



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

December 18, 2025

The Hon. Kristi Noem  
Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security

The Hon. Todd Lyons  
Acting Director  
U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement

Secretary Noem and Acting Director Lyons:

I am writing to follow up on my two previous letters, dated September 26, 2025 and November 7, 2025, which have gone unanswered by the Department. I continue to have grave concerns regarding operations and conditions at Camp East Montana, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facility on Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas.

I was angered to learn that since my last visit to Camp East Montana, ICE's negligence has led to the first known death in custody at the facility. A 48-year-old Guatemalan man, Francisco Gaspar-Andres, passed away on December 3, 2025<sup>1</sup>. According to ICE's own records, Gaspar-Andres had been treated for alcohol withdrawal when he was initially detained in Florida. When he was later transferred to Camp East Montana, he repeatedly sought medical care throughout his stay; despite requiring care for increasingly severe symptoms, staff at Camp East Montana only transferred Gaspar-Andres to a local hospital once he was in critical condition. Gaspar-Andres passed away from multiple organ failure two weeks after being admitted. Despite the law requiring ICE to inform Congress in a "timely" manner of any death in custody, Congress was notified on December 9<sup>th</sup>, six days after Mr. Gaspar-Andres' death on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. Unfortunately, Camp East Montana has been operational for less than six months and has already led to one detainee's death.

During my latest oversight visit to Camp East Montana on November 24<sup>th</sup>, I again heard from detainees that several of the issues that my staff and I have been aware of since August have not yet been adequately resolved. Issues persist with rotten food, inconsistent access to necessary medications, lack of regular access to recreational areas, and inconsistent laundry and cleaning services for uniforms. I spoke with detainees who shared that they save the few personal hygiene products they do receive to wash their uniforms in the bathroom sink. Other detainees

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<sup>1</sup> [Illegal alien from Guatemala in ICE custody dies at local hospital from suspected natural causes: liver, kidney failure | ICE](#)

commented that the hygiene product – a two-in-one soap and shampoo – is alcohol-based, and its use has resulted in people developing skin irritations and hives.

Given that detainees continue to point out issues with facility cleanliness and reliable laundry services, it appears to me that the companies subcontracted for cleaning, laundry, and hygiene product services at Camp East Montana are not providing the services and products they are being paid for, potentially against the terms of their contract. What kind of meaningful oversight is being conducted at Camp East Montana? What processes are in place to ensure that contractors and subcontractors are providing the services they were hired to do?

I have previously noted that I do not believe Camp East Montana has enough staff on-site to ensure the safety, wellbeing, and security of everyone at the facility, and that remains true. Detainees told me that they continue to experience difficulty receiving updates on their cases and getting to their court hearings. Camp East Montana was meant to be a short-term detention facility with a length of stay of fifteen days, yet several of the people I spoke to on November 24<sup>th</sup> shared with me that they had been at the facility nearly two months. In fact, my staff is aware of people who have volunteered to self-deport but are still being detained at the facility.

The Department of Homeland Security received \$45 billion from taxpayer dollars as part of the administration's priorities in the One Big Beautiful Bill. Of that \$45 billion, \$1.24 billion were awarded to Acquisition Logistics, LLC for the construction and management of Camp East Montana. The current state of the facility does not reflect a responsible use of \$1.2 billion in taxpayer money. That amount of funding should ensure robust staffing with knowledgeable and responsive staff, efficient transportation to and from court hearings, quality services for those in detention, fresh food, excellent medical care, and clean and cared-for facilities. As a Member of the House Committee on Appropriations, I will continue to demand transparency for every dollar spent at Camp East Montana.

Below are the questions I outlined in my September 26<sup>th</sup> and November 7<sup>th</sup> letters. I urge ICE and DHS to provide my office with a detailed response as soon as possible. Please provide my office with:

1. The most up-to-date population census numbers, including the amount of people with pending court dates.
2. The average number of detainees who have volunteered to self-deport and are still at the facility.
3. The average number of people who are in-processed and out-processed from the facility within a 24-hour period.
4. The average length of stay of detainees.

