

Trump orders ICE agents to deploy to airports in force

Patrick Martin
22 March 2026

Armed federal immigration agents will be mobilized to many major airports in the United States beginning Monday, according to social media posts by President Trump and statements by his key White House anti-immigration aide, Tom Homan.

Trump threatened the use of agents Saturday as a means of pressuring Senate Democrats, who have blocked funding for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in an effort to secure minor cosmetic reforms in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), two units of DHS whose agents murdered protesters Renée Nicole Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis in January.

Homan went further, appearing on several Sunday television talk shows, to declare that ICE agents would begin working at airports on Monday, presenting this as a means of alleviating gridlock due to long lines for airport screening by agents of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), another unit of DHS.

Hundreds of TSA agents have quit and thousands called in sick every day so that they can work second jobs to pay bills and feed their families. DHS funding authorization expired February 15, and there have been no full paychecks since then. The only DHS employees being paid are those at ICE and CBP, because the agencies received a special five-year appropriation last summer as part of Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill," which was otherwise devoted largely to tax cuts for the wealthy.

Speaking on CNN, Homan said there would be "a plan by the end of today, where we're sending—what airports we're starting with and where we're sending them. ... So it's a work in progress." He added that the focus was "the large airports where there's a long wait, like three hours." These would presumably include New York, Philadelphia, Atlanta and Houston, where

press reports have documented the longest waiting times.

Homan said that ICE agents would not conduct X-ray and other scanners but could be deployed to guard exits or check IDs as passengers queue up for their inspections. He brushed off questions about other specifics—such as whether the agents will be armed or masked—suggesting that this was still being worked out in internal DHS discussions.

He told CNN interviewer Dana Bash, "Hopefully, we'll have all those answers here by this afternoon, but we're working on it. And when we deploy tomorrow, we'll have a well-thought-out plan to execute." Bash seemed taken aback, replying, "With respect, if you're doing this in 24 hours, how well thought-out could it possibly be?"

President Trump in his weekend social media postings was virtually frothing at the mouth over the role that ICE agents would play at airports. On Saturday, he wrote: "If the Democrats do not allow for Just and Proper Security at our Airports, and elsewhere throughout our Country, ICE will do the job far better than ever done before ... I look forward to moving ICE in on Monday, and have already told them to, 'GET READY.' NO MORE WAITING, NO MORE GAMES!"

Adding his usual racist slurs, Trump said the ICE agents would "do Security like no one has ever seen before, including the immediate arrest of all Illegal Immigrants who have come into our Country, with heavy emphasis on those from Somalia."

Both Trump and Homan's comments suggest that ICE agents will be involved in checking identification and that they will focus on green card holders, international travelers and other non-citizens, who could well be asked to step out of the line for more

intensive interrogation, including the surrender of electronic devices for inspection by the federal agents.

The most ominous threat in Trump's weekend messaging came on Sunday morning, when he denounced the Democrats for blocking the DHS funding, while claiming they "are only focused on protecting hard line criminals who have entered our Country illegally, are endangering the USA ..."

He went on to say, "Now with the death of Iran, the greatest enemy America has is the Radical Left, Highly Incompetent, Democrat Party!"

This remarkable statement suggests that the next target for military action by the "commander-in-chief" is a political party that received 75 million votes in the 2024 election and holds nearly half the seats in both the House and Senate. It is nothing less than a declaration of war against his domestic opponents.

Equally remarkable was the indifference and complacency with which House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries responded to this threat. He also appeared on CNN and was asked by Dana Bash to respond to Trump's declaration that the Democratic Party was now "the greatest enemy America has."

Jeffries said, "Donald Trump should keep his reckless mouth shut before he gets somebody killed." The answer evinces a certain nervousness over the threat of violence, although the implication is that Trump might inspire some "lone wolf" attacker, not that he is actively preparing for the use of military force against political opposition within the United States.

The House Democratic leader acknowledged the danger that deploying ICE agents at airports might pose, saying, "The last thing the American people need is for untrained ICE agents to be deployed at airports across the country potentially to brutalize or to kill them."

But he continued, "Our basic premise and value proposition from the very beginning has been simple. ICE should conduct itself like every other law enforcement agency in the country." In other words, ICE agents should be unmasked but can otherwise carry out the same murderous violence that "every other law enforcement agency in the country" is responsible for. US police have killed more than 1,000 Americans every year in this decade: 20 people a week, three a day.

The Democratic Party supports the repressive

apparatus of the capitalist state because it is also a party of the financial oligarchy, which requires that apparatus to maintain its wealth and privileges. Its only quarrel with Trump is that the tactics of ICE are so brutal and heavy-handed that they risk provoking mass popular opposition that could take on an openly anti-capitalist political form.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact