

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 15, 2026

Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20528

Todd Lyons
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20536

Secretary Mullin and Acting Director Lyons:

We write following deeply troubling reporting on the deployment of pepper spray on detainees at Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Arizona Removal Operations Coordination Center (AROCC) in Mesa, Arizona. As Members of Congress who have conducted oversight at this facility and witnessed gravely concerning conditions, we are alarmed by this incident, the medical impact on detained individuals, and the lack of transparency from your agencies.

According to reporting from the Arizona Mirror, ICE officers deployed pepper spray against approximately 47 detainees who were being held in an enclosed room at the Mesa facility in February 2026.¹ The room reportedly held nearly twice its intended capacity at the time of the incident. A 911 call obtained through a public records request captured an ICE officer informing emergency dispatchers that "pepper spray was used" and that one detainee "appears to be seizing" following exposure. Detainees can be heard in the background of the 911 call recording coughing. One individual was transported to an Arizona hospital for asthma treatment.

We are concerned that this incident fits into a broader national trend of widespread use of physical force and chemical agents inside ICE detention facilities nationwide.² Further, this incident continues a disturbing pattern of unsafe practices at the AROCC facility. We witnessed firsthand severe overcrowding, insufficient hygiene facilities, and a lack of medical staff at an unannounced oversight visit last month. Concerns about incidents at this facility are so severe that Mesa-Gateway Airport leadership sent a letter to Strategic Government Properties, the company that leases the AROCC facility to ICE, warning that continued overcrowding at AROCC could violate their land lease agreement.³

As Members of Congress exercising our oversight authority, we demand detailed responses to the following no later than May 29, 2026:

1. Please provide all incident reports, after-action reviews, medical assessments, surveillance footage, witness statements, and internal communications related to the incident.
2. How many detainees were present in the room where pepper spray was deployed, and what was the posted maximum occupancy for that room at the time of the incident?
3. What was the total number of detainees at the facility at the time of the incident?
4. What ventilation, evacuation, or decontamination procedures were followed after pepper spray was deployed in the facility?

¹ Arizona Mirror, "911 Call Reveals ICE Pepper-Sprayed 47 Detainees in Overcrowded Mesa Holding Facility," May 13, 2026, <https://azmirror.com/2026/05/13/911-call-reveals-ice-pepper-sprayed-47-detainees-in-overcrowded-mesa-holding-facility/>

² The Washington Post, "Internal ICE Records Reveal Widespread Use of Force in Detention Centers," May 4, 2026, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2026/05/04/ice-detention-centers-force/>.

³ Arizona Mirror, "Mesa Airport Warns ICE Facility's Landlord That Overcrowding May Violate Its Lease," Apr. 30, 2026, <https://azmirror.com/2026/04/30/mesa-airport-warns-ice-facilitys-landlord-that-overcrowding-may-violate-its-lease/>

5. What specific conduct by detainees prompted the use of pepper spray, and what de-escalation techniques were attempted prior to deployment?
6. Provide all policies, directives, field guidance, or training materials governing the use of pepper spray in enclosed or overcrowded detention settings.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



Adelita S. Grijalva
Member of Congress