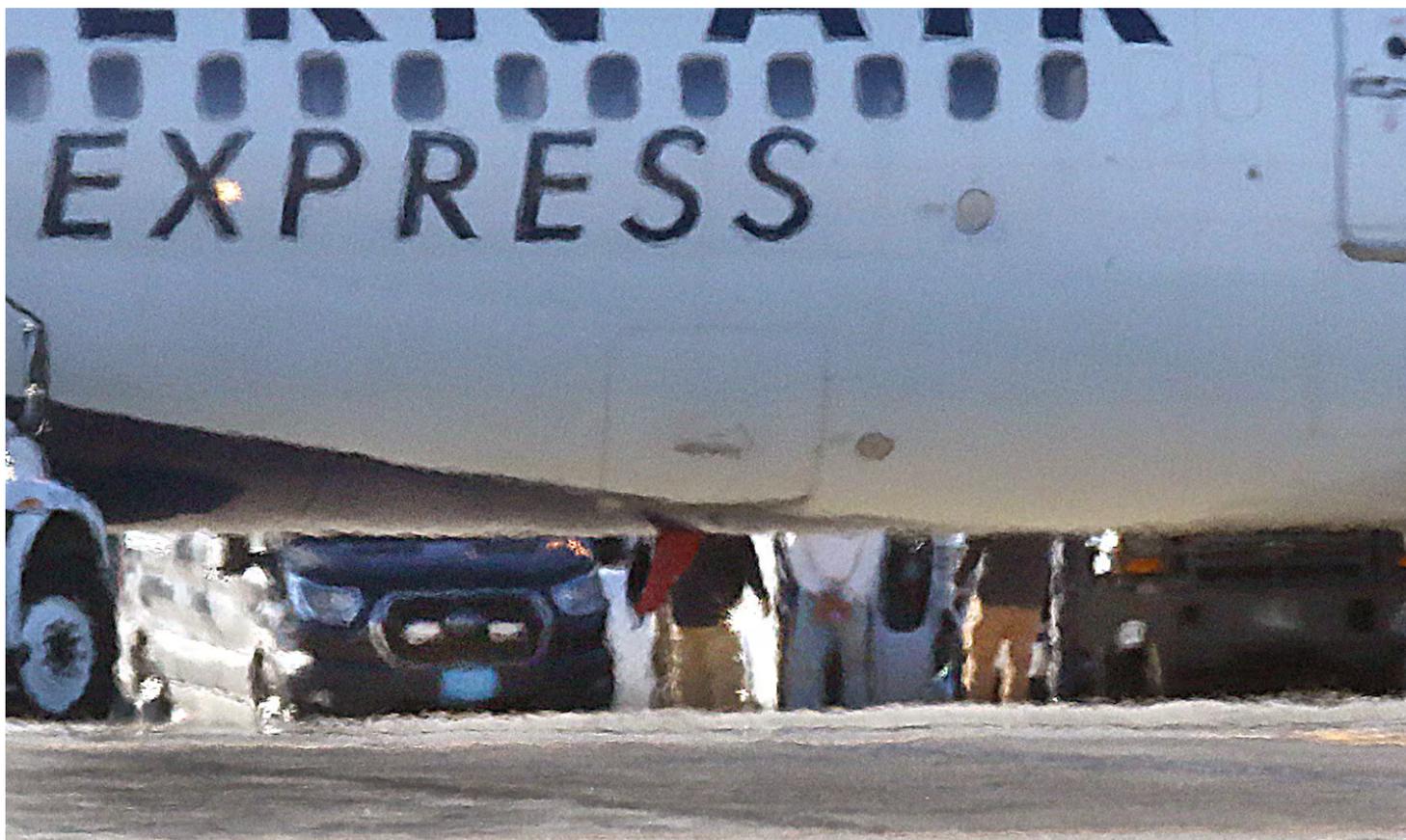


# Healey demands Trump halt ICE flights from Hanscom

By [Laura Crimaldi](#) Globe Staff, Updated December 15, 2025, 1:52 p.m.



A shackled man stood on the tarmac at Hanscom Field on Friday near an Eastern Airlines charter jet bound for Harlingen, Texas, where US Immigration and Customs Enforcement has a deportation hub. JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

Governor Maura Healey has demanded that the Trump administration halt [immigration detention](#) flights from Hanscom Field and other airports amid growing public outrage over the operations.

Her call came after new research from a prominent human rights group revealed US Immigration and Customs Enforcement flights from Hanscom have more than doubled since last year.

The research tracked the rise of domestic and international ICE flights nationwide by President Trump, and included details about Hanscom Field, an airport west of Boston that shares space with a US Air Force base and is a short drive from ICE's field office in Burlington.

This year, the Massachusetts Port Authority-operated airport has been the busiest in New England for ICE-chartered flights, happening about three times a week during most months since Trump's second inauguration, the research shows. Healey raised concerns that the flights are used to transport people to other states where their cases would be heard in jurisdictions far from their homes and families.

"This practice must stop," Healey wrote in a letter to US Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and Todd Lyons, ICE's acting director.

"Flying these residents out of state and away from their support systems and legal counsel — often within hours of arrest — is intentionally cruel and purposely obstructs the due process and legal representation they are owed," Healey wrote.

DHS and ICE did not respond Saturday to a request for comment about Healey's demands.

Critics said the Trump administration [uses domestic flights](#) to move detainees rapidly from where they were arrested to remote ICE facilities in states like Texas and Louisiana, where judges are often more conservative and less likely to grant release.

[Rümeysa Öztürk](#), a Tufts doctoral student from Turkey arrested by ICE agents in March, was driven from Somerville to New Hampshire, and Vermont, then flown to Alexandria, La., a busy ICE transfer and deportation hub.

[João Marciano do Carmo](#), who came from Brazil at age 11, was moved by bus and plane to New York and Mississippi after his arrest in Milford in September.

In June, the [Supreme Court let the Trump administration](#) resume swift removals of migrants to third countries outside their homelands, lifting a Boston federal judge's order that had blocked those rapid transfers.

Previously, DHS defended the flights as an effective tool for [carrying out Trump's deportation agenda](#) without addressing Hanscom specifically.

DHS said its deportation strategies are “cost effective,” and removal flights have deported people with serious criminal records.

“We are working rapidly overtime to remove these criminals from our country using all the tools at our disposal,” said DHS Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin

Federal immigration flights [have used Hanscom since at least 2014](#). Between 2020 and August, 269 immigration enforcement flights departed the airport, less than a percent of the 35,224 overall flights during that period, according to ICE Flight Monitor data.

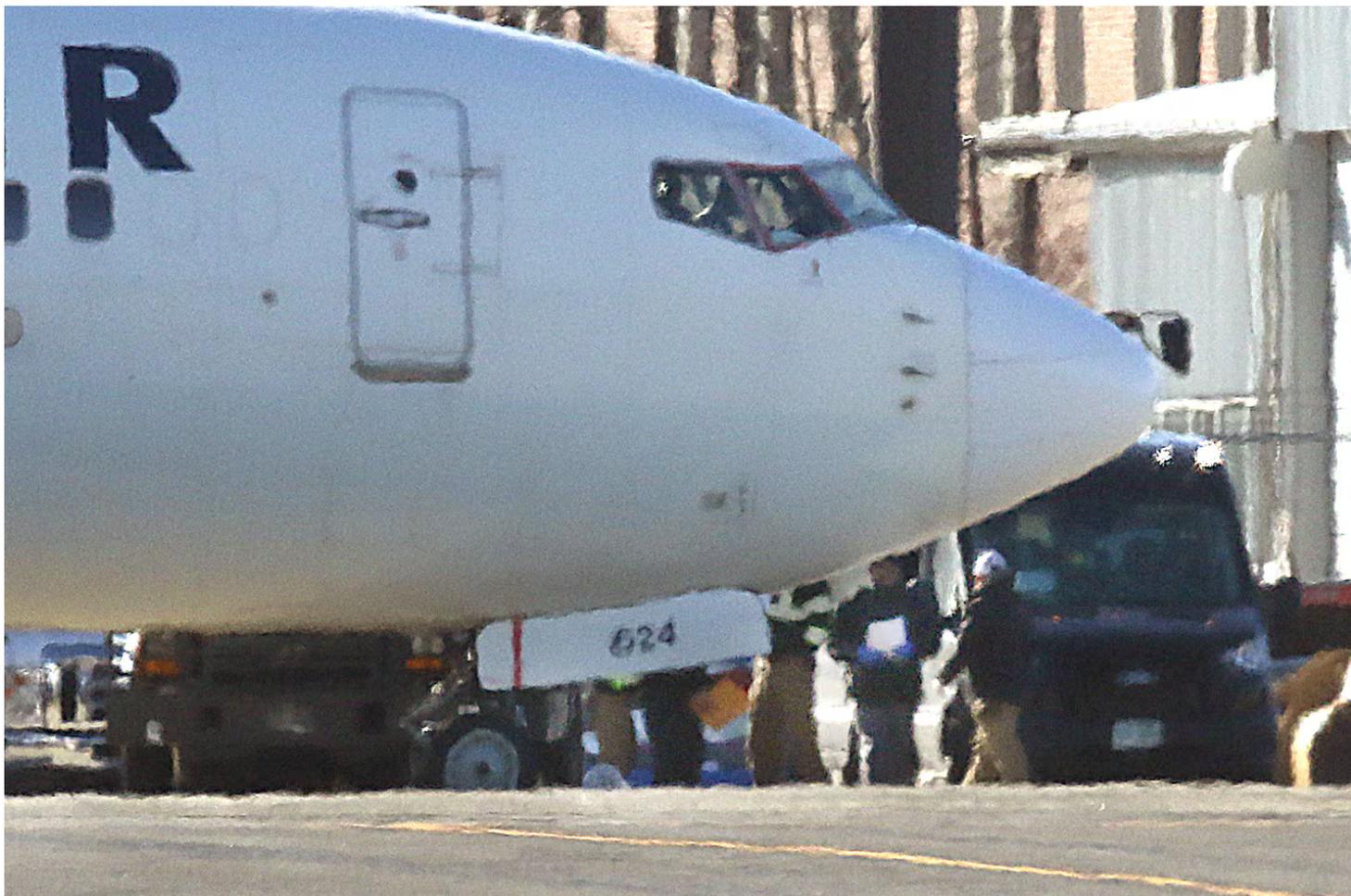


A charter flight landed Friday at Hanscom Field en route to Harlingen, Texas, where US Immigration and Customs Enforcement has a deportation hub. JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

During Trump’s current term, ICE-chartered planes have departed Hanscom 112 times and flown to 17 domestic airports as of Nov. 30, according to ICE Flight Monitor, part of the nonprofit Human Rights First.

Nationally, the group says domestic ICE flights have more than doubled since last year and trips overseas have increased by 41 percent as Trump carried out more than 605,000 deportations.

“ICE flights are facilitating this mass detention and deportation campaign by the administration,” said Savi Arvey, Human Rights First’s director of research and analysis for refugee and immigrant rights.



A man held paperwork Friday on the tarmac at Hanscom Field while a charter jet waited to leave for Harlingen, Texas, where US Immigration and Customs Enforcement has a deportation hub. JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

ICE Air Operations, a division of ICE, oversees the flights which are mostly run by private carriers even as the government moves to buy its own planes.

On Wednesday, [The Washington Post](#) reported DHS had agreed to spend nearly \$140 million to buy six 737 jets for deportation flights.

Local activists, citing Massport charter logs obtained under the public records law, estimate more than 2,000 people have been flown from Hanscom this year.

One flight departed Hanscom Friday afternoon. An Eastern Airlines charter jet arrived in Hanscom that morning from northeast Ohio, flight-tracking data show.

Among those who boarded at Hanscom was a man who waited on the tarmac with his hands shackled behind his back.

People stood Friday at the rear of charter jet flight at Hanscom Field before it left for Harlingen, Texas, where US Immigration and Customs Enforcement has a deportation hub. JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

As the flight flew to Harlingen, Texas, home to an ICE deportation hub, dozens of demonstrators gathered outside Hanscom.

