

Summary of Significant Border Incidents

Members of the Texas Legislature have requested that the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) provide unclassified examples of border-related incidents involving criminal aliens, home invasions, confrontations with law enforcement and public corruption that can be shared publicly. Below are incidents that can be shared with the public and will be updated periodically.

Criminal Aliens

Opportunistic criminals from around the world enter the U.S., both legally and illegally, and commit crimes in Texas – which we refer to as criminal aliens. Recent crimes illustrating the serious threats these individuals pose to our communities include:

April 2014 – Garland, TX – Year-long joint investigation busts sex trafficking ring:

An investigation conducted by DPS, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations, and Dallas Police Department disrupted a sex trafficking ring. For years this ring preyed upon young women from Central America and Mexico who were recruited to work in the U.S. as housekeepers and nannies, but upon entering the U.S., they became sex trafficking victims. These women were forced into prostitution by illegal aliens residing in Dallas and Houston. As a result of the investigation, 10 criminal aliens were indicted in connection with the sex trafficking organization, and 13 young women have been rescued. One of the women rescued is a 21-year-old who had been smuggled into Texas and trafficked since she was 13 years old. One young woman escaped but was forced to return after her family in Mexico received serious death threats. Tragically, this is not an isolated case; DPS has conducted other sex trafficking investigations in which criminal aliens lure young women and children to Texas using Cartel smuggling networks, and then force them into prostitution by threatening them and their families in Mexico and Central America if they seek to escape.

July 15, 2014 – Parker County, TX - Illegal alien arrested and charged with sexually assaulting a 9-year-old girl:

According to reports, a 9-year-old girl was asleep on a couch in her home when she was awakened by a man groping her. She told police he asked her to follow him to a bedroom where he had entered the home. Instead, she ran screaming into her parents' room. The suspect is an illegal alien who had been deported four times.

August 3, 2014 – Willacy County, TX – Off-duty Border Patrol agent fatally shot:

Two illegal alien Mexican nationals were arrested and charged with the murder of an off-duty Border Patrol agent, who was shot and killed while fishing with family members. The agent's father was also wounded during the incident. Following the report of the shooting, DPS and other agency personnel responded, including DPS Troopers, who assisted in the apprehension of the subjects, and the Texas Rangers, who conducted interviews and obtained a confession. The suspects had been arrested and deported

multiple times, and were also charged with unlawful carrying of firearms, assault, and DWI, in addition to multiple illegal immigration violations.

Home Invasions in the Rio Grande Valley

Mexican cartels and transnational gangs are actively involved in smuggling operations in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, using stash houses to conceal and warehouse drugs, weapons, bulk cash, and illegal aliens. We have seen a trend where these stash houses have also become attractive targets for “home invasions” by opposing criminal cliques, who seek to steal drugs, cash, and even illegal aliens, who they use to extort money from their families. Stash houses can be ordinary houses located in residential neighborhoods. Home invasions often involve the use of highly violent tactics by criminals armed with rifles, handguns, and other weapons.

From January to August 2014, DPS has identified 119 human stash houses and 79 drug stash houses along the Texas border. DPS has documented 135 home invasions in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) since 2012, 20 of which occurred between June 1 and August 31, 2014. Below are examples of several recent home invasions:

July 5, 2014 – Edinburg, TX – Attempted home invasion leaves homeowner dead:

Officers responded to a residence in Edinburg, TX, in reference to a report of a suspicious person, which was later reclassified as an attempted home invasion and homicide. Deputies located the homeowner bleeding and unresponsive by the front door of his residence. A witness stated that three masked and armed suspects arrived in a red, older model pickup truck and demanded undocumented aliens. The witness also struggled with one of the suspects, which resulted in an injury to the side of his head.

July 9, 2014 - Roma, TX – Gang member arrested following home invasion:

Following a report of a home invasion in Roma, TX, a green SUV was seen leaving the neighborhood and suspected of being involved. Soon after, a DPS Trooper pulled over a green SUV in Los Ebanos and positively identified the driver as the same person seen leaving the scene of the home invasion. The suspect is a confirmed Raza Unida gang member with an extensive criminal history.

August 15, 2014 – Elsa, TX – Suspect killed during attempted home invasion

robbery: A Hidalgo County Sheriff Deputy responded to a call in Elsa, TX, in reference to an aggravated robbery with the suspect shot and possibly deceased. Three subjects stated that they were at a residence when an unknown male stormed in with a rifle and a handgun. The subjects struggled with the unknown male to take the weapons away and were able to wrestle a handgun from the assailant and shoot him multiple times with his own gun. A black Taurus 9 MM handgun and a Bushmaster AR-15 were discovered by the deputy when he arrived on the scene. The unidentified male subject remained lying in the room unresponsive with no vital signs. Several tattoos on the subject’s body could indicate a possible association with the Sureños or Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) gangs.

August 18, 2014 – Roma, TX – Gang member among suspects arrested for home invasion: Roma Police Department responded to a report of a home invasion and vehicle

theft. The victims stated three males claiming to be Mexican federal police entered the residence and restrained the occupants with zip ties. The victims included a 73-year-old woman and two minor girls. Two of the suspects were armed with handguns. The suspects stole a gun safe and a pickup truck, both of which were recovered within 48 hours. All three of the suspects were identified, and two were arrested. One of those arrested is a 23-year-old confirmed Partido Revolucionario Mexicano (PRM) gang member with an extensive criminal history.

August 31, 2014 – Alton, TX – Home invasion attempt ends in firefight, one suspect killed: A small rental house, known to law enforcement to be involved with drug trafficking, was the target of a home invasion carried out by two or three suspects armed with pistols. While the suspects searched the house for valuables or contraband, the victims fought back, shooting two of the suspects and killing one of them. The getaway vehicle, which was later found by the Mission Police Department, had been burned to hide evidence. The suspect who was killed was confirmed to be from Michoacan, Mexico. The victims of the home invasion fled the scene and evaded apprehension.

Confrontations with Law Enforcement

In response to Operation Strong Safety's saturation patrols in the Rio Grande Valley, gang members and criminals associated with the Mexican Cartels are using increasingly aggressive tactics as they seek to avoid and evade law enforcement. For example, the Mexican Cartels have deployed a substantial number of scouts to conduct around-the-clock surveillance of law enforcement at hotels, airports, restaurants, observation posts and on the river, often taking pictures of officers. More concerning is their willingness to use violence against law enforcement officers as well as engage in other tactics – such as the deployment of caltrops on public roads – that place officers and the public at risk. Below are some recent examples of these threats:

June 17, 2014 – Mission, TX – Gulf Cartel associate attempts to block Trooper's vehicle to protect drug load: In coordination with U.S. Border Patrol, DPS Troopers engaged in a pursuit of a Nissan Sentra. During the pursuit, a Chevrolet Malibu attempted to block the Trooper. The Sentra was eventually stopped, and one suspect was arrested in possession of 359 pounds of marijuana. The investigation revealed that the marijuana belonged to the driver of the Malibu, a Gulf Cartel associate known as "C-2," who has a history of alien and narcotics smuggling. "C-2" and the passenger in the Malibu were both arrested.

July 4, 2014 – Anzalduas, TX – Suspect on Jet Ski rams DPS boat: While conducting deterrence operations along the Rio Grande River, a DPS shallow water boat was rocked by eight to 12 subjects from the Mexican side of the river. One subject on a jet ski rammed the DPS boat as its crew was attempting to arrest a suspect in the river. Both subjects returned to Mexico but Troopers seized the jet ski and turned it over to U.S. Border Patrol Agents to be federally forfeited.

July 12, 2014 – Pharr, TX – Suspects deploy caltrops from vehicle: The Weslaco Border Patrol Station received a concerned citizen call advising that a pickup truck had

just loaded several subjects near the Oratorio and Refugee areas. Information was relayed to the agents, and they spotted the vehicle traveling northbound on McColl Road towards Military Highway. Agents attempting to stop the truck were forced to slow down because the suspects were throwing caltrops out the window as they were evading law enforcement, and the suspects ultimately escaped.

