

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 14, 2020

Mr. Matthew T. Albence  
Acting Director  
Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
Department of Homeland Security  
500 12th Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20536

Dear Acting Director Albence:

We are writing to request information on the “citizens academy” trainings being offered to civilians by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The content and scope of these programs remains largely unknown to the general public and Congress, raising serious questions about their nature and purpose.<sup>1</sup>

ICE recently announced that it was expanding its citizen academy program—which previously was focused on the Homeland Securities Investigations (HSI) unit—with a new, six-week course in Chicago focused on the work done by the Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) unit.<sup>2</sup> According to a letter sent to “valued member[s] of the community,” the Chicago citizens academy is “the first of its kind” and will “serve as a pilot for nationwide implementation.”<sup>3</sup>

ICE describes this latest citizens academy in a letter to potential applicants as “an interactive six-week program” in which “key stakeholders” can “gain insight into the many facets and responsibilities of ICE/ERO operations” and help to “build a strong foundation of knowledge for those intrigued by the ERO mission.”<sup>4</sup> According to ICE’s website, ERO’s

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<sup>1</sup> *ICE Offering “Citizens Academy” Course with Training on Arresting Immigrants*, Newsweek (July 9, 2020) (online at [www.newsweek.com/ice-launching-citizens-academy-course-how-agency-arrests-immigrants-1516656](http://www.newsweek.com/ice-launching-citizens-academy-course-how-agency-arrests-immigrants-1516656)).

<sup>2</sup> Immigration and Customs Enforcement, *ICE Offers First Citizens Academy for Public to Learn More About Agency’s Mission in Chicago* (July 13, 2020) (online at [www.ice.gov/news/releases/ice-offers-first-citizens-academy-public-learn-more-about-agencys-mission-chicago](http://www.ice.gov/news/releases/ice-offers-first-citizens-academy-public-learn-more-about-agencys-mission-chicago)).

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Field Office Director Robert Guadian, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (online at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a2d8f4b6f4ca325a622037f/t/5f03a905bbac0c209a02c2d4/1594075398053/ERO+Chicago+Citizens+Academy+Memo+2020-07-01.pdf>).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

mission is the “arrest and removal of aliens.”<sup>5</sup>

The letter also states that this citizens academy will involve “scenario-based training and exercises in a safe and positive environment, including, but not limited to defensive tactics, firearms familiarization, and targeted arrests.”<sup>6</sup> The letter neglects to mention that the curriculum apparently includes a visit to an immigration detention center, which could violate detainees’ privacy rights.<sup>7</sup>

The announcement of this program has caused distress in Chicago’s immigrant community, particularly in light of the Administration’s harsh immigration strategy. Because there is no publicly available information about the nature of the “scenario-based training” described in the letter, officials and others in Chicago are voicing concerns that citizens academies would amount to an unchallenged opportunity for ICE to whitewash its deportation activities in an attempt to bolster its public image.<sup>8</sup>

The apparently intensive nature of the six-week pilot program also raises the possibility that the citizens academies will encourage individuals in the community to help carry out the ERO’s mission.<sup>9</sup>

This appears to be the latest of a series of citizens academies piloted by ICE. As part of ICE’s HSI academies, civilian participants have taken part in simulated confrontations with suspects that involve active shooting scenarios.<sup>10</sup> Such role-playing exercises—complete with simulated firefights—are of dubious public benefit.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Id.*; Immigration and Customs Enforcement, *Enforcement and Removal Operations* (online at [www.ice.gov/ero](http://www.ice.gov/ero)).

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Field Office Director Robert Guadian, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (online at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a2d8f4b6f4ca325a622037f/t/5f03a905bbac0c209a02c2d4/1594075398053/ERO+Chicago+Citizens+Academy+Memo+2020-07-01.pdf>).

<sup>7</sup> Immigration and Customs Enforcement, *ICE Offers First Citizens Academy for Public to Learn More About Agency’s Mission in Chicago* (July 13, 2020) (online at [www.ice.gov/news/releases/ice-offers-first-citizens-academy-public-learn-more-about-agencys-mission-chicago](http://www.ice.gov/news/releases/ice-offers-first-citizens-academy-public-learn-more-about-agencys-mission-chicago)).

