



State of Illinois
Illinois Department of Human Rights



ILLINOIS
ACCOUNTABILITY
COMMISSION

SOUTH SHORE
APARTMENT RAIDS

INVESTIGATION BRIEF

April 2026



INVESTIGATION BRIEF

South Shore Apartment Raids

Date: September 30, 2025

Location: South Shore, Chicago, IL

Estimated Number of Agents Involved: Approximately 300

Categorization: Militarized law enforcement, warrantless search and arrest

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

In the early morning hours of September 30, 2025, approximately 300 federal law enforcement agents surrounded an apartment complex located at 7500 S. South Shore Drive in Chicago, Illinois. They were preparing to execute one of the largest and most aggressive immigration enforcement operations during Operation Midway Blitz. The federal agents arrived in armored trucks and unmarked vans. Other agents rappelled onto the roof of the 130-unit, five story building from a Blackhawk military helicopter. Former CBP commander Gregory Bovino was on-scene and oversaw the operation. He told an embedded reporter that they were pursuing suspected members of the Venezuelan gang, *Tren de Aragua (TdA)* who had reportedly taken over units in the complexⁱⁱ that federal agents planned “to hit via force with guns.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Multiple federal agencies participated in the operation, including CBP, ICE, Homeland Security Investigations, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. They were joined by various specialized tactical units, including CBP’s Border Patrol Tactical Unit (BORTAC). The federal agents were masked and heavily armed with automatic weapons, flashbang grenades, and breaching tools. A camera crew, including cameras for the national cable news network NewsNation, and drones followed the federal agents as they carried out the operation. DHS shared [video](#) footage of the apartment raids on social media, showing federal agents breaching doors and angling weapons into apartments in the complex.ⁱⁱ Reports indicate that at least 37 individuals were arrested that day for immigration violations, and many more were detained for lengthy periods of time without any subsequent charges for criminal activity.

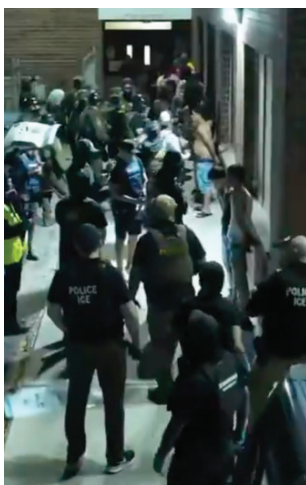


Image 1 Federal agents outside apartment buildingⁱⁱⁱ



Image 2 Federal vehicles outside apartment building^{iv}

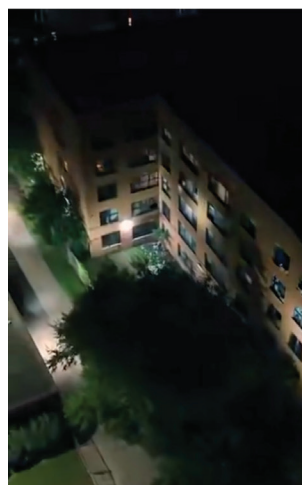


Image 3 Aerial view of apartment building with spotlights^v

Federal agents went door to door, forcing their way into apartments, battering down doors and cutting out deadbolts. Federal agents pointed military-style guns at residents, pulled them from their beds, restrained them with zip ties, and marched them out of the building. At least six residents reported that agents physically struck or kicked them. A law enforcement dog bit a tenant, leaving blood on the floor of an apartment. In at least one apartment, federal agents forced a resident to his knees while his 6-year-old nephew clung to him, sobbing.^{vi}

Residents did not have time to clothe themselves or their children before the federal agents dragged them out of the building in the early morning hours. Federal agents scrawled apartment numbers in black marker on the arms, bare chests, and foreheads of complex residents, all while a NewsNation camera invited by the federal agencies filmed the scene. Masked federal agents required residents to line up outside of the building, asked their name and country of origin, and lifted their shirts to inspect them for tattoos, asking whether they were members of *TdA*. Residents were not told why they were being detained and were not permitted to contact attorneys. Over two dozen residents reported that federal agents entered their apartment units without presenting a judicial warrant. To date, DHS has not publicly released any judicial warrants authorizing the raid.



