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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

March 25, 2024

Mr. Charles F. Sams III
Director, National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20242

Dear Director Sams:

The House Committee on Natural Resources (Committee) is continuing to conduct oversight¹ on the decision² to house migrants at Floyd Bennett Field, a portion of Gateway National Recreation Area, on National Park Service (NPS) land. Since the establishment of the migrant encampment at Floyd Bennett Field, local and national media have reported an uptick in crime at the migrant encampment and in the immediate neighborhood surrounding the park.³ In an effort to continue the ongoing oversight on this issue—and ensure the safety of all who visit, work, or now may temporarily live on America’s public lands—the Committee seeks to better understand how NPS is working with its partners and the City of New York to minimize the public safety and health hazards from the unprecedented decision to utilize national park land for migrant housing.

¹ See Letter from Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, H. Comm. on Natural Resources, et al., to The Honorable Deb Haaland, Secretary, Dep’t of the Interior, and Charles F. Samms III, Director, National Park Service (Sep. 15, 2023), https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hnr_letter_to_doi_nps_on_migrant_shelters.pdf.

² National Park Service, *Lease Between U.S. Dep’t of the Interior, National Park Service and the City of New York for the Premises known as Portions of Floyd Bennett Field, in the Jamaica Bay Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area*, DEP’T OF THE INTERIOR (Sep. 15, 2023), <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/foia/upload/FINAL-Lease-Floyd-Bennet-Field-09-15-2023-2.pdf> [hereinafter FBF Lease]

³ Carl Campanile, *Migrants’ pricey cars towed outside controversial NYC shelter in same area where they begged door to door*, NEW YORK POST (Jan. 6, 2024), <https://nypost.com/2024/01/06/metro/at-least-five-unregistered-vehicles-used-by-migrants-parked-outside-floyd-bennet-field-shelter-towed/>; Georgia Worrell et al., *Fear and loathing at Brooklyn’s Floyd Bennett Field: Neighbors fuming over migrants’ ‘lawlessness’*, NEW YORK POST (Jan. 13, 2024), <https://nypost.com/2024/01/13/metro/brooklyn-residents-fuming-over-migrants-lawlessness/>; Sarah Goodman et al., *City Hall vows to probe ‘lawlessness’ following Post report on spike in crime around Floyd Bennett Field migrant shelter*, NEW YORK POST (Jan. 14, 2024), https://nypost.com/2024/01/14/metro/city-will-probe-any-lawlessness-by-migrants-at-bennett-floyd-field/?utm_source=ground.news&utm_medium=referral; Isabelle Stanley, *Floyd Bennett Field migrants leaves NYC’ers fuming over reported spike in robberies, scams and an arrests near shelter*, DAILY MAIL (Jan. 14, 2024), <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12962373/Floyd-Bennett-Field-New-York-migrant-crime-shelter-arrests.html>; Craig McCarthy & Alex Oliveria, *Adams ‘looking into’ imposing curfew at migrant shelters as panhandling, crime surges*, NEW YORK POST (Jan. 11, 2024), <https://nypost.com/2024/01/11/metro/adams-looking-into-imposing-curfew-at-migrant-shelters-as-panhandling-crime-surges/>.

As you are aware, on August 21, 2023, the Department of the Interior (DOI) and NPS agreed to lease Floyd Bennett Field to the City of New York for a migrant encampment.⁴ In response, New York State Governor Hochul described it as a “significant development” because she was working with the Biden administration for “many many many months” to house migrants on Floyd Bennett Field after DOI and NPS said they “do not allow” the use of national park land for migrant housing.⁵ On September 15, 2023, the parties executed the lease (FBF Lease).⁶

Despite establishing a migrant encampment at Floyd Bennett Field, the migrant crisis in New York City has continued unabated. The crisis led Mayor Eric Adams to state that “we cannot continue to do the federal government’s job” as New York City buckles under President Biden’s failed immigration policies.⁷ Meanwhile, to help New York City stay afloat, Mayor Adams issued an executive order to control when bus companies could deliver migrants to the city and require bus companies to provide advance notice of migrant arrivals.⁸

The migrant crisis in New York City has led to increased crime for community residents. The widespread reports of criminality in and around the Floyd Bennett Field migrant encampment include domestic violence, assault, shoplifting, prostitution, and panhandling scams.⁹ Sadly, the deleterious effects of the Biden administration’s border and immigration policies are not limited to New York. Indeed, the rampant criminality has spread from the border to communities throughout America, to the point that FBI Director Christopher Wray warned that terrorists exploiting the Biden administration’s open border policies are a “very dangerous” threat to Americans.¹⁰

As you may be aware, University of Georgia student Laken Riley was recently murdered on campus while jogging and, as described by President Biden, the perpetrator was an illegal immigrant.¹¹ Laken Riley’s murder was the first murder on the campus in thirty years and sparked

⁴ Eyewitness News, *Floyd Bennett Field to be used to house asylum seekers in Brooklyn, Hochul announces*, ABC NEWS (Aug. 21, 2023), <https://abc7ny.com/nyc-migrants-asylum-seekers-floyd-bennett-field/13680120/>; Jon Campbell, *White House approves migrant shelter at Brooklyn’s Floyd Bennett Field, Gov. Hochul says*, GOTHAMIST (Aug. 21, 2023), <https://gothamist.com/news/white-house-approves-migrant-shelter-at-brooklyns-floyd-bennett-field-gov-hochul-says>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ FBF Lease, *supra* note 2.

⁷ Jeffery C. Mays and Dana Rubinstein, *As Migrant Arrivals Surge, Adams Sets Controls on Bus Arrivals*, N.Y. TIMES (Dec. 27, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/27/nyregion/mayor-adams-migrants-bus.html>.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Campanile, *supra* note 3; Worrell, *supra* note 3; Goodman, *supra* note 3; Stanley, *supra* note 3; and McCarthy, *supra* note 3.

¹⁰ Adam Shaw, *FBI director warns of ‘very dangerous threats’ at border, smuggling network with ‘ISIS ties’*, FOX NEWS (Mar. 11, 2024), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/fbi-director-warns-very-dangerous-threats-border-smuggling-network-isis-ties>; *see also* Adam Shaw & Brooke Singman, *FBI Director Wray says border gotaways a source of ‘great concern’ for agency*, FOX NEWS (Nov. 15, 2023), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/fbi-director-wray-says-border-gotaways-a-source-of-great-concern-for-agency>.

¹¹ Jacey Fortin & Adeel Hassan, *The Killing at U. of Georgia: What We Know*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 8, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/article/uga-nursing-student-death.html>.

a “palpable” fear¹² and “shock” in the community.¹³ The suspect in her death, Jose Ibarra, was first arrested by the U.S. Border Patrol for entering the United States illegally in September 2022 and, according to the New York Times, “was released quickly.”¹⁴ According to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Jose Ibarra was arrested again a year later, in September 2023, by the New York Police Department for “acting in a manner to injure a child.”¹⁵ Sadly, the repeated criminality of Jose Ibarra is not an aberration for illegal immigrants released by the Biden administration. For example, on March 5, 2024, a migrant was arrested after beating a man with a rock in Brooklyn and attempting to steal his wallet.¹⁶ The migrant listed his address as one of the local shelters.¹⁷ The surging “migrant crime wave” led New York City Mayor Eric Adams to call for increased law enforcement help from federal authorities.¹⁸

The Committee is deeply concerned with the Biden administration’s management of American’s public lands, notably at Floyd Bennett Field, and the inherent safety risks to employees at the park, residents of the surrounding communities, and migrants as a result of the decision to lease national park land for a migrant encampment. Moreover, the Committee is concerned about how the criminality at Floyd Bennett Field is part of the widespread lawlessness permeating from the Biden administration’s contempt for the rule of law at the border to the illegal immigrants who were released and spread throughout America.

