

MEMORANDUM

To: Yakima City Council
From: Cliff Moore, Yakima City Manager
Date: July 3, 2019 (Note: This document is updated after each ICE flight)
Subject: ICE flight using Yakima Airport

Council,

On May 6 we learned that ICE would using the Yakima airport for detainee transfers while they attempt to “normalize” their relationship with King County. Flights began arriving on May 7. The flights to date have all originated in the US southwest and all flights have been met by busses coming from the federal detention center in Tacoma. In most cases, there are individuals arriving on the buses that get transferred to the plane and individuals on the plane that get transferred to the plane. In some cases, the buses or the plane arrive empty and take on detainees from the opposite conveyance. ICE has stated that when the planes depart, they are bound for another destination in the US southwest. We have heard El Paso, Texas; Las Vegas, Nevada and Mesa, Arizona. ICE has told the City that all of the detainees being transported are 18 years of age or older. From observing the flights, it appears that approximately 30% of the detainees are women, the rest are men. Most appear to be in their 20s or 30s, but there have been individuals who appear much older.

ICE has said that the individuals who are bound for the detention center in Tacoma are asylum seekers whose case is still pending adjudication. Apparently they will wait for a hearing at the detention center. ICE reports that those individuals boarding the plane for a southwest US destination have had an asylum hearing and their application has been denied; these individuals will be processed for deportation. We have been told that all the individuals being deported will be returned to their country of origin. ICE says that some of these individuals have been “convicted of serious crimes in the US or their home country, or are suspected of committing serious crimes in their home country.” Those individuals in this category will be flown to a destination in their home country and turned over to the custody of local officials. At least some Mexican nationals who are being deported will be walked across the border into the Mexican port of entry in Juarez and then either set free or turned over to the custody of Mexican officials, ICE would not say what the exact process would be.

Mr. Bryan Wilcox, the Acting Director of the Regional ICE Enforcement and Removal operation, based in Seattle, stated that ICE using the airport in Yakima did not mean we should expect additional ICE enforcement activities in the Yakima Valley. “They are completely different operations” he said.

ICE has been providing the required 24 hour notice for flights.

May 7: Flight arrived with 40 individuals who were transferred to buses. The buses carried 92 individuals who boarded the plane.

May 12: Flight arrived with 100 individuals who were transferred to buses. The buses arrived with nobody on board.

May 14: Flight arrived with 4 individuals who were transferred to a bus. The buses arrived with 78 individuals who boarded the plane.

May 18: Flight arrived with 34 individuals who boarded the buses. The buses arrived with nobody on board.

May 21: Flight arrived with 40 individuals who boarded the buses. Buses arrived with 61 individuals who boarded the plane.

May 26: Flight arrived with 50 individuals who boarded the buses. The buses arrived with nobody on board.

May 28: Flight arrived with nobody on board. Buses arrived with 60 individuals who boarded the plane.

June 4: Flight arrived with 76 individuals who boarded the buses. Buses arrived with 40 individuals who boarded the plane.

June 11: Flight arrived with 50 individuals who arrived from Mesa, AZ and boarded the buses. The buses arrived with 77 departing to Las Vegas, NV.

June 16: Flight arrived with 61 individuals who arrived from Houston, TX. The plane left empty.

June 18: Flight arrived empty from Mesa, AZ. Buses arrived with 88 individuals who boarded the plane for Las Vegas, NV.

June 22: Flight arrived with 92 passengers from Denver, CO. The plane departed to Mesa, AZ empty.

June 25: Flight arrived from Mesa, AZ empty. The plane departed to Las Vegas, NV with 73 passengers.

July 2: Flight arrived from Mesa, AZ with 52 passengers. The plane departed to Las Vegas, NV with 81 passengers.