<sup>8</sup> *ICE Citizen Trainings May Be A “Vigilante Academy,” Chicago Alderman Warns*, National Public Radio (July 10, 2020) (online at [www.npr.org/local/309/2020/07/10/889726473/i-c-e-citizens-trainings-may-be-a-vigilante-academy-chicago-alderman-warns](http://www.npr.org/local/309/2020/07/10/889726473/i-c-e-citizens-trainings-may-be-a-vigilante-academy-chicago-alderman-warns)); *Plan for Chicago ICE Citizens Academy Causes Uproar*, NBC Chicago (July 10, 2020) (online at [www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/plan-for-chicago-ice-citizens-academy-causes-uproar/2303189/](http://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/plan-for-chicago-ice-citizens-academy-causes-uproar/2303189/)).

<sup>9</sup> *ICE Offering “Citizens Academy” Course with Training on Arresting Immigrants*, Newsweek (July 9, 2020) (online at [www.newsweek.com/ice-launching-citizens-academy-course-how-agency-arrests-immigrants-1516656](http://www.newsweek.com/ice-launching-citizens-academy-course-how-agency-arrests-immigrants-1516656)).

<sup>10</sup> *At Citizens Academies, Devoted Participants Get Their Law Enforcement Fix*, Los Angeles Times (Dec. 3, 2018) (online at [www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-ice-citizens-academy-20181205-story.html](http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-ice-citizens-academy-20181205-story.html)); *ICE Citizen Academy Causes Uproar in Chicago, Has Been Going on in Los Angeles—For Years*, Fox Los Angeles (July 10, 2020) (online at [www.foxla.com/news/ice-citizen-academy-causing-uproar-in-chicago-has-been-going-on-in-los-angeles-for-years](http://www.foxla.com/news/ice-citizen-academy-causing-uproar-in-chicago-has-been-going-on-in-los-angeles-for-years)).

<sup>11</sup> *Homeland Security Investigators Try To Show There is More to Their Work Than ICE Arrests*, Boston Globe (Oct. 20, 2019) (online at [www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2019/10/20/citizens-academy-federal-investigators-](http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2019/10/20/citizens-academy-federal-investigators-)

ICE has an obligation to be fully transparent about the content, scope, and purpose of its citizen academy programs.

For the above reasons, we request answers to the following questions:

1. What is the total number of citizens academies you have offered? Please provide the city, dates, and focus of each program.
2. How many citizen academies are currently being planned? Please provide the city, dates, and proposed focus of each program.
3. What are the criteria for selecting cities for citizen academies, and how do you consult with local leaders in determining the suitability of the program locations?
4. What are the criteria for determining who is invited to a citizen academy?
5. How many of your citizen academies involved visits to detention centers, and if so, what was the procedure for notifying detainees of the visit and protecting their privacy?
6. What restrictions, if any, are placed on participants' wishing to share the content of a citizen academy?
7. What social distancing policies, if any, have been put in place for any citizen academies occurring during the coronavirus pandemic?

In addition, we request that you provide the following documents and information:

1. All video recordings or transcripts of ICE-sponsored citizen academy sessions, including video footage of civilian "graduation ceremonies";
2. All documents and communications relating to the development of all ICE citizens academies, including internal discussions of program objectives, lesson plans, proposed curricula, plans for expansion and continuation of these programs and the criteria for selecting each city and invitees, as well as any external communications with community members;
3. A complete list of:
  - a. invitees to each citizens academy;
  - b. applicants to each citizens academy;

- c. participants in past citizens academies;
4. A copy of background checks done on citizens academy attendees;
5. All documents and information provided to participants in all citizens academies, including confidentiality agreements, waivers, other contracts, course materials, schedules, informational pamphlets, and any other material;
6. All documents and communications relating to citizens academies' visits to detention centers, including any planned visits in the future, such as notification provided to the detention center, guidelines for the visit, discussion of safety precautions, and any notification provided to the detainees;
7. All documents and communications relating to the use of real or simulated firearms by citizen academy participants, including communications that describe the utility of such training;
8. All communications between ICE and all citizen academy applicants, participants, and alumni; and
9. All documents and communications regarding adherence to social distancing guidelines for all citizens academies being held during the pandemic.

