



One Hundred Seventeenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 24, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane, SW
Washington, DC 20528

Mr. Tae D. Johnson
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
1500 12th St., SW
Washington, DC 20356

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Acting Director Johnson:

We write to express grave concern over the conditions in the Torrance County Detention Facility (TCDF) operated by CoreCivic in Estancia, New Mexico, as outlined by a recent Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) Management Alert. The DHS OIG inspected TCDF and found that the facility is critically understaffed with unsanitary conditions, which has created health and safety risks for detainees.¹ To protect those in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention, we urge you to swiftly remove all individuals detained at TCDF and terminate ICE's contract with the facility.

DHS OIG found that TCDF is severely understaffed, including significant shortages in medical and security personnel. Security personnel were not present in housing units, which can have significant implications for detainee safety and welfare, as detainees may have no one to contact in emergencies. In addition, DHS OIG staff observed unsanitary living conditions, including mold and numerous non-functioning toilets and faucets in detainee housing units.

We are disturbed that in its response to the OIG's findings, ICE is defending CoreCivic's repeated failures to resolve ongoing issues to preserve detention space rather than following the OIG's recommendation to remove detainees from TCDF. ICE's response is not only inconsistent with the inspection, but also with its own recent findings. On March 1, 2022, ICE issued a Contract Discrepancy Report stating, "The Torrance County Detention Facility (TCDF) located in Estancia, NM has been *repeatedly in violation* of the 2011 Performance Based National Detention Standards

¹ Office of Inspector General, Management Alert – Immediate Removal of All Detainees from the Torrance County Detention Facility, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, Mar. 16, 2022, <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2022-03/OIG-22-31-Mar22-mgmtalert.pdf>.

(PBNDS) and the signed [Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)/Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) Intergovernmental Service Agreement (IGSA)] contractual agreement...”²

The Department has stated that it “will not tolerate the mistreatment of individuals in civil immigration detention or substandard conditions of detention.”³ We urge you to follow through on that commitment by immediately removing detainees from TCDF and ending the contractual agreement with the facility.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Border Security,
Facilitation, & Operations

² Ibid. (emphasis added)

³ Press Release: ICE to Close Two Detention Centers, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, May 20, 2021, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2021/05/20/ice-close-two-detention-centers>.