



JB Pritzker, Governor
Hina Mahmood, Executive Director

Illinois Accountability Commission Hosts Second Public Hearing

The Commission Releases Initial Status Report, Adopts Governor JB Pritzker's Recommendation to Examine Role of Trump Officials, Hears Compelling Expert Testimony

CHICAGO –The Illinois Accountability Commission, housed in the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR), today held its second public hearing to showcase how institutional structures and propaganda were abused to transform federal agents into a paramilitary force operating above the law during Operation Midway Blitz.

During the hearing, the Commission released its [initial status report](#), approved [Governor Pritzker's request](#) to examine the impact of the conduct and decisions of key Trump Administration officials, heard from five subject matter experts, and received public comment. To watch the recording, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cu7uMFfFplk>.

Overview of Testimony

Five subject matter experts provided testimony during the hearing. Information on the experts and key quotes can be found below:

Professor Robert Pape is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago and the Founding Director of the Chicago Project on Security and Threats. He explained that the administration's falsehoods about crime, justifications for using force, and terrorism labels applied to ordinary civilians are part of a consistent pattern to justify violence and justify local occupation. He also discussed how propaganda legitimizes force, why militarized deployments generate resistance, and when lies persist even after facts collapse.

"When disruption becomes collective, the enforcement stops feeling targeted and starts feeling political," **said Professor Robert Pape.** "When officials deny visible facts, credibility erodes. When credibility erodes, legitimacy follows especially when dealing with lethal uses of force."

Garrett Graff is a historian and journalist who has extensively documented the evolution of ICE and CBP for over two decades. Graff placed Operation Midway Blitz and ongoing immigration enforcement activities in historical context. He explained how these agencies grow, what happens when enforcement bodies scale rapidly, and why past surges in hiring, budget, and authority have consistently produced misconduct and loss of institutional control.

"CBP has been likely the deadliest and certainly the most troubled federal law enforcement agency for the better part of two decades now," **said Garret Graff.** "(CBP) This is an agency that is uniquely callous about human lives. Both of U.S. citizens and migrants. It is as best as anyone can determine perhaps the nation's deadliest law enforcement agency."

Deborah Fleischaker, who joined virtually, served in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for over 14 years under Republican and Democratic administrations. Her roles include DHS's Executive Secretary, the Acting Chief of Staff at ICE, and as an attorney in the DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties. She explained how DHS enforcement lost its internal constraints.

"What is happening in Chicago is not simply a federal policy dispute," **said Deborah Flieschaker.** "It's a demonstration of what occurs when immigration enforcement abandons its constraints and begins operating in ways that destabilize communities rather than protects them."

Dr. Marc Brown, who joined virtually, is the Academic Director and Lead Instructor for the Excellence in Policing and Public Safety Program at the University of South Carolina Joseph F. Rice School of Law. He began his career as a police officer for approximately 14 years and worked as a Physical Technique's Instructor for five years at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) – where he trained law enforcement officers from across the country, including Customs and Border Protection agents. He explained the constitutional framework governing when officers may use force and when that force crosses into unlawful territory. He educated the audience on the relevant use-of-force legal standard, what officers are trained to understand about reasonable force, and how accountability is supposed to function when those lines are crossed.

"I don't see their actions being consistent with the training they would have received at FLETC (Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers), in terms in grand factors," **said Dr. Marc Brown.** "And two for the current mission they have been tasked to do, I don't believe they have been trained properly at all. I think there is a significant gap in training and that's creating an issue for public safety."

Professor Nicole Hallett is a Clinical Professor of Law and Director of the Immigrant's Rights Clinic at the University of Chicago. She explained the Fourth Amendment's application to immigration enforcement: what distinguishes a consensual encounter from a detention, what reasonable suspicion requires, and why every person within the U.S. regardless of immigration status, has constitutional protection against unreasonable searches and seizures.

"The Fourth Amendment protects all people in the United States regardless of their immigration status," **said Professor Nicole Hallet.** "The Fourth Amendment refers to people, not citizens, and the courts have consistently applied its protections to citizens and non-citizens alike."

Initial Status Report

In alignment with requirements outlined in [Executive Order 2025-06](#), today the Commission issued its initial status report. The initial status report outlines the Commission’s work to date, information from the first hearing, as well as initial recommendations from the Commission. The final report will be completed no later than April 30, 2026.

Part of the Commission's purpose is to make recommendations for law or policy changes to ensure greater protection for Illinois residents from violations of their rights and to ensure community safety. Policy considerations include standards and limitations on use of force, identity shielding techniques, surveillance technology and additional measures of accountability for misconduct as well as identifying rapid response, community support initiatives, “know your rights” campaigns.

To view the full report, visit <https://ilac.illinois.gov/initial-report-january-2026>.

Submit a Report to the Commission

In October 2025, Governor Pritzker established the Illinois Accountability Commission to create a public record of the conduct of federal agents during “Operation Midway Blitz” and the Trump Administration’s military-style operations in Illinois. The Commission examines the impact of that conduct on individuals and communities to consider policy recommendations to prevent future harm.

Any person who witnessed or experienced potential misconduct during Operation Midway Blitz is encouraged to submit information — including photos, video, or narrative accounts — through the portal at ilac.illinois.gov/interest-form.

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