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## ICE whistleblower warns new recruits are receiving "defective" training



**CBS NEWS**



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A former U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement instructor responsible for educating new ICE officers on proper use of force said the agency's efforts to rapidly scale up its ranks will place recruits on the streets without the training they need to lawfully carry out immigration enforcement.

"Without reform, ICE will graduate thousands of new officers who do not know their constitutional duty, do not know the limits of their authority, and do not have the training to recognize an unlawful order," wrote the instructor, Ryan Schwank, in an excerpt of prepared remarks he planned to deliver before Congress.

Schwank, an attorney and career ICE employee who resigned from the immigration agency less than two weeks ago, is set to testify on Monday at a hearing organized by congressional Democrats. A spokesperson for Whistleblower Aid, the legal group representing Schwank, said he quit the agency in protest. It stands as one of the first instances of an ICE official who has served under the second Trump administration publicly rebuking the agency and the adequacy of its training. Schwank resigned from ICE on Feb. 13, according to congressional aides.

The hearing, organized by Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut and Rep. Robert Garcia of California, comes as calls for accountability grow in the wake of several incidents where federal immigration officers have deployed deadly force,

including the January killing of Renee Good in Minneapolis. Schwank's testimony will likely fuel Democrats' refusal to fund the Department of Homeland Security until the Trump administration agrees to a number of reforms for ICE, including a prohibition on agents wearing masks.

"I am duty bound to tell you the ICE Basic Immigration Enforcement Training Program is now deficient, defective, and broken," Schwank wrote in his prepared remarks. He alleged ICE officials are lying about the amount of training new recruits receive.



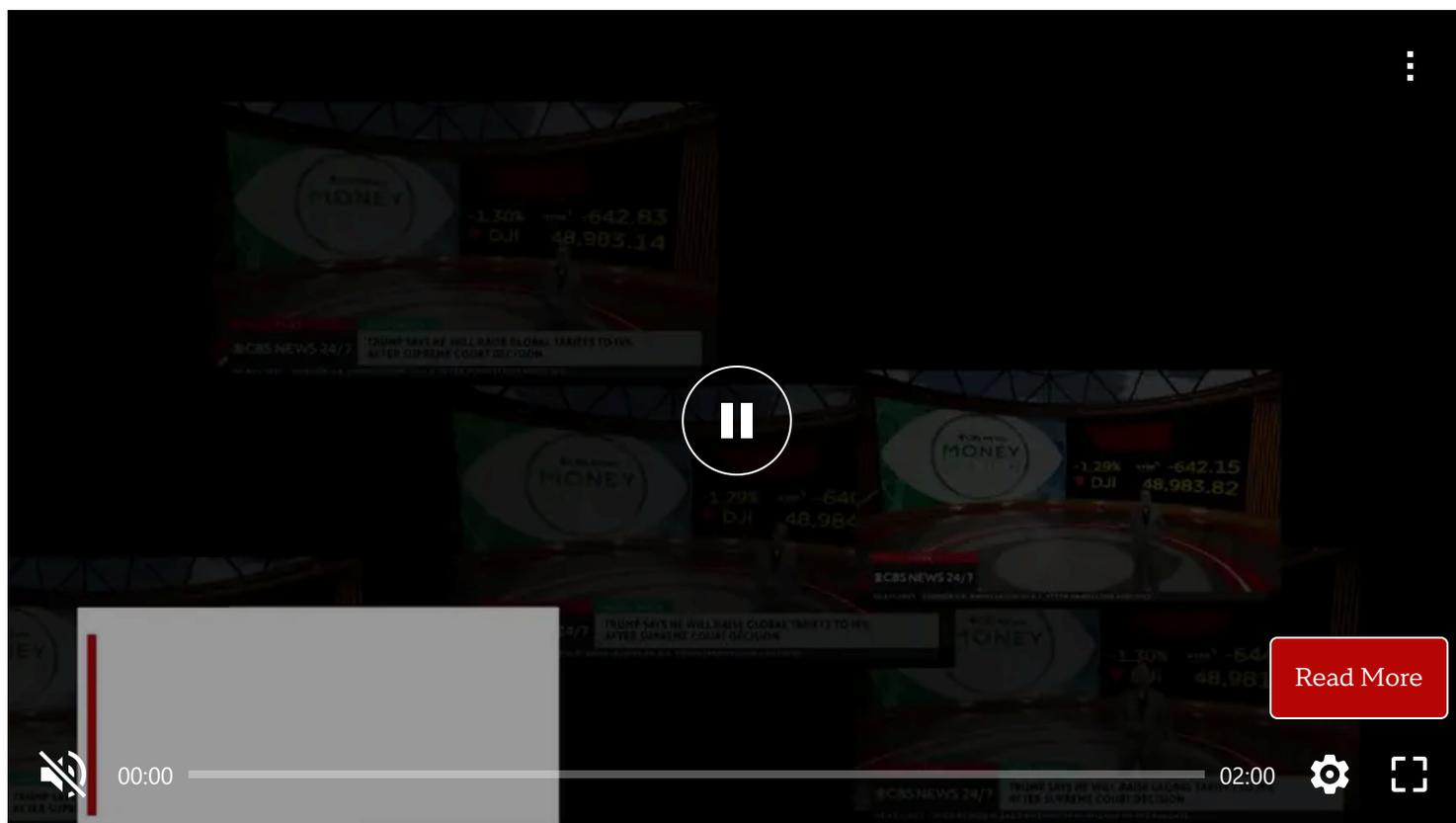
File: Ryan Schwank, a former career ICE employee who resigned in February 2026.

