



Texas Department of Public Safety

Information for the News Media

Media Relations Office

(512) 424-2080

June 16, 2011

Public Safety Commission hears report on Mexican border incident

The Texas Rangers continue to investigate last week's border incident in which U.S. law enforcement officers exchanged gunfire with members of a Mexican drug cartel, Texas Public Safety Commission members were told by DPS director Steve McCraw.

During a Texas Ranger Reconnaissance operation in Hidalgo County on June 9, Texas Parks and Wildlife Game Wardens and U. S. Border Patrol agents interrupted drug smugglers who were attempting to move approximately 1,500 pounds of marijuana across the Rio Grande from Mexico to near Abram, Texas. The smugglers threw rocks at the officers and then began firing guns at them. The officers returned fire, striking at least three of the smugglers, who then fled back into Mexico.

"This event underscores the nature of the threat we are encountering along the border on a daily basis," McCraw told the Commission. "Our officers already are seeing incidents where the cartels are using blocking and chase vehicles, throwing caltrops to puncture law enforcement tires, using organized boat recovery operations and conducting surveillance on law enforcement. We are concerned about the escalation of violence against our officers."

McCraw told commissioners that during the last 18 months, smugglers in the Valley have fled from the Texas Highway Patrol and crashed their drug-laden vehicles into the Rio Grande 55 times.

During these incidents, known as "splashdowns," smugglers who are intercepted on the Texas side of the river attempt to return their load back to Mexico before it can be seized by U.S. law enforcement. The smugglers contact co-workers in Mexico, who meet them with boats in the river and offload the drugs from the vehicles to boats and transport the drugs back to the Mexican side of the river. These incidents have been increasing over the past several years.

Allan Polunsky, chairman of the Texas Public Safety Commission, said that violence toward Texas law enforcement agencies would not be tolerated.

"I want to make it perfectly clear: if any of our officers are shot at or come under attack, there is no minimum number of bullets that need to be discharged at our people before we respond. We will respond with whatever force is required to terminate the attack or threat. Our officers are not and will not be intimidated by cartel criminals who care nothing for the rule of law," Polunsky said.

(PIO 2011-61)