

# United States Senate

September 18, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth  
Secretary of War  
U.S. Department of War  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth,

Thank you for restoring warfighting focus to the Department of War (DoW) and thank you especially for ensuring defense of the homeland remains central to the Department's mission.

As I raised with General Mahoney during his confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee on September 11, I believe Fort Leonard Wood offers an important opportunity for the DoW to support a vital national security priority: training the next generation of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents.

Fort Leonard Wood is already a cornerstone of America's law enforcement training enterprise. The installation houses the U.S. Army Military Police School and the Marine Corps Police Academy, as well as the Army's Criminal Investigative Training program. These institutions have long demonstrated the Army's ability to prepare law enforcement professionals of the highest caliber. Beyond its existing missions, Fort Leonard Wood has vast unused capacity—thousands of acres of training grounds, robust barracks and classroom infrastructure, and a fully functional dual-use airfield—that could readily accommodate surge training needs for ICE.

This proposal is not without precedent. During the height of the War on Drugs, Fort Leonard Wood hosted specialized interdiction training for local and state law enforcement agencies across the nation. The installation has repeatedly proven its ability to absorb sudden increases in training demand and to deliver results that strengthen both national defense and domestic law enforcement.

Today, that experience and capacity can be used again. Through robust funding provided in the One Big Beautiful Bill, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is pursuing a major recruitment effort to expand ICE's enforcement workforce. The success of that initiative depends on quickly bringing new agents through training pipelines. Fort Leonard Wood is uniquely positioned to meet this need: it has the infrastructure, the expertise, and the space to serve as a surge training hub.

Just as important, the DoW must be fairly compensated for the use of its facilities and services. Under longstanding authorities such as the Economy Act, DHS can reimburse DoW for the direct and indirect costs associated with providing training support. In practice, this ensures that DHS's robust new funding is properly applied to its expanded mission set while protecting the Army's core resources from being depleted. This type of interagency reimbursement is a model of responsible stewardship—aligning resources to national priorities without burdening the DoW with unfunded mandates.

I urge you to work proactively with the DHS and ICE to make Fort Leonard Wood available for this mission. Leveraging synergies between our military law enforcement schools and civilian federal law enforcement is precisely the kind of coordination that enhances overall national security. It will strengthen border enforcement, make prudent use of existing Defense resources, and demonstrate the DoW's ability to adapt to pressing national priorities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your views on how the Department can best facilitate this partnership and stand ready to support your efforts in Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Eric S. Schmitt", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eric S. Schmitt  
United States Senator

Cc: Secretary of Homeland Security  
Cc: Secretary of the Army