**From my September 26<sup>th</sup> letter:**

1. When our office first visited, we were informed that Camp East Montana had “about” 300 support staff consisting of contractors and about 40 ICE staff on site, and that whenever the facility reaches a 3,000-bed capacity, the number of ICE staff “should” be 10 ICE supervisors and 40 Deportation officers.

- a. What will the contractor staffing numbers be at 3,000 and 5,000 beds?
2. During our August 28<sup>th</sup> visit, our office discussed the list of the vendors at Camp East Montana with staff, including the food vendor that was local to El Paso and was in the process of phasing out, and the new food vendor that would replace them. Please provide the names of those vendors.
3. We were informed that ICE had re-hired retired staff and annuitants to bring them on in a supervisory role. With these new hires, how many supervisory staff are now on site?
4. What processes are in place to ensure that phones are being answered 24 hours a day, as is necessary, at Camp East Montana? Our office has heard from staff at a local legal service provider organization that it can be difficult to connect with staff at Camp East Montana over the phone. One legal service provider reportedly placed 25 calls to Camp East Montana before staff at the facility answered the phone.
5. What is the current status of construction on the walkway between the visitor area and the meeting space? Are there plans to ensure this walkway is enclosed and protected from the elements in the future?
6. My staff recommended that staff at Camp East Montana connect with the City of El Paso Public Health Department as a preventative public health measure against potential outbreaks of illnesses at Camp East Montana. My staff also provided contact information for the city's public health director. Please confirm if staff at Camp East Montana has made efforts to connect with the City of El Paso Public Health Department.
7. Multiple detainees spoke to me and my staff about the quality of the drinking water at Camp East Montana. Several people told us the water smelled bad and made them ill after drinking it. Please confirm where the water is being sourced and what tests are being conducted to ensure it meets all applicable standards for drinking water.

**From my November 7<sup>th</sup> letter:**

1. Please clarify the number of shifts per week that contracted staff are currently scheduled to work, the number of shifts per week contracted staff currently works, and the duration of each shift.
2. Please clarify how many detainees have escaped from Camp East Montana. Include details on if they were taken back into custody, how long they were outside of the facility, and what their current condition is.
3. Please clarify what protocols are in place to determine when a detainee requires medical attention beyond the capabilities of Camp East Montana and how quickly a detainee will be transferred to a local healthcare facility.
  - a. Which staff are responsible for ensuring the medical wellbeing of detainees at Camp East Montana?
  - b. What facility-specific training, if any, do these staff members receive before being able to interact with and make medical determinations for detainees at Camp East Montana?
  - c. Which staff are responsible for ensuring continuation of care for detainees at Camp East Montana once they are discharged from the local healthcare facility at which they received care?
  - d. Under what circumstances would a detainee with required follow-up care be unable to keep their appointments and meet with their healthcare team?

- e. Under which circumstances would a detainee who has received necessary and invasive care at a local healthcare facility continue to be housed at Camp East Montana at all, especially if staff is unable or unwilling to ensure compliance with necessary continuation of care off-site?

I demand that ICE and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) respond to these concerns and enumerate what steps, if any, are being taken to guarantee the safety and wellbeing of all the people currently detained at Camp East Montana, their families, and the staff there. Additionally, on December 17, 2025, U.S. District Judge Jia M. Cobb ruled ***against*** DHS's unlawful policy prohibiting Members of Congress from performing unannounced oversight visits. As the ruling immediately stayed DHS's policy barring unannounced visits, I look forward to my staff and I conducting direct oversight at Camp East Montana at our discretion.

Conditions at Camp East Montana are dangerous and inhumane; they have been since the facility opened at the beginning of August (when it was still an active construction site), and only seem to be deteriorating. It is increasingly clear that it is not a safe nor professionally managed facility. Continuing to detain people at Camp East Montana means continually exposing people to risks from unhygienic conditions, poorly built facilities, and a general lack of security and reliable management. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress