NEWS

"Let nothing come between you and the light."
HENRY DAVID THOREAU AMERICAN ESSAYIST

ICE agents detain Southern Connecticut State student at Tweed airport

BY EVELYN RONAN AND NORAH MCPARTLAND
STAFF REPORTERS

Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents arrested a Southern Connecticut State University student-athlete at Tweed New Haven Regional Airport on Friday afternoon.

The arrest is the latest in a recent wave of increased ICE activity across Connecticut and follows reports of covert federal law enforcement operations at Bradley International Airport in Hartford over the summer.

"On September 4, at the Tweed New Haven Airport, ICE arrested Deng Deng, an illegal alien from South Sudan," a spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security wrote in a statement to the New Haven Independent. "He legally entered the U.S. and illegally overstayed, violating the immigration laws of our country. All of his claims will be heard by an immigration judge and he will receive due process. This administration will not ignore the rule of law."

Deng, who announced his commitment to play basketball at Southern Connecticut State University in a May Instagram post, is currently in custody at Wyatt Detention Facility in Central Falls, Rhode Island, according to ICE's Online Detainee Locator System. Per online court records, Deng's lawyers filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus on Friday, which would require the federal government to justify his detention in court.

United States District Judge Vernon Oliver issued an order the same day mandating that Deng not be transferred to any detention facility more than 150 miles away from the Connecticut border. The case was transferred to the district court of Massachusetts on Wednesday.

"Tweed-New Haven Airport, like all public-use airports, is subject to federal law enforcement agencies and has no visibility into or influence over enforcement activity," a Tweed spokesperson wrote in an email to the News when asked about ICE activity in the airport.

Anne Watkins, an organizer with the New Haven Immigrants Coalition, said the volunteer organization has received numerous tips about federal agent presence at Tweed since last week and alleged that the agency detained at least two people since then.

"We know that they are parking in the Tweed parking lot, and we know that they've been stationed at the TSA checkpoints," Watkins said in a phone interview, referring to the Transportation Security Administration.

Watkins alleged that the airport has issued security passes to ICE agents, which provides them with unrestricted access to the airport.

"For operational security purposes, ICE does not disclose information pertaining to current or ongoing operations, including law enforcement plans, tactics or strategies," a spokesperson for ICE's Boston field office wrote in an emailed statement on Tuesday.

In photographs of the arrest obtained by the New Haven Independent, ICE agents wore photo identification cards that resemble Tweed-issued security badges.

In response to a question about whether the airport was badging federal agents, a Tweed spokesperson cited a federal statute requiring airport operators to authorize "unescorted access for qualifying government employees, including law enforcement officers, as long as a background check was part of the employment process."

"Access and credentialing remain subject to the airport's TSA-approved security program and other applicable security requirements," the spokesperson wrote.

In July, state officials and the Connecticut Airport Authority confirmed ICE activity at Bradley International Airport in Hartford. Connecticut Insider reported that month that despite concerns that federal agents were stationed inside the airport, Tweed personnel had not received any notification from TSA of ICE activity at airports.

"The CAA has no authority to intervene or prevent such operations, which occurred predominantly in areas under the control of the federal government," the Connecticut Airport Authority wrote in a statement to the Connecticut Mirror.

"The mission of the CAA is to provide the safest and most convenient facilities for our workforce and the many families and individuals traveling through Bradley International Airport, and this initiative does not further that mission."

Watkins said that New Haven Immigrants Coalition and other immigrant protection groups across the country are "concerned about ICE's tactics of terror" and encouraged New Haven citizens to "share information, not spread fear."

Watkins said any ICE sightings should be reported to New Haven Immigrants Coalition through their hotline at (854) 666-4472.

In April 2025, Avelo, which operates most planes flying out of Tweed, announced that it would be the first commercial airline to partner with the Department of Homeland Security to run deportation flights via a department contractor. Avelo cited low revenue from Tweed New Haven airport as a motivating factor.

