

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 2, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
White House
1600 Pennsylvania, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

In line with your commitment to maximize governmental efficiency and productivity, we are writing to encourage you to direct your Administration to address the tens of millions of dollars a month being spent on the unprecedented actions to fly immigrants from the United States and detain them at Naval Station Guantánamo Bay (GTMO). This egregious use of taxpayer dollars should be a top-level concern for members of your Cabinet, and should be subject to, at a minimum, the same level of investigation you directed the U.S. DOGE Service Temporary Organization (USDS) to have over all government spending.

We write following our visit to GTMO where we saw first-hand and examined your Administration's use of GTMO as an immigration detention facility. While no one disagrees that violent criminals should be deported, this mission is operating under questionable legal authority, undermines due process, and is unsustainably expensive – wasting millions of dollars of taxpayer money.¹ Moreover, while your Administration has claimed that detention at GTMO is for the "worst of the worst," many individuals being detained at GTMO are classified by ICE as "low-level" detainees. We request that you direct the Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security to act immediately to end this wasteful spending, and that USDS launch an immediate full-scale review of these recent – and if applicable, future – efforts on immigration enforcement migrant operations in GTMO and evaluate whether such actions violate the law, agency policies or procedures, and whether these decisions create additional waste and inefficiency or allow fraud or misconduct.

The exorbitant cost of operating the controversial law of war detention facility at GTMO is well-documented, costing approximately \$13 million a year for each prisoner being held there.² Despite the known costs of using GTMO for detention, you directed the Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security on January 29, 2025 to expand the Migrant Operations Center (MOC) at GTMO to use additional detention space to hold tens of thousands of noncitizens to address "immigration enforcement needs identified by the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security."³ As of March 12, 2025, the migration operations mission for GTMO has

¹ Carol Rosenberg, *U.S. Has Spent \$40 Million to Jail About 400 Migrants at Guantánamo*, N.Y. Times (Mar. 31, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/31/us/politics/migrants-guantanamo-costs.html>.

² Carol Rosenberg, *The Cost of Running Guantánamo Bay: \$13 Million Per Prisoner*, N.Y. Times (Feb. 20, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/16/us/politics/guantanamo-bay-cost-prison.html>.

³ Memorandum from President Donald J. Trump to Sec'y of Def. and Sec'y of Homeland Sec., Expanding Migrant Operations Center at Naval Station Guantánamo Bay to Full Capacity, (Jan. 29, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/expanding-migrant-operations-center-at-naval-stationGuantánamo-bay-to-full-capacity/>.

cost taxpayers \$39.3 million dollars – and for now – GTMO can hold just 180 immigration detainees at a time.⁴ In contrast, existing DHS facilities in the mainland United States are Congressionally funded hold 41,500 detainees, costing between \$125 to \$200 a day.

The costly migration mission at GTMO has posed severe logistical challenges. Approximately 1,000 government personnel – which includes 900 members of the U.S. military – have been sent to GTMO to support this mission, and in February, military personnel were directed to build 195 tent structures to hold approximately 2,000 noncitizens which cost more than \$3 million dollars.⁵ After the tent structures were erected, your Administration determined that they did not meet detention standards, and this effort was paused.⁶ During our visit, DOD leadership told us that there was no intention to use the tent structures to hold any immigrants in another startling example of waste. In addition, your Administration has wasted taxpayer dollars in flying immigrants to GTMO, using both DOD and Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) contract flights, only to return immigrants to the United States mainland days later.⁷ According to U.S. Transportation Command, it costs DOD \$20,000 per flight hour for C-130Js and \$28,500 per flight hour for C-17s. The contracted ICE flights, that regularly transport immigrants inside of the U.S., cost \$8,500 per flight hour.

The outrageous spending of the migration operations mission at GTMO comes at a time when your Administration has indiscriminately moved to terminate thousands of federal employees across the government at the behest of DOGE under the guise of eliminating waste.⁸ Therefore, we request that your Administration review the extent to which the migrant operations at GTMO, including flights and detention, have and will impact agency operations and contribute to waste, fraud, and abuse. We request an initial review to this effect be completed within 30 days of receipt of this letter, resulting in a public advisory or analysis.

Please include in your review of migration operations at GTMO the following:

1. The detailed cost, broken down by each agency and entity, for detaining individuals at Naval Station Guantánamo Bay and projected future costs.
2. To what extent does the use of GTMO violate any federal law, regulation, or department policy or procedure.
2. Under what authority, if any, are conditions standards and operations determined? Please identify all authorities and conditions standards and operations by each agency and entity involved.
3. Have the GTMO migrant operations, including flights, contributed to or caused waste, fraud or abuse, including but not limited to a compromised or impacted agency/department mission?
4. The extent to which the use of roughly 1,000 military and DHS personnel reduces military readiness and efficacy and contributes to the waste of DOD and DHS resources.

⁴ Luis Martinez, *Southwest border mission has cost \$330M so far -- with over \$40M for Guantanamo Bay alone: Sources*, ABC News (Mar. 29, 2025), <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/southwest-border-mission-cost-330m-40m-guantanamo-bay/story?id=120298109>.

⁵ Carol Rosenberg, *How Guantánamo Bay Figures in the Trump Immigration Crackdown*, N.Y. Times (Apr. 4, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/04/us/politics/migrant-mission-guantanamo-bay.html>.

⁶ Haley Britzky and Priscilla Alvarez, *US halts plan to house migrants in tents at Guantanamo amid concerns over conditions*, CNN (Feb. 24, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/24/politics/guantanamo-tents-migrants-housing-paused/index.html>.

⁷ Morgan Lee and Tara Copp, *U.S. transfers immigrants out of Guantanamo Bay to Louisiana as court weighs legality*, AP (Mar. 13, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/guantanamo-bay-immigrant-detention-louisiana-1fe7a42993551269d58069d093c2cf8d>.

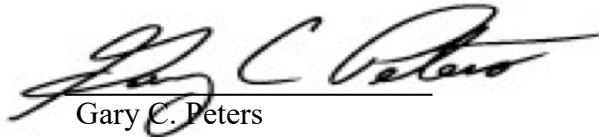
⁸ Letter from Senator Gary Peters, et al., to Inspectors General of 23 federal agencies (Mar. 21, 2025), <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/IG-Mass-Layoff-Request.pdf>.

May 2, 2025

Page 3

5. The extent to which the Administration justifies the reasoning behind using more costly DOD resources compared to ICE resources.

Respectfully,



Gary C. Peters
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs



Alex Padilla
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Border Security
and Immigration

cc: Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem
United States Digital Service Administrator Amy Gleason