

Gov. Tom Wolf
Office of the Governor
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Attorney General Josh Shapiro
Office of the Attorney General
Strawberry Square
Harrisburg, PA 17120

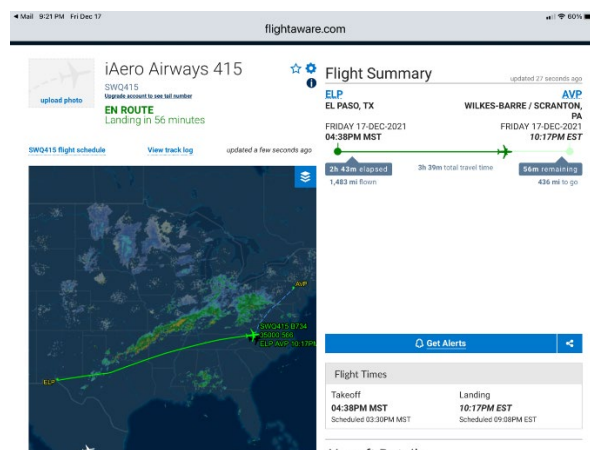
December 23, 2021

Dear Gov. Wolf and Attorney General Shapiro:

I write regarding reports aired this week on WILK radio in Wilkes-Barre which contend that a plane carrying illegal immigrants apprehended at the southern border of the United States was flown from El Paso, Texas to Northeast Pennsylvania late at night on December 17, 2021. These reports included eyewitness accounts from employees of Wilkes-Barre Scranton International Airport who estimated that as many as 180 illegal immigrants disembarked from the plane.

Because of the nature of what has been described, I am corresponding to both of you in your roles as chief executive of the Commonwealth and chief law enforcement officer of the Commonwealth.

If the accounts are true, it would seem to be in line with the established policy of the Biden administration to transport illegal immigrants from the border to other locations within the country. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki has confirmed the existence of such flights to other states, and only quibbled about the time of day they were occurring.



According to the screenshot from FlightAware included above, the flight originated in El Paso at 4:38 p.m. MST and landed at 10:17 p.m. EST at Wilkes-Barre Scranton International on December 17. The carrier is noted as iAero Airways, which is known to be a charter company

that has contracts with the federal government, specifically with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Such a flight would be in keeping with others which have been permitted to land in Pennsylvania. For example, a flight of unaccompanied minors from the southern border landed at Erie International Airport in April, and thousands of refugees have landed in Philadelphia since August.

I am drawing this issue to your attention because there are serious concerns that arise when accepting flights of illegal immigrants. As someone who dealt with the issue of illegal immigration extensively as the mayor of Hazleton and as a member of Congress, I know that it is extremely difficult to adequately screen people and conduct a thorough background check when they have entered the country by illegal means.

The nation is in the midst of a rising tide of crime, and Pennsylvania has not been spared. Philadelphia is setting a new record for murders in a calendar year with every passing day, and Pittsburgh is experiencing a similar wave of violence. We have at least 17 jurisdictions in the Commonwealth which classify themselves as “sanctuary cities,” meaning they refuse to cooperate with federal immigration authorities. Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties are not among those sanctuary cities, although their shared border is where Wilkes-Barre Scranton International Airport is located. Certainly, the idea of introducing illegal immigrants to the population without proper screening is concerning from a public safety perspective.

Further, as the nation is in the tightening grip of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, Pennsylvanians are being asked, and in some cases required, to be vaccinated and masked when working or entering certain public places. It would seem to be an extremely difficult task to determine the health status of a large group of illegal immigrants, and it would be a reckless disregard for public health and unfair to lawful citizens to enforce a lower standard for those who broke our laws to cross our border.

And finally, extending such accommodation to illegal immigrants at taxpayer expense is a slap in the face to legal immigrants who followed the proper processes to emigrate to this country. It sends the message that they need not have bothered following our laws, because it is now American policy to decline to enforce those laws at all. In addition, there are countless people around the world who are right now waiting in line to enter legally, yet we continue to let thousands upon thousands enter with few or no consequences.

All of this brings me to a series of questions to which I would like answers:

- 1) Was there indeed a flight from El Paso to Wilkes-Barre Scranton International Airport on December 17, 2021 for the purpose of transporting illegal immigrants?
- 2) Were you aware of this flight?
- 3) If so, what was your reasoning for permitting it to land?
- 4) If you permitted the flight to land, why were the citizens of Pennsylvania not informed?
- 5) How were criminal background checks conducted on the passengers?
- 6) How did you determine the passengers' COVID-19 or vaccination status?

- 7) How many passengers were on board and where are they now?
- 8) Will there be more such flights in the future?
- 9) If you were not aware of the flight, will you commit to an investigation to determine how this was allowed to occur without your knowledge?

If it was your decision to allow a flight of illegal immigrants to land on December 17, the citizens of Pennsylvania are entitled to know your rationale for doing so. At the very least, they deserve transparency on an issue that is of such importance to public safety and public health.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lou Barletta". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lou Barletta
Former mayor and member of Congress