Nine months later, following a petition by the New Haven Immigrants Coalition — which amassed over 40,000 signatures — local protests and anti-Avelo billboards along the I-95, Avelo moved to "pause" its relationship with DHS in January.

An Avelo spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment on whether the airline resumed its relationship with DHS after the January pause.

Avelo CEO Andrew Levy announced in a company-wide email earlier this year that the returns of chartering deportation flights were not sufficient to maintain the partnership with Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

CSI Aviation, the company that previously chartered Avelo's deportation flights, made over $1.2 billion in ICE contract revenue in the first year of Trump's second term.

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ZOE BERG / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Local organizers say that federal immigration agents are conducting operations at Tweed New Haven Regional Airport amid mounting anxiety about Immigration and Customs Enforcement activity statewide.

Health-oriented Korean rice bowl restaurant opens on Whitney Avenue

BY ELSPETH YEH AND CINDY ZHONG
STAFF REPORTERS

BIBIM, a restaurant offering build-your-own Korean rice and salad bowls, opened last week on Whitney Avenue.

The eatery occupies the former address of sushi and hot pot restaurant Tiger Daddy and hopes to attract Yalies looking for healthy, cost-effective meals. Gracemarie Luciano, a manager of the restaurant, said it has sold 1,000 bowls in its opening week. Joseph Park, BIBIM's owner, said his weight loss journey inspired him to open the restaurant.

"I truly believe having a good meal can really change somebody's life," Park, who also owns the franchised branch of bb.q Chicken next door to BIBIM, said in a phone interview.

When Park saw Tiger Daddy was preparing to close its location between Trumbull and Grove streets, he decided to try out a different restaurant concept at the storefront.

The restaurant owner said he lost over 100 pounds in one year — which he said he achieved by eating bibimbap for lunch every day. Bibimbap, which translates literally to "mixed rice," is a Korean dish consisting of rice, various vegetables, and a protein, then often topped with an egg.

Park said he previously weighed 310 pounds and suffered from severe health issues related to his weight. When a doctor informed him that he might not make it to 50 years old with his current lifestyle, he said, the restaurant owner decided it was time to make a change. Through BIBIM, he hopes to share bibimbap with local patrons.

"I'm trying to build something very healthy for the kids, healthy for the people, and the price is actually something that is not going to be breaking their bank," Park said.

Bibim's signature bowl costs $14.95 before tax, and the restaurant currently offers a 10 percent discount for students. Each bowl also comes with a complimentary side of soup, which changes day to day.

Park said that conversations with students who would come into bb.q Chicken informed BIBIM's prices. He said he has often heard students complain that their dorms did not include kitchens and that they often found themselves buying meals for over $20.

The restaurant owner said he also noticed that there were many Asian students in the area, and thought they might be homesick for familiar flavors. He hopes that bibimbap, something that reminds Park of his parents' cooking, will provide "a little comfort" to these students.

He said that promoting Korean cuisine to those unfamiliar with it was a large part of his mission with BIBIM.

Since Park thought that not everyone would enjoy gochujang, a Korean chili sauce traditionally mixed into bibimbap, he underwent a process of "trial and error" to come up with the six sauces on BIBIM's final menu.

When she visited BIBIM on Saturday with other members of the Bulldog Racing team, Thais Burgess '28 said that it was her first time eating bibimbap. After trying a custom bowl, she said she was "pleasantly surprised."

Jenny Trang '28, one of Burgess's teammates, said she frequently walks down Whitney Avenue to attend club meetings. She added that she was intrigued by the new restaurant and that she enjoyed the customizable nature of BIBIM's bowls.

Over the course of one evening, multiple groups of Yale students came to order food to-go from the electronic kiosks.

Traditional bibimbap often incorporates white, red and blue or black, yellow and green ingredients to embody the traditional Korean five-color spectrum known as obangsaek.

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MARTIN PERALTA / HEAD PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR
BIBIM, a new venture from the owner of bb.q Chicken, aims to offer affordable, healthy Korean fare in a customizable form. In its opening week, the restaurant has sold 1,000 bowls, according to a manager.