



**OFFICE OF THE
RAMSEY COUNTY ATTORNEY**
John J. Choi, County Attorney



**OFFICE OF THE
RAMSEY COUNTY SHERIFF**
Bob Fletcher, Sheriff

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Dennis Gerhardstein, 651-421-0365

Ramsey County Attorney and Sheriff seek information from the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regarding possible kidnapping and other charges of federal agents

Saint Paul, MN – Ramsey County Attorney John Choi and Ramsey County Sheriff Bob Fletcher announced today an active local investigation into an incident in which federal law enforcement agents may have committed the crimes of kidnapping, burglary, and false imprisonment. The County Attorney and Sheriff also announced steps to obtain needed information from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and encouraged the public to report similar incidents.

On the afternoon of January 18, 2026, several individuals forcibly entered the Saint Paul home of ChongLy Scott Thao, a U.S. citizen. Mr. Thao was handcuffed and removed from his home without consent, dressed only in shorts and Crocs in sub-freezing weather. He was driven around and questioned while in-custody for approximately one hour before being returned home. It is believed the individuals involved were agents of one or more DHS agencies. At this time, there is no indication that the agents had a warrant for entry or arrest.

The identities of the individuals remain unknown. Investigators with the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office identified a vehicle used in the incident, but its license plates were switched shortly afterward to another vehicle. The lead investigator sought information from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) but was denied. On March 23, the County Attorney's Office submitted a formal "Touhy Demand" to DHS requesting all relevant information. A Touhy Demand is the legally prescribed method for obtaining information from federal agencies in such cases. This letter is attached.

In the letter, the County Attorney's Office Trial Division Director Hao Nguyen stated:

"Federal officers may be found criminally liable under state law unless they act with legal authority in a way that is necessary and proper. Whether or not these officers committed a crime, and whether or not they may ultimately be immune from prosecution, can only be determined through a full investigation. The public is demanding, and deserves, transparency when authorities may have violated their trust. This transparency, and accountability when warranted, is in the interest of all who work in law enforcement and government generally. Without it, we lose the trust of those we are sworn to serve and protect, and our entire system of government loses credibility."

Nguyen is leading a team of attorneys, including Senior Assistant County Attorney Mark Haase, focused on this and other federal officer-involved incidents.

Speaking of the importance of accountability, the role of local law enforcement, and the need to support victims and affected communities, Ramsey County Attorney Choi stated:

“I am grateful for the work of the Sheriff’s Office in this case. We will continue to support all our law enforcement partners in getting to the truth and holding people accountable regarding Operation Metro Surge and will not give up until every option has been explored.

I also want victims to know that we will work with them in determining whether we move forward in a case and help them secure any support or protections available. We’ve been working with several attorneys for victims already, and reaching out to lawyers and community groups supporting people impacted.”

Ramsey County Sheriff Fletcher stated:

“There are limits to ICE authority just like there are limits to ours. When you exceed your authority, the United States multi-tiered system of justice ensures that there are checks and balances to hold all law enforcement accountable. One of those systems is the Federal Court but another check is local law enforcement and local laws. When people feel that those limits have been breached and or a crime has occurred, they have the right to make a report. And it’s our job to investigate.”

Both the County Attorney and the Sheriff continue to encourage anyone who has witnessed or experienced what may have been a crime committed by federal agents in Ramsey County to come forward by calling 9-1-1 or calling the non-emergency number for the local law enforcement agency where it occurred. Victim support services may be available, and both victims and witnesses may qualify for protective visas.

More information can be found on the Ramsey County Attorney’s Office [Federal Immigration Enforcement Guidance and Reporting](#) page. Related questions can be directed to the County Attorney's Office at RCAOffice@co.ramsey.mn.us.

Note: Contact Dennis Gerhardstein for additional information.