Image 4 Resident finds his apartment unit ransacked after the raid^{vii}

Federal agents zip-tied and removed residents, including many U.S. citizens, from their apartments. Federal agents placed them in unmarked vans, questioned them, and detained them for several hours. One resident, a 67-year-old man and U.S. citizen, told reporters that federal agents broke through his door and dragged him out in zip ties. He was left outside of the building for nearly three hours before the federal agents released him. "I asked [agents]

why they were holding me if I was an American citizen, and they said I had to wait until they looked me up,” the man said. “I asked if they had a warrant, and I asked for a lawyer. They never brought one.”^{viii}

“It looks like hell. ICE really just a gang.”

— Apartment Resident

Many residents who were not U.S. citizens were taken to detention centers and endured harsh conditions for weeks. Many residents were subsequently removed from the country, even if they had pending asylum claims or other kinds of recognized status. Those residents who were able to return to their apartments after the raid reported that the building hallways were filled with debris, personal belongings were scattered or stolen from their apartments, and paperwork was missing. Residents reported valuable items being stolen from their apartments because agents had broken doors during the raid, leaving their units unprotected while they were gone. Residents who were deported have been unable to get their belongings.



Image 5 Agent brandishing weapon outside apartment building^{ix}

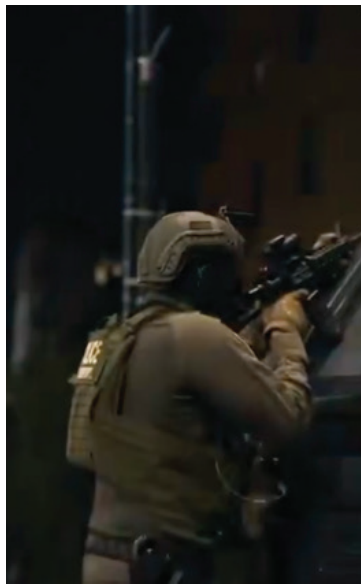


Image 6 Agent holding weapon outside apartment building^x

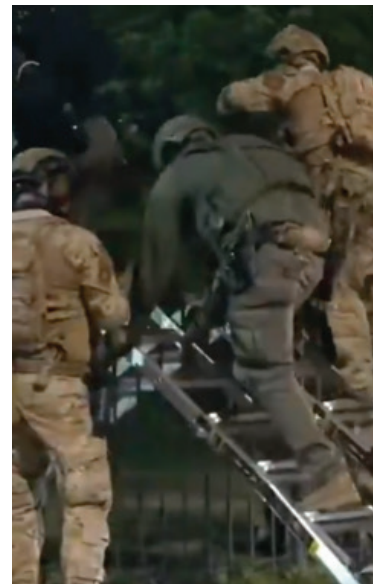


Image 7 Agents using ladder to scale a fence^{xi}

Federal agents reported that they carried out the apartment raids because the building was “known to house dangerous undocumented individuals from Venezuela who have suspected affiliation” with *TdA*.^{xii} They pointed to intelligence from federal law enforcement agencies indicating that *TdA* members and other suspected criminals had “seized control of approximately 30 vacant apartments” in the building and that ATF had conducted several undercover operations to purchase illicit firearms in the apartment complex.^{xiii} They also noted

that suspected *TdA* members on the second floor were “known to be armed with pistols, rifles, and grenades.”^{xiv} The federal agents did not report that they were executing any judicial warrants and reported instead that the “manager granted [federal agencies] written consent to search vacant apartments for individuals who are amenable to deportation as well as other criminal activity located in the building.”^{xv} On the day of the operation, Gregory Bovino reported that federal agents had detained “a couple of potential targets” with affiliations to *TdA*.^{xvi} A DHS spokesperson stated that an additional 35 individuals were detained for immigration violations and that some had violent criminal histories.^{xvii}

However, subsequent reporting has cast doubt on DHS’ claims that the operation was targeted at violent criminals with terrorist affiliations, suggesting instead that the raids were intended to remove tenants and other individuals who were undocumented. Despite the references in the federal agents’ incident report to weapons and even explosives in some of the units, federal prosecutors have not filed criminal charges against anyone who was arrested as part of the South Shore raid.^{xviii} According to ProPublica, records of two individuals detained during the raids make no mention of *TdA*. Rather, the records indicate that the operation was “based on intelligence that there were illegal aliens unlawfully occupying apartments.”^{xix} Federal agents said they focused their search on units “that were not legally rented or leased at the time.”^{xx} Others have criticized the disproportionate show of force, pointing to a highly produced video clip displaying “military hardware and agents armed for combat” that was posted on social media just days after the raids.^{xxi}

These events have devastated the lives of many South Shore residents, who continue to suffer physical and emotional trauma, and have had their lives in Chicago entirely upended. One mother who was deported with her six-year-old son feared that federal agents would shoot her or her family when they forcibly entered their apartment.^{xxii} She fainted as she was escorted outside with other residents. She spent a month in poor conditions at a detention center in Texas where the rust-colored water was undrinkable. She agreed to deportation and still feels scared and cries about the incident.

