



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

April 9, 2026

The Honorable Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator King:

Thank you for your February 11, 2026 letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). I am responding on behalf of the Department.

On January 20, 2026, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and its federal partners began an operation in Lewiston, Maine, called Operation Catch of the Day. This operation targeted aliens who were unlawfully present in or otherwise subject to removal from the United States. Specifically, Operation Catch of the Day focused on aliens who posed threats to national security and public safety.

ICE is focusing its immigration enforcement operations on jurisdictions that historically refuse to honor detainers increasing risks to public safety by shielding dangerous criminals who, when released, often reoffend and further victimize innocent people.

Thank you again for your letter. Enclosed are the responses to the questions raised in your letter. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact the ICE Office of Congressional Relations [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Lyons".

Todd M. Lyons
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Chellie Pingree

**Department of Homeland Security's Response to Senator Angus King and
Representative Chellie Pingree's February 11, 2026 Letter**

1. Please confirm whether Operation Catch of the Day is ongoing in Maine?

Response: Operation Catch of the Day ran from January 20, 2026 through January 23, 2026.

a. Please clarify if the operation has been completely halted, reduced, or has not yet changed?

Response: As stated above, this operation has concluded.

b. If it has only been reduced, please detail the current scope and nature of this operation?

Response: Please refer to the above response.

c. What further information can ICE provide regarding any ongoing activity?

Response: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) does not have additional information to report.

2. What is the objective of launching "OCOTD" in Maine?

Response: ICE is focusing its immigration enforcement operations on several jurisdictions that have historically failed to cooperate with the agency's immigration enforcement operations. ICE selected these jurisdictions due to their continued refusal to honor ICE's immigration detainers; instead, they release aliens who have committed serious crimes into their own communities. Jurisdictions refusing to honor detainers increase risks to public safety by shielding dangerous criminals who, when released, often reoffend and further victimize innocent people.

3. Which individuals are being targeted?

Response: This operation targeted aliens who were unlawfully present in or otherwise subject to removal from the United States. Specifically, Operation Catch of the Day focused on aliens who posed threats to national security and public safety.

4. How many DHS/ICE (any federal) agents were deployed to Maine specifically for "OCOTD?"

Response: The operation was supported by more than 100 ICE Homeland Security Investigations Special Agents and ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations Officers. The exact number of personnel deployed to the active operation fluctuated daily.

- a. **How many additional agents have arrived to Maine for this operation?**

Response: Please refer to the above response.

- b. **What agencies did they represent?**

Response: Please refer to the above response.

5. **What is the total number of arrests made to date (from the time you are responding to this inquiry) as part of OCOTD?**

Response: The operation resulted in the administrative arrest of 206 illegal aliens, 21 of whom have known criminal histories.

- a. **Barring any legal restrictions, please provide a name and justification for each criminal arrest—such as what is posted on DHS’ “Worst of the Worst” website and clarify whether the individual has been convicted of or just charged with the crime listed?**

Response: Beginning in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 and continuing into FY 2026, ICE has focused its immigration enforcement operations on several jurisdictions that have historically failed to cooperate with the agency’s immigration enforcement operations. ICE selected these jurisdictions due to their continued refusal to honor ICE’s immigration detainers; instead, they release aliens who have committed serious crimes into their own communities. Jurisdictions refusing to honor detainers increase risks to public safety by shielding dangerous criminals who, when released, often reoffend and further victimize innocent people.

However, ICE enforces immigration law against all removable aliens—criminal history is not a prerequisite for enforcement. Being unlawfully present in the United States is itself a violation of federal law.

- b. **Where are detainees apprehended in this operation being taken (please list name of states and facilities)?**

Response: Once an alien arrives in ICE custody, whether through a transfer from U.S. Customs and Border Protection custody after being apprehended at the border or an arrest by ICE in the interior, an ICE officer determines if an alien will remain in ICE custody.

The purpose of placing an alien in detention is to secure their presence for immigration proceedings and/or removal from the United States. In many cases, ICE may detain an alien if an ICE officer determines the alien is a flight risk or a public safety or national security threat.

In other cases, ICE is bound by mandatory detention requirements to detain an alien in accordance with U.S. immigration laws. These aliens may include, but are not limited to, suspected or known terrorists and certain criminal aliens, such as aliens with aggravated felony convictions.

c. Among those arrested, do any have final removal orders?

Response: Yes.

d. Among those arrested, how many have criminal convictions verses criminal charges?

Response: ICE is unable to statistically report this information for this operation.

e. How many discretionary arrests of asylum seekers?

Response: ICE is unable to statistically report this information for this operation. ICE does not target aliens for arrest based on whether the alien is seeking or has requested asylum.

f. How many arrests are of refugees whom US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) have decided to re-interview?