Please provide the requested information by September 2, 2020. The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X.

An attachment to this letter provides additional instructions for responding to the Subcommittee's request. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Subcommittee staff at (202) 225-5051.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jamie Raskin  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and  
Civil Liberties



Robin Kelly  
Member  
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and  
Civil Liberties

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Chip Roy, Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

## Responding to Oversight Committee Document Requests

1. In complying with this request, produce all responsive documents that are in your possession, custody, or control, whether held by you or your past or present agents, employees, and representatives acting on your behalf. Produce all documents that you have a legal right to obtain, that you have a right to copy, or to which you have access, as well as documents that you have placed in the temporary possession, custody, or control of any third party.
2. Requested documents, and all documents reasonably related to the requested documents, should not be destroyed, altered, removed, transferred, or otherwise made inaccessible to the Committee.
3. In the event that any entity, organization, or individual denoted in this request is or has been known by any name other than that herein denoted, the request shall be read also to include that alternative identification.
4. The Committee's preference is to receive documents in electronic form (i.e., CD, memory stick, thumb drive, or secure file transfer) in lieu of paper productions.
5. Documents produced in electronic format should be organized, identified, and indexed electronically.
6. Electronic document productions should be prepared according to the following standards:
  - a. The production should consist of single page Tagged Image File ("TIF"), files accompanied by a Concordance-format load file, an Opticon reference file, and a file defining the fields and character lengths of the load file.
  - b. Document numbers in the load file should match document Bates numbers and TIF file names.
  - c. If the production is completed through a series of multiple partial productions, field names and file order in all load files should match.
  - d. All electronic documents produced to the Committee should include the following fields of metadata specific to each document, and no modifications should be made to the original metadata:  
  
BEGDOC, ENDDOC, TEXT, BEGATTACH, ENDATTACH, PAGECOUNT, CUSTODIAN, RECORDTYPE, DATE, TIME, SENTDATE, SENTTIME, BEGINDATE, BEGINTIME, ENDDATE, ENDTIME, AUTHOR, FROM, CC, TO, BCC, SUBJECT, TITLE, FILENAME, FILEEXT, FILESIZE, DATECREATED, TIMECREATED, DATELASTMOD, TIMELASTMOD,

INTMSGID, INTMSGHEADER, NATIVELINK, INTFILPATH, EXCEPTION,  
BEGATTACH.

7. Documents produced to the Committee should include an index describing the contents of the production. To the extent more than one CD, hard drive, memory stick, thumb drive, zip file, box, or folder is produced, each should contain an index describing its contents.
8. Documents produced in response to this request shall be produced together with copies of file labels, dividers, or identifying markers with which they were associated when the request was served.
9. When you produce documents, you should identify the paragraph(s) or request(s) in the Committee's letter to which the documents respond.
10. The fact that any other person or entity also possesses non-identical or identical copies of the same documents shall not be a basis to withhold any information.
11. The pendency of or potential for litigation shall not be a basis to withhold any information.
12. In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(d), the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and any statutory exemptions to FOIA shall not be a basis for withholding any information.
13. Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552a(b)(9), the Privacy Act shall not be a basis for withholding information.
14. If compliance with the request cannot be made in full by the specified return date, compliance shall be made to the extent possible by that date. An explanation of why full compliance is not possible shall be provided along with any partial production.
15. In the event that a document is withheld on the basis of privilege, provide a privilege log containing the following information concerning any such document: (a) every privilege asserted; (b) the type of document; (c) the general subject matter; (d) the date, author, addressee, and any other recipient(s); (e) the relationship of the author and addressee to each other; and (f) the basis for the privilege(s) asserted.
16. If any document responsive to this request was, but no longer is, in your possession, custody, or control, identify the document (by date, author, subject, and recipients), and explain the circumstances under which the document ceased to be in your possession, custody, or control.
17. If a date or other descriptive detail set forth in this request referring to a document is inaccurate, but the actual date or other descriptive detail is known to you or is otherwise apparent from the context of the request, produce all documents that would be responsive as if the date or other descriptive detail were correct.

