afraid.

The federal immigration enforcement apparatus deployed during Operation Midway Blitz has not been dismantled. It has expanded. Congress allocated \$75 billion to ICE through the One Big Beautiful Bill, funding a hiring surge that dwarfs any prior expansion of domestic immigration enforcement. In March 2026, federal immigration agents were deployed to at least fourteen major airports nationwide, including Chicago O’Hare, showing the force’s operational footprint beyond immigration enforcement into civilian travel infrastructure.<sup>dxviii</sup>

The Commission has documented the measurable effects that a concentrated paramilitary deployment has on the civic life of targeted communities. During Operation Midway Blitz, school attendance declined as families restricted children’s movement in response to roving enforcement. Emergency service calls fell in affected neighborhoods, as did clinic visits and commercial foot traffic. These effects were not limited to individuals directly contacted by

federal agents. Survey research conducted by Professor Robert Pape found that by late September 2025—within three weeks of the operation’s launch—54 percent of Chicago residents believed the deployment’s purpose was political control rather than immigration enforcement; 36 percent of Republicans in the city shared that assessment.<sup>dxxix</sup> The suppression of routine civic activity in response to a concentrated enforcement presence has direct implications for democratic participation, including electoral participation, in the communities most affected.

The Commission finds that the threat to electoral integrity posed by this apparatus is not speculative. The Trump administration has previously taken direct action to interfere with the democratic process. On August 1, 2023, Special Counsel Jack Smith indicted President Trump on four federal counts arising from his conduct following the 2020 election, including conspiracy against the right to vote and have one’s vote counted under 18 U.S.C. § 241.<sup>dxxx</sup> Those charges were dismissed without prejudice following Trump’s reelection, pursuant to the Department of Justice’s longstanding policy against prosecuting a sitting president.<sup>dxxxii</sup> In February 2026, former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon stated publicly that ICE agents would surround the polls during the November 2026 midterm elections.<sup>dxxxiii</sup> That statement followed the President’s own public comments calling for federal takeover of elections in multiple states.<sup>dxxxiii</sup> The White House did not disavow either statement

The following recommendations from the Commission are designed to increase transparency and accountability, protect and support communities and families, and safeguard First amendment rights. The Commission has identified a set of key recommendations that most directly address the Commission’s findings about harm and misconduct during Operation Midway Blitz. Additionally, the Commission submits to the Governor a full set of recommendations based on expert testimony, public comments and submissions, and the Commission’s own findings.

## Key Recommendations:

The Commission has identified key recommendations that most directly address the findings of misconduct and harm observed during Operation Midway Blitz.

- **Key Recommendation for Federal Government: Prohibit Roving Patrols, Hold Agents Accountable and Require Body Worn Cameras**

DHS should end the use of roving patrols, and Congress should ban the practice. Agents must be adequately trained on de-escalation and crowd control techniques. DHS must reign in agents' use of chemical agents, physical force and vehicular pursuits. Civil immigration enforcement should not escalate to the point that officers need to use any type of crowd control device. In any case, federal agents should never deploy tear gas, pepper spray and other chemical agents prior to issuing an order to disperse and providing time and space for individuals to comply. In addition, DHS should distribute body worn cameras to all agents and ensure any officer with a body worn camera complies with the policy requiring it to be activated to record all encounters.

- **Key Recommendation for Federal Government: Hold Senior Leadership Accountable**

Congress should investigate and hold federal leadership accountable for the pattern of misinformation during Operation Midway Blitz. DHS must improve transparency so that the public can evaluate claims made by federal officials about incidents involving federal immigration agents.

- **Key Recommendation for Federal Government: End Warrantless Arrests**

Congress must amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to end warrantless arrests for civil enforcement matters and prohibit discriminatory stops that rely on race, ethnicity, workplace, accent or language. Congress must also strengthen the requirements for arrests made pursuant to an administrative warrant to prevent agents from misusing them as cover for warrantless arrests.

- **Key Recommendation for Federal Government: Stop Paramilitary Tactics**

DHS must prohibit agents from wearing face coverings or otherwise hiding their identity. DHS must stop agents from brandishing weapons to intimidate or harass. DHS must ensure agents display visible identification at all times. DHS must immediately end its unlawful surveillance of and interference with first amendment activities, and Congress must investigate, end these retaliatory practices, and dismantle whatever databases DHS has amassed containing biometric data.

- **Key Recommendation for Federal Government: Restore Due Process**

Congress must prioritize immigration law reform and redirect funding to DHS initiatives that improve due process in the immigration system rather than expanding detention. Congress must restore humanitarian policies for the treatment of all detained foreign nationals. Congress must also prohibit DHS detaining or separating children from their parents and restore conditional release for parents and children waiting disposition of their civil cases. DHS must immediately restore access to bond hearings for all individuals in detention.

- **Key Recommendation for Federal Government: Discipline ICE and CBP Agents Who Committed Misconduct**

Federal oversight systems responsible for disciplining officers who harm the public, such as the DHS Office of Inspector General, DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties and the Department of Justice's Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division, must be re-opened and empowered to hold officers accountable. Congress should also lift barriers in federal law that make it difficult for individuals to seek monetary damages for constitutional violations by federal officers. Congress should also hold DHS leadership accountable for the many failures of DHS' officers to comply with standard practices during Operation Midway Blitz and monitor DHS compliance with training and standards requirements.

- **Key Recommendation for State of Illinois: Protect Civic Life**

The State of Illinois, private sector partners, county and municipal governments, and non-profit organizations should continue to collaborate on ways to alleviate the economic damage caused by Operation Midway Blitz, expand access to legal services and family preparedness planning support, and prevent further disruption to civic life by immigration enforcement activities, including the potential intimidation or interference with elections. Congress should also allocate funding to offset the impact of Operation Midway Blitz to Illinois governments, communities and businesses.

- **Key Recommendation for other states and local governments: Enact Policies**

- **Like the Illinois TRUST Act**

The Trump Administration targeted Illinois on the faulty assumption that the TRUST Act made Illinois unsafe, when it was actually the conduct of ICE and CBP agents that put Chicagoans in harm's way. Now more than ever, states and local governments that have not yet adopted legislation like the TRUST Act should do so to safeguard the relationship between their residents and local police.

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# ENDNOTES

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- i. *Blitzkrieg*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/blitzkrieg> (Apr. 13, 2026).
- ii. Ill. Exec. Order 2025-06 (Oct. 23, 2025), available at: <https://www.illinois.gov/government/executive-orders/executive-order.executive-order-2025-06.2025.html>.
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ccxlii. 18 U.S.C. § 371 (making it a crime for two or more people to intentionally agree to commit another federal crime, so long as one or more of those people takes an overt action in furtherance of the plan).

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cccxi. IAC Interview with Jennifer Moriarty (Jan. 29, 2026) (agent twisting Africano's leg "like they were trying to spiral fracture his leg"; Declaration of Kerry Littel (Exhibit 136), *Chicago Headline Club v. Noem*, No. 25-cv-12173, Dkt. 188 (N.D. Ill. Nov. 3, 2025).

cccxiii. Exhibit 136 (Littel Decl.) at ¶ 11, Dkt. 188.

cccxiv. IAC Interview with Jennifer Moriarty (Jan. 29, 2026) (Africano repeated in the vehicle: "I was just helping my brother move and we saw an accident and people on the ground.").

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