July 22, 2014 - La Joya, TX – Gang member and Gulf Cartel associate shoots two police officers: Two Edinburg Police Department officers were shot and wounded while attempting to serve an arrest warrant on Joaquin Cibrian, aka "El Cruzador Perrón," a Texas Syndicate member and confirmed Gulf Cartel associate. Cibrian was wanted for the murder of a 19-year-old, who was shot in the back of the head over an apparent drug deal. Officers from multiple agencies responded as Cibrian remained inside a residence. The law enforcement response included multiple DPS assets participating in Operation Strong Safety, including DPS Troopers, CID, and a DPS pilot who assisted on the ground in escorting nearby children to safety. The incident ended when Cibrian attempted to shoot a deputy U.S. Marshal, and DPS SWAT members used deadly force to fatally shoot the suspect.

August 16, 2014 – Rio Grande City, TX – Valluco gang member fires shotgun at Starr County Deputy: As a Starr County Sheriff Deputy arrived to investigate a domestic disturbance call; a suspect fired a shotgun at the deputy, striking his patrol vehicle. The suspect escaped and is believed to be in Mexico. A review of the suspect's social media websites illustrates his collection of firearms and ties to the Valluco gang.

August 20, 2014 - Alamo TX – Driver of vehicle with marijuana deploys caltrops, disables law enforcement vehicles: Border Patrol, Pharr Police Department and Hidalgo Police Department began a pursuit of a vehicle after a failure to yield to law enforcement officers during a traffic stop. The suspect vehicle attempted to abscond from law enforcement, and during the pursuit, deployed caltrops that disabled law enforcement vehicles. The suspect bailed out and evaded apprehension, abandoning 18.5 grams of marijuana in the vehicle.

August 24, 2014 – Hidalgo County, TX – Aggressive posture encountered by DPS Tactical Marine Unit: DPS Troopers with the Tactical Marine Unit (TMU) were involved in the seizure of a load of marijuana from a raft on the Rio Grande River. During the seizure, they received notification from a DPS helicopter that multiple vehicles were approaching their position at high speeds from the Mexican side of the border. Troopers on the TMU vessel then observed two SUVs and two sedans approach the riverbank and observe their activities during a tense encounter.

August 25, 2014 – Hidalgo County, TX – Suspects on Mexican riverbank point firearm at Game Wardens: While a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Game Warden Marine Unit conducted patrols along the Rio Grande River in Hidalgo County, they observed three individuals on the Mexican side of the river pointing a firearm at their vessel. No shots were fired and the individuals walked back into the brush.

Public Corruption

Public servants who engage in illegal activity or conspire with criminal organizations not only contribute to the furtherance of crime, they betray the public trust. This form of corruption is especially concerning in the Rio Grande Valley, where corrupt officials who permit traffickers to transit an area without interference, potentially allowing drugs, people, weapons, and other unknown threats to enter the country. Mexican cartels are adept at corrupting law enforcement officers in Mexico, and they also seek to corrupt public officials at all levels in the U.S.

October 2008 – Rio Grande City, TX – Starr County Sheriff Arrested: Former Starr County Sheriff Reymundo Guerra was arrested and convicted on federal drug charges for his role in assisting drug traffickers to smuggle marijuana and cocaine through his jurisdiction.

March 2014 – Hidalgo County, TX – Hidalgo County Sheriff Arrested: Former Hidalgo County Sheriff Lupe Trevino was arrested and convicted on federal money laundering charges for accepting campaign contributions from a drug trafficker. Trevino's chief of staff was also convicted in relation to the crime, and former Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office Commander Jose Padilla was also arrested for accepting bribes in exchange for confidential law enforcement information.

April 2014 – McAllen, Texas – Federal Judge sentences 12 defendants in two days in the Panama Unit corruption case: Jonathan Trevino, a former Mission Police Department officer and son of former Hidalgo County Sheriff Lupe Trevino, was sentenced to 17 years in prison for an elaborate drug conspiracy while part of the narcotics task force known as the Panama Drug Task Force Unit. Also sentenced was his partner and friend, Alexis Espinoza, a former Mission Police Department officer, along with 10 other officers.