Photo provided by Whistleblower Aid

In addition to Schwank's testimony, CBS News obtained internal agency documents that were part of a disclosure he and a second U.S. government whistleblower shared with Congress. They include a July 2025 syllabus for the ICE officer training program, and an updated one dated February 2026. Within the 7-month span, training dropped from 72 to 42 days, and multiple courses dealing with use of force appear to be removed.

The documents also include a model daily schedule from January 2026 that shows at least some of ICE's new recruits are receiving about half the training hours as previous cohorts, according to an analysis by Democratic staff with the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigation. A list of required exams from October 2025 shows cadets are only graded on a fraction of the topics that were necessary to become an officer four years earlier. Eliminated evaluations appear to touch on use-of-force protocols, such as "Encounters to Detention" and "Judgment Pistol Shooting."

In a statement, the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees ICE, denied that any training requirements for new recruits had been eliminated.



"DHS has streamlined training to cut redundancy and incorporate technology advancements, without sacrificing basic subject matter content," the statement read. "Under these new improvements, candidates still learn the same elements and meet the same high standards ICE has always required. No subject matter has been cut."

DHS said the training still includes "multiple classes dedicated to use of force policy and the proper use of force."

During a hearing before Congress earlier this month, Acting ICE Director Todd Lyons said recruits with law enforcement experience are undergoing more abbreviated training.

"We reduced the timeline for the previous certified federal law enforcement officers or special agents – where we went to ones who are already trained in firearms and defensive tactics and criminal procedure, we adapted to a shorter program, so they would just have the extensive Immigration Nationality Act training, immigration law and ICE-specific training," Lyons said.

According to the documents disclosed to Congress, ICE expects about 4,000 new recruits will graduate from the training program by the end of September. The administration has said it will be hiring 10,000 new officers through the funding allocated by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

Schwank was first hired by ICE in 2021, according to a biography provided by congressional aides in advance of his testimony. In addition to his role training new recruits, Schwank has also represented the agency during immigration proceedings and served as an on-site legal adviser at ICE's family detention facility in Dilley, Texas.

He first raised concerns anonymously, in a [whistleblower complaint](#) shared with Congress in January, where he alleged Trump officials leading ICE have encouraged current immigration enforcement officers to embrace tactics that are unconstitutional.

That earlier disclosure revealed a directive signed by Lyons reversing longstanding rules that barred officers from entering homes without judicial warrants. Historically, ICE told its officers these warrantless entries violated constitutional protections. But Lyons' memo stated ICE agents could forcibly enter homes, without a judicial warrant, when they are targeting an individual with a deportation order.

Department of Homeland Security general counsel Jimmy Percival has defended the practice, arguing that warrants signed by ICE officials were sufficient because immigrants in the U.S. illegally aren't afforded the same constitutional rights as U.S. citizens. He noted ICE only uses these so-called administrative warrants when an individual "has received a final order of removal from an immigration judge."

Stevan Bunnell, a former DHS general counsel who will appear alongside Schwank at Monday's hearing, said the Supreme Court has found such administrative warrants unconstitutional.

"The police can't sign their own warrants," Bunnell wrote in prepared remarks.

Documents the whistleblowers disclosed to Congress also show ICE plans to graduate more than 3,000 new enforcement officers by June. In a statement, Blumenthal said by speaking out, Schwank was meeting "a moral imperative".

"To anyone else who is repulsed by what you're seeing or what authorities are asking you to do, please know that you can make a real difference by coming forward," he wrote.

ICE has been under intense pressure from the White House to ramp up arrests and deportations under the Trump administration, which has promised to oversee the largest deportation in American history. Last year, White House deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller said ICE should carry out a minimum of 3,000 arrests per day.

In President Trump's first year back in the White House, ICE carried out nearly 400,000 arrests, or roughly 1,000 per day, well below the 3,000 target but also up from the 300 average in 2024. According to an internal DHS document obtained by CBS News, less than 14% of arrestees had violent criminal records. Overall, 60% of

those arrested by ICE over the past year had criminal charges or convictions, and about 40% did not have any criminal records, beyond civil immigration violations.

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