

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 7, 2026

The Honorable Joseph V. Cuffari
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane, SW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Inspector General Cuffari:

We write to formally request a comprehensive investigation into a severe pattern of incidents of excessive force in immigration enforcement operations at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Earlier this year, you announced that you were initiating an audit of how U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) investigates allegations of excessive use of force and holds personnel accountable in accordance with applicable Federal laws, DHS policies, and ICE directives.¹ Across multiple jurisdictions, however, federal immigration enforcement agents within ICE and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have engaged in unauthorized tactical operations, excessive force, and constitutional violations, while DHS leadership has systematically weaponized public communications channels to distribute false narratives defending these abuses. Both agencies have represented to our offices that immigration enforcement operations, including Operation Midway Blitz, occurred under the direct orders of DHS leadership. There is a clear need for a broader investigation into DHS actions related to excessive force in the course of immigration enforcement operations.

Enforcement actions across the country — from Illinois to Minnesota to Virginia — reveal a consistent pattern that goes beyond ICE: agents use reckless and unlawful force and then DHS issues public statements justifying the use of force that are repeatedly proven false or highly misleading.² We are deeply concerned that DHS has not taken sufficient action to ensure that agents and officers do not engage in this type of misconduct. Recently, in Bailey's Crossroads, Virginia, masked ICE officers cut off a car, jumped out of their vehicles, and surrounded the woman sitting behind the wheel — Carolina Molina, a licensed mental health professional and U.S. citizen. One of the agents, subsequently identified as Martin Lagunas, pointed his firearm in Ms. Molina's face and accused her of trying to "run [them] over."³ Video evidence materially contradicts this claim, showing no indication that agents faced the threat described. Ms. Molina's dashcam shows her slowly driving past the agents twice; on her second pass, the agents pull forward to cut her off and block her vehicle. Ms. Molina later described the incident at a press conference: "I think my life was in danger at that point. It wasn't until after I was like, this was a whole Renée Good situation again."⁴

1 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General. 2026. "Audit of ICE's Processes for Investigating and Addressing Allegations [of Misconduct]." <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/projects/memos/2026-05/Audit%20of%20ICE%27s%20Processes%20for%20Investigating%20and%20Addressing%20Allegations.pdf>

2 Smith, Brenna T., Belle Cushing, Jaclyn Jeffrey-Wilensky, and Hannah Critchfield. 2026. "Videos Show How ICE Vehicle Stops Can Escalate to Shootings." WSJ. <https://www.wsj.com/us-news/videos-show-how-ice-vehicle-stops-can-escalate-to-shootings-caf17601>.

3 Held, Steve, Dave Byrnes, and Raven Geary. 2026. "Chicago ICE team seen threatening drivers has roamed from Illinois to Minnesota to Virginia." Unraveled Press. <https://unraveledpress.com/chicago-ice-team-seen-threatening-drivers-has-roamed-from-illinois-to-minnesota-to-virginia/>.

4 Alexander, Jimmy. 2026. "'This guy's really pointing a gun at my head': Virginia woman speaks out after viral ICE video." WTOP. <https://wtop.com/fairfax-county/2026/08/this-guys-really-pointing-a-gun-at-my-head-woman-speaks-out-after-viral-ice-video/>.

Agent Lagunas' involvement raises serious concerns about the Department's action to investigate and hold accountable officers who have engaged in incidents of excessive force. He has a history of aggressive, escalatory conduct in both Chicago and Minneapolis prior to this incident, including reports of reckless driving, obstructing observers engaged in legal First Amendment activity, drawing weapons on residents, questionable discharge of chemical irritants, and making both general and specific threats during encounters with the public.⁵

According to a report by Human Rights Watch, on September 26, 2025, Agent Lagunas and his team responded to a protest outside the ICE processing facility in Broadview, Illinois. As people gathered in a parking lot across the street, he and other federal agents shot protesters, reporters, and local elected officials with pepper ball launchers and other weapons.⁶ They lobbed tear gas canisters and fired 40mm foam rounds, though video footage and witnesses confirmed that the protesters did not appear to present any risk to agents.⁷

On April 22, 2026, Agent Lagunas accused an ICE observer on the Northwest Side of Chicago of stepping in front of a car while she stood on the curb next to a parked vehicle.⁸ She feared for her life, especially as a visibly gender non-conforming person targeted by the Administration. Agent Lagunas responded, "Ma'am... whatever you are. You're gonna get run over...you're purposefully trying to get in front of a moving car." Her camera footage then panned down to show her feet on the sidewalk. She later explained, "He was trying to create a fake narrative, a lie about what was going on to make it seem like I was doing something wrong, which I was not. I felt absolutely threatened, like my life was in danger...and that he was ready to run me over."⁹

On August 3, 2026, Agent Lagunas and a colleague were recorded again threatening observers on Chicago's West Side. Agent Lagunas pulled out his taser while his fellow agent pulled out his gun. He accused observers of blocking the road, yet video shows he and other agents had blocked them in. Agent Lagunas was recorded stating, "Stop following us. Trust me. You're not gonna like the outcome."¹⁰ It was the same thing he told witnesses after smashing the windows of a car and forcibly removing ICE observers Patty O'Keefe and Brandon Sigüenza in Minneapolis on January 11, 2026: if they continued observing, they were not "gonna like the outcome."¹¹

Agent Lagunas' behavior is not an isolated incident. This pattern of abusive, illegal, and reckless behavior is documented at length in the Illinois Accountability Commission's Final Report on "Operation Midway Blitz."¹² Justin Mazzola, Deputy Director for Research with Amnesty International USA, stated the report's findings left:

5 Manriquez, Pablo. 2026. "EXCLUSIVE: Two DHS Sources Confirm to Migrant Insider — The ICE Agent Who Pointed His Gun at a U.S. Citizen in Virginia Is Martin Lagunas." Migrant Insider. https://migrantinsider.com/p/exclusive-two-dhs-sources-confirm?hide_intro_popup=1

6 Held, Steve, Dave Byrnes, and Raven Geary. 2026. "Chicago ICE team seen threatening drivers has roamed from Illinois to Minnesota to Virginia." Unraveled Press. <https://unraveledpress.com/chicago-ice-team-seen-threatening-drivers-has-roamed-from-illinois-to-minnesota-to-virginia/>.

7 Human Rights Watch. 2025. "United States: Federal Agents Use Excessive Force in Illinois." <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/10/23/united-states-federal-agents-use-excessive-force-in-illinois>.

8 Held, Steve, Dave Byrnes, and Raven Geary. 2026. "Chicago ICE team seen threatening drivers has roamed from Illinois to Minnesota to Virginia." Unraveled Press. <https://unraveledpress.com/chicago-ice-team-seen-threatening-drivers-has-roamed-from-illinois-to-minnesota-to-virginia/>.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 "Illinois Accountability Commission | Final Report | April 2026." 2026. Illinois Accountability Commission. <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report.html>.

[N]o doubt that federal agents engaged in paramilitary-style enforcement practices, excessive force, discriminatory stops and arbitrary arrests — harming immigrants, U.S. citizens, journalists, clergy, and bystanders, even children, alike. The roving patrols in residential neighborhoods, the use of unmarked cars, masked officers, excessive violence, and racial profiling created a climate of fear and intimidation... The treatment of people in Illinois during Operation Midway Blitz by federal agents described in this report suggest not isolated incidents, but a systemic effort by the U.S. government to deny human rights.¹³

The Commission found that:

- Border Patrol Agent Charles Exum crashed into the vehicle of Marimar Martinez, a U.S. citizen and teaching assistant, and shot her five times. DHS leadership initially claimed she had attempted to ram agents, until video evidence led to the dismissal of felony charges against her. Border Patrol Agents Adam Perkins and Lorenzo Cordero were also involved in the incident.
- Border Patrol Agents Benito Nuñez, Carlos Chavira, and Jesus Guillen conducted unauthorized high-speed pursuits and caused crashes in residential neighborhoods after being directly ordered to stop.
- Border Patrol Agents Matthew Sulek, Michael Turner, Oscar Meza, Andrew Torabpour, Joseph Brennan, Martin Davalos, and Alexander Mills crashed into the vehicle of Dayanne Figueroa, pointed weapons at her, pulled her out of her vehicle by her feet, pinned her face down, and utilized excessive force as they detained her.
- Border Patrol Agents Andy Chavez, Tee Rico, and Javier Puente used excessive force on two bystanders in the process of detaining a construction worker, who was working on private property, reportedly without a warrant. Border Patrol Agents assaulted bystander George Withek, causing a traumatic brain injury, and another female bystander, reportedly breaking her ribs.¹⁴
- Border Patrol Agent Timothy Donahue repeatedly pointed weapons at civilians during routine stops. In Evanston on October 31, 2025, he is on video physically assaulting multiple civilians and restricting access to emergency medical care for at least one of the civilians he assaulted.
- Border Patrol Agents Enrique Camacho, Angel Nieves, and Ricardo Moreno deployed tear gas on a public road, near an elementary school while children played nearby.¹⁵

There is little evidence of DHS action to investigate these incidents and hold personnel accountable. Instead, many, like Agent Lagunas, continue to engage in incidents of excessive force around the country with apparent impunity. His example points to a structural failure in how DHS monitors, investigates, and corrects such operational conduct to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and policies.

We formally request you conduct investigations into these incidents and publicly determine DHS compliance with DHS policy and federal law.

We ask that you consider in the course of your investigation:

13 “USA: Federal Government Must Take Report from Illinois Accountability Commission Seriously, Implement Recommendations.” 2026. Amnesty International. <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/usa-federal-government-must-take-report-from-illinois-accountability-commission-seriously-implement-recommendations/>.

14 “Declaration of George Withek.” 2025. Loevy and Loevy.
zLHIVN_uTaD8CyKV7NBgKQtZlduTBbP_zP1ilptsEszHHLCiXoBUJ_A0yHSvyC_icxfPydELxyxRz2nJOgMFsC6l83UXH1DoDptoggO12Je15yR6EJX_Yku0G2Xrq-lcshP8Bg9OJbiIKMW1x3W0.

15 “Illinois Accountability Commission | Final Report | April 2026.” 2026. Illinois Accountability Commission. <https://ilac.illinois.gov/2026-04-iac-final-report.html>.

1. The findings of the Illinois Accountability Commission, including detailed accounts of incidents of excessive force by DHS personnel during Operation Midway Blitz.
2. DHS responses, including internal administrative reviews or investigative proceedings, to incidents of excessive force involving Agents Martin Lagunas, Benito Nuñez, Carlos Chavira, Jesus Guillen, Charles Exum, Timothy Donahue, Adam Perkins, Lorenzo Cordero, Matthew Sulek, Michael Turner, Oscar Meza, Andrew Torabpour, Joseph Brennan, Martin Davalos, Alexander Mills, Andy Chavez, Tee Rico, Javier Puente, Enrique Camacho, Angel Nieves, and Ricardo Moreno.
3. Information regarding whether the above agents were flagged or otherwise identified as having engaged in excessive force before being deployed to engage in immigration enforcement activity.
4. Information regarding complaints against all agents aggregated across geographic deployments and component assignments.
5. Steps taken by DHS and its component agencies to respond to media or local stakeholders reports of agents' escalatory or abusive behavior.
6. DHS and its component agencies' processes for monitoring personnel with multiple documented reports of aggressive or high-risk tactical conduct, including corrective steps taken in cases where officers have repeatedly been accused of excessive force.
7. DHS and its component agencies' processes for evaluating whether claims of "imminent danger" — such as those invoked against Marimar Martinez and Carolina Molina — are scrutinized by supervisory leadership during or after use-of-force incidents.
8. Administrative standards or verification protocols that govern the release of public statements and criminal allegations by DHS and its component agencies' public affairs offices.
9. Consequences, if any, imposed on DHS officials who authorized inaccurate public statements.
10. New or modified instructions and guidance on internal protocols governing the preservation and mandatory disclosure of body-worn camera and dashcam footage issued by DHS regarding agent-involved uses of force, and steps taken to implement these instructions and guidance.
11. The status of the use-of-force incidents DHS has claimed are open for review.

We also request a briefing on steps the Inspector General's office has taken to initiate administrative reviews and investigations into agent misconduct. Separately, we request that your office direct the preservation of, and itself preserve, all records relating to the incidents described in this letter and to the agents named herein. This includes but is not limited to body-worn and dashboard camera recordings and associated metadata; radio and dispatch traffic; incident, use-of-force, and after-action reports; supervisory review and referral documentation; personnel and disciplinary files; communications concerning the drafting, approval, and dissemination of public statements regarding these incidents; and any records reflecting the assignment, deployment, or transfer of the named agents among Illinois, Minnesota, and Virginia.

We request further written confirmation, within 30 days, that this preservation instruction has been transmitted to ICE, CBP, and the DHS Office of Public Affairs.

In addition to a comprehensive OIG investigation, we request an expected timetable for the issuance of a final report and information about whether requested areas of investigation fall within any existing OIG investigation.

When the Illinois Accountability Commission released its findings, a DHS spokesperson attempted to dismiss the report by arguing that states lack the authority to investigate on-duty federal agents.¹⁶ While we disagree with this claim, the Office of Inspector General unquestionably possesses the public duty to investigate federal officers for misconduct, unconstitutional uses of force, and potential criminal violations.

Please notify us in writing if DHS leadership continues to systematically obstruct the work of your office.¹⁷ Accountability is not optional; it is a baseline requirement for restoring public trust and pursuing restitution for communities under siege.

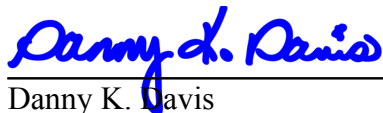
Sincerely,



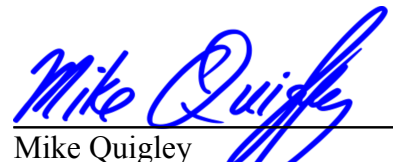
Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



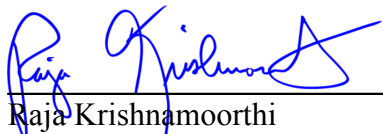
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



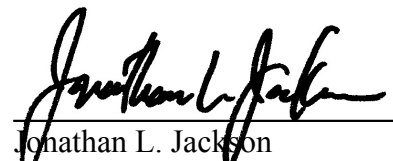
Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress

¹⁶ Silva, Daniella, and Selina Guevara. 2026. "Illinois commission recommends investigating federal immigration agents for misconduct and criminal charges." NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/pritzker-illinois-commission-investigating-immigration-midway-blitz-rcna342280>.

¹⁷ Beitsch, Rebecca. 2026. "DHS demanded list of ongoing investigations from its watchdog." The Hill. <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5730522-dhs-list-ongoing-investigation-inspector-general/>.

Bill Foster

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Member of Congress