

ICE Calls for Discipline of Lawmaker who called them Gestapo

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The head of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will ask Congress to consider taking disciplinary action against one of its members for a statement he made equating ICE agents with the Gestapo, a senior agency official said Wednesday.

Luis V. Gutierrez, vice chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee that handles immigration, has called for a moratorium on ICE enforcement actions until Congress passes a comprehensive overhaul, something it has failed to do in each of the past two years.

In a column written for Politico, Gutierrez, D-Ill., commenting on recent ICE arrests of illegal immigrants in Iowa, said: "You know who is in charge now? The Gestapo agents at Homeland Security. They are in charge."

A senior ICE official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Julie L. Myers, the assistant secretary of Homeland Security for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, was "absolutely appalled and deeply angered" by the statement. The official said Myers would send a letter to senior members of Congress asking that disciplinary action be taken against Gutierrez' for his remarks.

Another official, Jamie Zuieback, director of congressional affairs for ICE, went on the record. "It's not OK," Zuieback said. "Aside from being demeaning to the law enforcement officers that uphold the very laws passed by Mr. Gutierrez's Congress, it's potentially dangerous. No member of Congress should be encouraging the public to defy or demean federal law enforcement officers. Words matter."

A call seeking comment from Gutierrez was not returned. Similar comments from the immigration activist community are not all that uncommon, and at least one other Democratic House member has made a similar remark. At a February hearing, California Democrat Sam Farr, assessing ICE's tactics, said, "What happens is the public image of you becomes one of not this compassionate law enforcement agency but essentially a Gestapo-type agency that is knocking on doors."

At that hearing, Myers responded by saying "Congressman Farr, we are not the Gestapo, and I will not listen to you call . . . us Gestapo."