The Illinois Department of Human Rights filed a housing discrimination charge to investigate the landlord’s role in the immigration raids in January 2026 to determine whether any state laws may have been violated.^{xxiii} The investigation is ongoing.

Commission Determinations of Misconduct

Based on the information it has gathered, the Commission has determined that there is reasonable cause to believe that federal agents should be formally investigated for possible violations of agency policy, state and federal criminal laws, and individuals' constitutional rights. In particular, the following instances of misconduct should be investigated further:

- Agents may have violated the constitutional rights of individuals when they forcibly entered apartment units as part of warrantless searches and when they detained individuals who were not suspected of engaging in criminal activity.
- Agents may have violated federal law and court orders when they arrested individuals who were suspected of being illegally present in the United States without the required flight risk assessment.
- Federal officials and agents likely issued misleading statements in their incident report about the need for militarized law enforcement to enter and detain men, women, and children when no federal criminal charges have been filed against any individuals. Agents may also have violated agency policy by using dangerous and highly militarized tactics, such as rappelling from a helicopter onto a rooftop in a residential neighborhood, for the purpose of producing social media content and other publicity. According to policing experts, the use of a military helicopter to rappel onto the roof of a residential building for the type of operation executed at South Shore was a significant departure from standard practice because it places residents, bystanders, and the agents in extreme danger from a helicopter mishap.^{xxiv}



Image 8 An aerial view of the apartment building raided by federal agents in Chicago's South Shore neighborhood
(Source: Mustafa Hussain for ProPublica)^{xxv}