Carolyn Whiting, dressed as the Statue of Liberty, demonstrated Friday outside Hanscom Field. JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

“What ICE is doing is awful. It’s just reprehensible,” said Carolyn Whiting, who dressed for the protest as the Statue of Liberty and held a sign reading, “DUE PROCESS FOR ALL.”

The activists have been calling on Healey and Massport to disclose more about the flights and try to restrict them.

“Our idea is sand in the gears,” said Toby Sackton, president and founder of Lexington Alarm!, which organizes the Hanscom protests. “We want to slow ICE down. We want to reduce their ability to move people in and out of Massachusetts.”

Protesters demonstrated Friday outside Hanscom Field. JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

Protesters said they worry immigration detainees are being flown out of Massachusetts before they can challenge their detention or reach family and lawyers, and they question ICE’s practice of [shackling detainees](#) in flight and whether passengers [remain restrained on board during](#) refueling — a potential safety hazard.

McLaughlin said all federal immigration flights are staffed with private security, ICE personnel, and a medical professional.

The use of restraints is a longstanding, standard protocol for the “safety and well-being” of all aboard the planes and complies with legal standards, she said.

Detainees on removal flights have “had full due process,” McLaughlin said.

Along with Eastern Airlines, GlobalX and [Avelo Airlines](#) have also flown detainees from Hanscom this year, according to ICE Flight Monitor.

The companies didn’t respond to repeated requests for comment. Avelo, a low-cost carrier, has faced consumer backlash over its ICE work, with protests and pressure from public officials, including Connecticut’s US Senator Richard Blumenthal and Attorney General William Tong.

Demonstrators at the entrance to Hanscom Field Friday said they fear detainees are being flown out of Massachusetts before they can challenge their detention. JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

Most Hanscom flights go to Buffalo Niagara International Airport, about 34 miles from an ICE detention facility in Batavia, N.Y., the research shows.

Alexandria and Harrisburg, Penn., are also common destinations.

Hanscom-bound flights most often originate from Youngstown-Warren Regional Airport in Ohio, followed by Harlingen and Newark, N.J., where ICE has a detention facility.

The flights paused in August and resumed in September when there were 25 flights, the busiest month yet at Hanscom.

After the resumption, community efforts to scrutinize the operations escalated.

The Hanscom Field Advisory Commission, which represents communities covered by the airport, asked Massport and ICE for flight information.

At a November meeting, the commission asked an ICE spokesperson questions about whether any Hanscom flights carry US citizens, permanent residents, or valid visa holders, and whether detainees are shackled during flights and refueling stops.

Christopher Celozzi, the ICE spokesperson, confirmed agency flights were using Hanscom, but said he needed to speak with agency leaders before answering further.

The commission revisits the flights at its Tuesday evening meeting, according to an agenda.

Residents around Hanscom “deeply” oppose the flights, said Christopher Eliot, who represents Lincoln on the commission.

“I would like ICE to stop this whole campaign but I don’t see anything within our power to do that,” he said.

Massport said it cannot legally prohibit the flights and does not receive advance notice, according to a Sept. 24 letter from Christopher Willenborg, Hanscom’s director.

“Massport is not given prior notice by the federal government when and if these flights occur at our airports,” spokesperson Jennifer Mehigan, said in an email. “Massport has no role in these operations.”

Some activists said they are skeptical Massport is in the dark, pointing to a Sept. 5

email to Hanscom leaders about two ICE charter flights.

The email came from Signature Aviation, which provides fuel and other services to planes at Hanscom.

In a statement, the company said it is legally obligated to serve government flights and has “no ability to restrict flight operations that comply with the law and relevant regulations.”

The company did not answer questions about whether it refuels the planes with shackled passengers onboard.

During Trump’s first term, ICE Air Operations became a flashpoint in Seattle, where activists pushed the King County International Airport to write future contracts barring its business partners from servicing the flights.

The federal government sued the county, and last year the US Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled the airport couldn’t impose such restrictions.

The county maintains [a log of ICE flights from the airport and live camera views of its airfield](#), according to its website.

Angelina Godoy, a professor who directs the University of Washington’s Center for Human Rights and has researched the flights extensively in Seattle, said they sow fear in communities.

“What you see in these flights is an abject disregard for people’s humanity and their basic rights,” she said.