Indeed, the FBF Lease does contain terms on law enforcement services at Floyd Bennett Field, with the naming of the New York Police Department (NYPD) as the “primary entity responsible for law enforcement issues inside the perimeter of the [migrant encampment] Premises.”¹⁹ However, it has come to the Committee’s attention that the City of New York has contracted with a private security firm to provide security at the migrant encampment, and, on at least one occasion, the private security firm has impeded NYPD officers attempting to access the camp.

As you know, Floyd Bennett Field is located on federal land. It is the Committee’s understanding that tenants of the migrant camp are not subject to a basic background search during the intake process. All tenants, employees of Floyd Bennett Field, and surrounding residents

¹² Will Leitch, *The Murder on My Running Trail*, NEW YORK MAGAZINE (Feb. 28, 2024), <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/the-murder-on-my-running-trail.html>.

¹³ Chris Starrs, *Athens running community asking how best to move forward in wake of Laken Riley's murder*, ATHENS BANNER-HERALD (Feb. 28, 2024), <https://www.onlineathens.com/story/news/local/2024/02/28/laken-riley-murder-athens-runners/72757262007/>.

¹⁴ Fortin, *supra* note 11.

¹⁵ Chris Welch, *UGA student murder suspect arrested last year in NYC, ICE says, despite NYPD claims*, FOX5 NEW YORK (Feb. 26, 2024), <https://www.fox5ny.com/news/uga-student-murder-suspect-arrested-last-year-in-nyc-ice-says-despite-nypd-claims>.

¹⁶ Joe Marino and David Propper, *Migrant arrested for beating man with rock during attempted robbery in Brooklyn: sources*, NEW YORK POST (Mar. 5, 2024), <https://nypost.com/2024/03/05/us-news/nyc-migrant-arrested-for-assault-and-attempted-robbery-sources/>.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ David Propper, *Eric Adams proposes U-turn on NYC's controversial sanctuary city status after migrant crime wave grips Big Apple*, NEW YORK POST (Feb. 27, 2024), <https://nypost.com/2024/02/27/us-news/adams-calls-nyc-to-cooperate-with-ice-over-migrants-accused-of-serious-crimes/>.

¹⁹ FBF Lease, *supra* note 2.

deserve to know if they are living with migrants who have previous arrest records and/or convictions.

To assist the Committee with ensuring effective management of America's public lands and better understand the role that NPS will play to uphold the safety of its employees and surrounding communities in the unprecedented decision to use national park land for a migrant encampment, please provide the following documents and information by April 11, 2024:

1. Documents and communications sufficient to demonstrate how NPS is monitoring the terms of the FBF Lease, particularly as it relates to law enforcement services, including:
 - a. All communications with the New York Police Department regarding law enforcement concerns, calls, or complaints that have occurred at Floyd Bennett Field since the opening of the camp.
 - b. Documentation sufficient to demonstrate any subcontracts the NPS may be aware of between the City of New York and private security firms handling law enforcement services on a routine basis at Floyd Bennett Field.
 - c. A narrative explanation of how the use of private security meets the obligations of the FBF Lease.
2. Documents and communications sufficient to show how NPS has cooperated, or plans to cooperate, with ICE to better ensure the safety of residents in and around Floyd Bennett Field.
3. Documents and communications sufficient to show how the migrant tenants at Floyd Bennett Field are screened, particularly for a criminal history.
4. Document and communications sufficient to show how NPS is preventing persons with a history of criminal conduct from residing at Floyd Bennett Field.

An attachment to this letter provides additional instructions for responding to the requests from the Committee on Natural Resources. Please contact the Majority staff for the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee at (202) 225-2761 or HNRR.Oversight@mail.house.gov with any questions. Under House Rule X, the Committee on Natural Resources has "general oversight" of any matter relating to its jurisdiction, including the management of national parks and federal lands. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Bruce Westerman
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations



Mike Collins
Member of Congress



Anthony D'Esposito
Member of Congress



Andrew Garbarino
Member of Congress



Nick LaLota
Member of Congress



Nicole Malliotakis
Member of Congress



Elise Stefanik
Member of Congress

Enclosure