Endnotes

- i NewsNation Bradley on the Border [NewsNation]. (2025, Sept. 2). *Raw footage: 300+ federal agents raid Chicago apartments* [Video at 6:15]. YouTube. (Interview of Gregory Bovino at 6:15).
- ii Homeland Security (@DHSgov) X (Oct. 2, 2025 12:06 PM), <https://x.com/DHSgov/status/1973796727615598738?s=20>.
- iii Homeland Security (@DHSgov) X (Oct. 2, 2025 12:06 PM), <https://x.com/DHSgov/status/1973796727615598738?s=20>.
- iv Homeland Security (@DHSgov) X (Oct. 2, 2025 12:06 PM), <https://x.com/DHSgov/status/1973796727615598738?s=20>.
- v Homeland Security (@DHSgov) X (Oct. 2, 2025 12:06 PM), <https://x.com/DHSgov/status/1973796727615598738?s=20>.
- vi Melissa Sanchez, Jodi S. Cohen, T. Christian Miller, Sebastian Rotella and Mariam Elba, *'I Lost Everything': Venezuelans Were Rounded Up in a Dramatic Midnight Raid but Never Charged With a Crime*, ProPublica (Nov. 13, 2025), <https://www.propublica.org/article/chicago-venezuela-immigration-ice-fbi-raids-no-criminal-charges>.
- vii Resident finds his apartment unit ransacked after the raid. Colin Boyle, *All Eyes on Chicago After Midnight South Shore Raid*, Block Club Chicago, (Dec. 30, 2025), <https://blockclubchicago.org/2025/12/30/chicago-under-siege-how-operation-midway-blitz-changed-our-city/>.
- viii Cindy Hernandez, *Massive immigration raid on Chicago apartment building leaves residents reeling: 'I feel defeated'*, Chicago Sun-Times, (Oct. 1, 2025), <https://chicago.suntimes.com/immigration/2025/10/01/massive-immigration-raid-on-chicago-apartment-building-leaves-residents-reeling-i-feel-defeated>.
- ix Homeland Security (@DHSgov) X (Oct. 2, 2025 12:06 PM), <https://x.com/DHSgov/status/1973796727615598738?s=20>.
- x Homeland Security (@DHSgov) X (Oct. 2, 2025 12:06 PM), <https://x.com/DHSgov/status/1973796727615598738?s=20>.
- xi Homeland Security (@DHSgov) X (Oct. 2, 2025 12:06 PM), <https://x.com/DHSgov/status/1973796727615598738?s=20>.
- xii CBP E-STAR Incident Report #25670 at 8, *Chicago Headline Club v. Noem*, Doc. 338-2 (N.D. Ill. Feb. 6, 2026), <https://loevyandloevy.wetransfer.com/previews/834909f42b6f94af4e3e20bf9462e72720260209181837/0193d8?itemId=6d271c75e7e06fcceb51339dc1dc863820260209181902>
- xiii CBP E-STAR Incident Report #25670 at 6, *Chicago Headline Club v. Noem*, Doc. 338-2 (N.D. Ill. Feb. 6, 2026), <https://loevyandloevy.wetransfer.com/previews/834909f42b6f94af4e3e20bf9462e72720260209181837/0193d8?itemId=6d271c75e7e06fcceb51339dc1dc863820260209181902>
- xiv CBP E-STAR Incident Report #25670 at 8, *Chicago Headline Club v. Noem*, Doc. 338-2 (N.D. Ill. Feb. 6, 2026), <https://loevyandloevy.wetransfer.com/previews/834909f42b6f94af4e3e20bf9462e72720260209181837/0193d8?itemId=6d271c75e7e06fcceb51339dc1dc863820260209181902>
- xv CBP E-STAR Incident Report #25670 at 6, *Chicago Headline Club v. Noem*, Doc. 338-2 (N.D. Ill. Feb. 6, 2026), <https://loevyandloevy.wetransfer.com/previews/834909f42b6f94af4e3e20bf9462e72720260209181837/0193d8?itemId=6d271c75e7e06fcceb51339dc1dc863820260209181902>
- xvi NewsNation: Bradley on the Border [NewsNation]. (2025, Sept. 30). *Raw footage: 300+ federal agents raid Chicago apartments* [Video at 11:00]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IK-IMjwnB88>.
- xvii Department of Homeland Security, Statement from Tricia McLaughlin, Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (Nov. 6, 2025), <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/26219676-2025-11-06-tricia-mclaughlin-statement/>.
- xviii Melissa Sanchez and Jodi S. Cohen, *"The Real Story Behind the Midnight Immigration Raid on a Chicago Apartment Building"*, ProPublica, (Feb. 4, 2026), <https://www.propublica.org/article/chicago-venezuela-immigration-ice-raid-landlord-tren-de-aragua>.
- xix Melissa Sanchez and Jodi S. Cohen, *"The Real Story Behind the Midnight Immigration Raid on a Chicago Apartment Building"*, ProPublica, (Feb. 4, 2026), <https://www.propublica.org/article/chicago-venezuela-immigration-ice-raid-landlord-tren-de-aragua>.
- xx Melissa Sanchez and Jodi S. Cohen, *"The Real Story Behind the Midnight Immigration Raid on a Chicago Apartment Building"*, ProPublica, (Feb. 4, 2026), <https://www.propublica.org/article/chicago-venezuela-immigration-ice-raid-landlord-tren-de-aragua>.
- xxi Tim Sullivan, *Takeaways from AP report on a Chicago raid that signals a major escalation of immigration crackdown*, AP News, (Oct. 21, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/trump-chicago-raid-immigration-helicopter-venezuelans-9ae4ca54f3975b66a5106d0f15d55ae9>; Department of Homeland Security (@dhsgov), Instagram, (Oct. 4, 2025), <https://www.instagram.com/p/DPZTrp0CXdc/>.
- xxii IAC Interview with a former tenant (Mar. 6, 2026).
- xxiii Press Release, Illinois Department of Human Rights, "Illinois Files Housing Discrimination Charge to Investigate Chicago Landlord's Role in ICE Raid," Jan. 21, 2026, <https://dhr.illinois.gov/about-us/idhr-news-and-events/idhr-to-investigate-landlord-and-ice-activities.html>.
- xxiv Melissa Sanchez, Jodi S. Cohen, T. Christian Miller, Sebastian Rotella and Mariam Elba, *'I Lost Everything': Venezuelans Were Rounded Up in a Dramatic Midnight Raid but Never Charged With a Crime*, ProPublica (Nov. 13, 2025), <https://www.propublica.org/article/chicago-venezuela-immigration-ice-fbi-raids-no-criminal-charges>.
- xxv Source: Mustafa Hussain/ProPublica; Melissa Sanchez et. al., *'I Lost Everything': Venezuelans Were Rounded Up in a Dramatic Midnight Raid but Never Charged With a Crime*, ProPublica, (Nov. 13, 2025), <https://www.propublica.org/article/chicago-venezuela-immigration-ice-fbi-raids-no-criminal-charges>.

