



United States Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Northern District of New York*

*Gateway Building
14 Durkee Street, Suite 340
Plattsburgh, New York 12901-2998*

*Tel.: (518) 314-7800
Fax: (518) 314-7811*

June 23, 2025

Hon. Gary L. Favro
U.S. Magistrate Judge
U.S. District Court
14 Durkee St., Suite 350
Plattsburgh, New York 12901

Re: *United States v. Timothy Oakes* (No. 8:25-CR-147 (MAD))

Dear Judge Favro,

I write in connection with the anticipated detention hearing for defendant Timothy Oakes in the above-captioned matter. The defendant was arrested on June 15, 2025, in the Northern District of New York (NDNY), by Homeland Security Investigations at the Massena Port of Entry. On June 17, 2025, the defendant appeared before Your Honor for an initial appearance.

Given the defendant has indicated he desires a detention hearing, the government offers the following information in support of its request to detain the defendant because he poses a flight risk. In determining whether to detain the defendant, the Court must consider “(1) the nature and circumstances of the offense charged; (2) the weight of the evidence against the defendant; (3) the history and characteristics of the defendant; and (4) the nature and seriousness of the danger to any person or the community that would be posed by the defendant’s release.” *United States v. Dai*, 2023 WL 11016392, at *6 (N.D.N.Y. Dec. 19, 2023) (citing 18 U.S.C. § 3142(g)). Each of these factors supports detention.

I. The nature and circumstances of the offense and the weight of the evidence warrant detention.

On April 9, 2025, Oakes was indicted for conspiracy to commit alien smuggling, four counts of alien smuggling for profit, and four counts of alien smuggling resulting in death. The indictment stems from an attempted human smuggling event in which a Romanian family of four died when the small boat that they were travelling in across the St Lawrence River capsized on March 29, 2023. Upon conviction, the defendant faces a mandatory minimum sentence of imprisonment of five years and up to life in prison. These penalties alone provide the defendant significant incentive to flee.

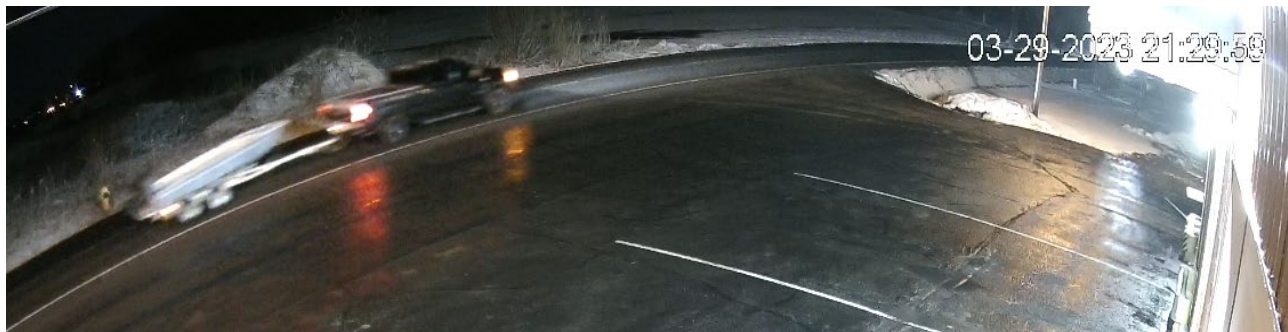
The evidence establishes the defendant was a key facilitator in a human smuggling organization that smuggled aliens from mainland Cornwall, Canada to Cornwall Island and then

Letter to Hon. Gary L. Favro
United States v. Oakes.
 Case No. 8:25-CR-147 (MAD)
 June 23, 2025
 Page 2

into northern New York. The defendant, a Native American Indian living on the Canadian portion of the Akwesasne Mohawk Indian Reservation—which overlaps the United States and Canada—is a known alien smuggler and would frequently smuggle aliens by boat utilizing the St. Lawrence River. The evidence further establishes that the defendant was routinely paid by a codefendant to pilot boats carrying aliens across the river, earning \$1,000 per alien that he crossed. The aliens were later driven into New York. Cornwall Island, Canada is a well-known staging area for smugglers to prepare to send contraband and aliens across the St. Lawrence River into the United States.

The defendant and his co-conspirators were in the business of smuggling aliens and the evidence establishes that the defendant's home was used as a staging area for such criminal activity. The evidence establishes that in March 2023, the defendant housed the Romanian family and other aliens for nearly 24 hours before transporting them to a public boat launch on the tip of Cornwall Island. Once there, the defendant offloaded his boat for his brother, Casey Oakes, to transport the migrants across the river. The boat was used by Casey Oakes to attempt to smuggle the Romanian family of four across the river. The evidence further establishes that the boat used to attempt to smuggle the migrants was transported by the defendant toward the public boat launch on the evening of the fatal smuggling event. The boat capsized resulting in the deaths of the Romanian family and Casey Oakes.

Co-conspirators Dakota Montour, 31, and Kawisiiostha Celecia Sharrow, 43, both of Akwesasne-Mohawk, New York, and Janet Terrance, 45, of Hogansburg, New York, entered guilty pleas on Jan. 23, 2025, Oct. 8, 2024, and March 6, 2025, respectively (8:24-CR-295 (MAD)).



The defendant's vehicle with light blue boat in tow on March 29, 2023, at 9:29 p.m., appearing to match the boat found in the river during recovery efforts.

II. The history and characteristics of the defendant warrant detention.

The defendant is a dual citizen of the United States and Canada as a result of his Native American status. The defendant's knowledge of the reservation, its porous borders, and his known

Letter to Hon. Gary L. Favro
United States v. Oakes.
Case No. 8:25-CR-147 (MAD)
June 23, 2025
Page 3

status as an alien smuggler all weigh in favor of his detention. Simply put, if the defendant wished to flee to another country, he would be able to simply walk across one of the several unguarded roads that exist on the Akwesasne and be in Canada. All of this demonstrates that he poses a risk of flight such that there are no conditions to ensure his appearance.

Based on these facts, the government requests detention because the defendant presents as a serious risk of flight. Should the Court require further information, please so advise.

Respectfully submitted,

JOHN A. SARCONI III
United States Attorney

By: /s/ Jeffrey C. Stitt
Jeffrey C. Stitt
Assistant United States Attorney
Bar Roll No. 520195

MATTHEW R. GALEOTTI
Head of the Criminal Division
Department of Justice

By: /s/ Jenna Reed
Jenna Reed
Trial Attorney
Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section