Response: The Department is unable to statistically report this information.

6. Please share where and how ICE compiled its list of “1,400 targets” for OCOTD?

Response: ICE utilizes a variety of techniques to identify and target aliens present in the U.S. in violation of immigration law, including vetting against law enforcement and immigration databases.

7. Why are detainees of OCOTD who are asylum seekers, those without a criminal record, and waiting to appear before an immigration judge, being taken into custody?

Response: Once an alien arrives in ICE custody, ICE determines if the alien should be placed in an ICE detention facility or released from ICE custody with conditions. Custody determinations are made case-by-case based on several factors, including detention capacity, which is limited by factors such as bedspace availability and safety considerations.

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suspected or known terrorists and certain criminal aliens, such as aliens with aggravated felony convictions.

8. **There have been numerous arrests of individuals without criminal records—what is the justification for these arrests? This is contrary to the DHS statement that the objective of OCOTD is to arrest the “worst of the worst.”**

Response: All ICE arrests—either criminal or administrative—are pursuant to violations of longstanding U.S. federal laws passed and amended on a bipartisan basis over multiple decades.

Under its Title 8 authority, ICE officers remove aliens from the United States who are subject to final removal orders. ICE’s removal authority extends to aliens who entered lawfully (e.g., lawful permanent residents with criminal convictions or visa overstay) who violated the terms of their admission or are unlawfully present in the United States.

Some aliens unlawfully in the United States have been ordered removed by an immigration judge but absconded from ICE supervision and are therefore immigration fugitives. Furthermore, ICE has encountered numerous illegal aliens with no criminal charges or convictions, but whom ICE later found to be associated with terrorist organizations, members of transnational gangs, or who have convictions in other countries.

- a. **How is ICE classifying “the worst of the worst?”**

Response: Every crime committed by an illegal alien was a preventable crime. Waiting to arrest or remove illegal aliens until only after the commission of another crime against American citizens or other legal immigrants is akin to trying to purchase fire insurance on a home currently in flames—the damage has already been done. As the Department has pointed out, the high percentage of arrests of illegal aliens with known criminal histories in the United States “doesn’t even count gang members, terrorists, human rights abusers, and foreign fugitives who lack a rap sheet in the U.S.”

Therefore, the percentage of ICE arrests involving aliens with a known criminal history reflects only the limited data available to federal law enforcement. As a result, the number of illegal aliens with criminal histories arrested and removed by ICE is likely dramatically undercounted.

- b. **Does this include those with parking citations, for example?**

Response: Please refer to the above response.

9. Are there any concurrent, separate operation(s) and/or targets being pursued in tandem with OCOTD?

Response: No, Operation Catch of the Day was an independent, targeted enforcement action.

a. If so, please what are those operation(s)?

Response: Please refer to the above response.

b. Are there any U.S. citizens on ICE's target list in Maine?

Response: ICE is not targeting U.S. citizens. As a matter of law, ICE does not arrest or detain U.S. citizens for civil immigration violations. ICE Directive No. 16001.2, *Investigating the Potential U.S. Citizenship of Individuals Encountered by ICE* (November 10, 2015), governs ICE officer and special agent investigations into determining whether an individual encountered during enforcement operations is a U.S. citizen. ICE personnel must assess the potential U.S. citizenship of individuals encountered by ICE if the individual makes or has made a claim to U.S. citizenship, as well as when certain indicia of potential U.S. citizenship, as identified in ICE Directive 16001.2, are present in a case even if the individual does not affirmatively make a claim to U.S. citizenship.

Additionally, Title 8 and Title 19 authorize ICE officers and agents to make criminal arrests of anyone, including U.S. citizens, for violations of federal criminal law in certain circumstances. For example, ICE may arrest anyone—whether or not they are a U.S. citizen—who forcibly assaults, resists, opposes, impedes, intimidates, interferes with or even attempts to kill ICE officers or agents, or who damages government property during an enforcement action.

10. It appears the individuals who have been listed in DHS's announcement about "Operation Catch of the Day" do not also appear on the "'Worst of the Worst" website under Maine arrests, despite being characterized as "worst of the worst"? Please explain.

Response: Beginning in FY 2025 and continuing into FY 2026, ICE has focused its immigration enforcement operations on several jurisdictions that have historically failed to cooperate with the agency's immigration enforcement operations. ICE selected these jurisdictions due to their continued refusal to honor ICE's immigration detainers; instead, they release aliens who have committed serious crimes into their own communities. Jurisdictions refusing to honor detainers increase risks to public safety by shielding dangerous criminals who, when released, often reoffend and further victimize innocent people.

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