

Protesters stand out against ICE at Hanscom Field

It was a cold and bleak afternoon, but that didn't deter about two dozen residents of Lincoln and neighboring towns who stood with protest signs to protest ICE prisoner flights from Hanscom Field on March 6 as they have done every Friday for the past several months.

Many of the protesters are from Lincoln, though some did not want to give their names for fear of being targeted by people who support the actions of (ICE) U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, such as the counter-protester who shouted at the group from across the road. One of the protesters was a woman dressed in a full-body owl costume (including mask) who strutted and flapped her wings in time to music such as "Immigrant Eyes" by Willie Nelson and "Get Up, Stand Up" by Bob Marley.

"I'm the entertainment," she said.

They're calling attention to the fact that ICE charts private planes to fly suspected illegal immigrants from its intake center in Burlington to detention centers elsewhere in the country. Almost three-quarters of those arrested [have not been convicted of any crime](#), according to the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute. ICE temporarily stopped using Hanscom Field for transport flights last summer but resumed operations in the fall.

"You do what you can do, being somewhere where you can cheer on the people fighting the good fight," said AJ Fripp of Lincoln.

An area doctor who gave his name only as John handed out hand warmers, water and tissues for the protesters. Over the summer, he also helped a couple of people who fainted from the heat. The protesters "are people who actually give a damn," he said. "It's worth doing, I think."

The protesters' actions at Hanscom and elsewhere are "all about undermining the pillars of ICE," such as the airfield services operations companies such as Signature Aviation that support the charter flights, said Andy Platt of Acton. "They're not being forthright and honest in their role in facilitating these flights... this is all being supported by these myriad companies that may in some cases have good reputations to maintain."

Among the regular Friday protesters are members of [LincolnWitness.org](#), many of whom staged a nighttime vigil at Lincoln Town Hall in January. The group's [calendar](#) lists future "De-ICE Hanscom" standouts as well as other area protests.

After the protesters had been there for a while, a counter-protester (a regular figure at these events and "our resident loony-tunes," as one protester described her) arrived and harangued the group from the traffic island across from where they stood with their signs. Echoing familiar right-wing tropes, she said the government is "doing good to get rid of people who come through the open border — criminals, murderers, rapists [running around] while we were shut in our homes wearing masks" during the pandemic.

The woman, who would not give her name or hometown, went on to assert that the Epstein files had exonerated President Trump of any wrongdoing and that ICE protests around the country included "Antifa, No Kings, [Jews Against ICE](#), and the Palestinian flag."

Massport runs Hanscom Field but has no direct involvement in scheduling or operating flights and, as a federally obligated airport, does not have the power to restrict any legal flights, Massport spokesman Jennifer Mehigan told the [Bedford Citizen](#) in late January.

“ICE flights are coordinated and managed exclusively by the fixed base operators (FBOs),” she said. “Any questions about ICE flight details should be directed to the Department of Homeland Security.”

In January, Gov. Maura Healey demanded that two private airline companies, GlobalX Airlines and Eastern Air Express, stop providing flights from Hanscom Field for ICE to remove Massachusetts residents who have been detained.

“Flying these residents out of state and away from their support systems and legal counsel — often within hours of arrest — is intentionally cruel and purposely obstructs the due process and legal representation they are owed. This is not the justice we believe in or stand for in Massachusetts or as Americans. This practice must stop,” Healey said in a [Dec. 15 letter](#) to then-Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and Acting ICE Director Todd Lyon.

Avelo Airlines, a commercial airline serving airports including the one in Wilmington, Del., announced on Jan. 9 that it was ending its nine-month-old partnership with ICE. [The announcement](#) came a week after two Delaware lawmakers introduced legislation to pressure the company to terminate its contract with ICE.

It’s unclear whether GlobalX Airlines is still flying ICE detainees out of Hanscom Field.

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