18. This request is continuing in nature and applies to any newly-discovered information. Any record, document, compilation of data, or information not produced because it has not been located or discovered by the return date shall be produced immediately upon subsequent location or discovery.
19. All documents shall be Bates-stamped sequentially and produced sequentially.
20. Two sets of each production shall be delivered, one set to the Majority Staff and one set to the Minority Staff. When documents are produced to the Committee, production sets shall be delivered to the Majority Staff in Room 2157 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority Staff in Room 2105 of the Rayburn House Office Building.
21. Upon completion of the production, submit a written certification, signed by you or your counsel, stating that: (1) a diligent search has been completed of all documents in your possession, custody, or control that reasonably could contain responsive documents; and (2) all documents located during the search that are responsive have been produced to the Committee.

### **Definitions**

1. The term “document” means any written, recorded, or graphic matter of any nature whatsoever, regardless of how recorded, and whether original or copy, including, but not limited to, the following: memoranda, reports, expense reports, books, manuals, instructions, financial reports, data, working papers, records, notes, letters, notices, confirmations, telegrams, receipts, appraisals, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, prospectuses, communications, electronic mail (email), contracts, cables, notations of any type of conversation, telephone call, meeting or other inter-office or intra-office communication, bulletins, printed matter, computer printouts, teletypes, invoices, transcripts, diaries, analyses, returns, summaries, minutes, bills, accounts, estimates, projections, comparisons, messages, correspondence, press releases, circulars, financial statements, reviews, opinions, offers, studies and investigations, questionnaires and surveys, and work sheets (and all drafts, preliminary versions, alterations, modifications, revisions, changes, and amendments of any of the foregoing, as well as any attachments or appendices thereto), and graphic or oral records or representations of any kind (including without limitation, photographs, charts, graphs, microfiche, microfilm, videotape, recordings and motion pictures), and electronic, mechanical, and electric records or representations of any kind (including, without limitation, tapes, cassettes, disks, and recordings) and other written, printed, typed, or other graphic or recorded matter of any kind or nature, however produced or reproduced, and whether preserved in writing, film, tape, disk, videotape, or otherwise. A document bearing any notation not a part of the original text is to be considered a separate document. A draft or non-identical copy is a separate document within the meaning of this term.
2. The term “communication” means each manner or means of disclosure or exchange of information, regardless of means utilized, whether oral, electronic, by document or otherwise, and whether in a meeting, by telephone, facsimile, mail, releases, electronic

message including email (desktop or mobile device), text message, instant message, MMS or SMS message, message application, or otherwise.

3. The terms “and” and “or” shall be construed broadly and either conjunctively or disjunctively to bring within the scope of this request any information that might otherwise be construed to be outside its scope. The singular includes plural number, and vice versa. The masculine includes the feminine and neutral genders.
4. The term “including” shall be construed broadly to mean “including, but not limited to.”
5. The term “Company” means the named legal entity as well as any units, firms, partnerships, associations, corporations, limited liability companies, trusts, subsidiaries, affiliates, divisions, departments, branches, joint ventures, proprietorships, syndicates, or other legal, business or government entities over which the named legal entity exercises control or in which the named entity has any ownership whatsoever.
6. The term “identify,” when used in a question about individuals, means to provide the following information: (a) the individual’s complete name and title; (b) the individual’s business or personal address and phone number; and (c) any and all known aliases.
7. The term “related to” or “referring or relating to,” with respect to any given subject, means anything that constitutes, contains, embodies, reflects, identifies, states, refers to, deals with, or is pertinent to that subject in any manner whatsoever.
8. The term “employee” means any past or present agent, borrowed employee, casual employee, consultant, contractor, de facto employee, detailee, fellow, independent contractor, intern, joint adventurer, loaned employee, officer, part-time employee, permanent employee, provisional employee, special government employee, subcontractor, or any other type of service provider.
9. The term “individual” means all natural persons and all persons or entities acting on their behalf.