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**Report to the 84th Texas Legislature  
and Office of the Governor**

February 2015



This report is the UNCLASSIFIED version of an original report containing Law Enforcement Sensitive information. All information and citations from the original report that are confidential by law or excepted from public disclosure requirements have been redacted from this unclassified version.

## Executive Summary

(U) This report is submitted in response to a June 18, 2014, directive by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Lieutenant Governor, and Governor to submit a full report on Operation Strong Safety to the 84th Texas Legislature and the Office of the Governor detailing its costs and effectiveness, and to make recommendations regarding the cost of continuing or expanding border security operations.

(U) This report is the unclassified version of an original report containing Law Enforcement Sensitive information. All information and citations from the original report that are confidential by law or excepted from public disclosure requirements have been redacted from this unclassified version. Additional sensitive intelligence information related to the effectiveness of Operation Strong Safety was not included in the original report, though we are prepared to brief this information to members of the Texas legislature at their convenience.

(U) There is ample and compelling evidence that the Texas-Mexico border is not secure, and this lack of security undermines public safety and homeland security in every region of the state. Crime has become increasingly transitory, transnational, organized, and discreet, and terrorism has become more disaggregated. An unsecure border with Mexico is the state's most significant vulnerability as it provides criminals and would-be terrorists from around the world a reliable means to enter Texas and the nation undetected. This is especially concerning today, in light of the recent terrorist attacks and schemes around the world.

(U) Seven of the eight major Mexican cartels operate throughout Texas, and they have enlisted transnational and statewide gangs to support their drug and human smuggling and trafficking operations on both sides of the border. These gangs are responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime, and they threaten the safety and security of communities across the state.

(U) The ascension of the Mexican cartels as the state's and nation's most significant organized crime threat – and Mexico's most significant domestic security threat – is directly attributable to a porous U.S.-Mexico border and an unending demand in the U.S. for illegal drugs, forced labor, and commercial sex. The availability of Mexican cartel heroin, methamphetamine, and marijuana has increased throughout the state, while the costs of these drugs have decreased. Human trafficking is highly profitable and is the fastest growing organized crime business in Texas. Its vilest form is the sex trafficking of children and young women, many of whom are smuggled into Texas from Mexico and Central America.

(U) A percentage of the illegal aliens (IA) smuggled into Texas are committing crimes throughout the state, including homicide, robbery, burglary, kidnapping, and sex trafficking. Deported criminal aliens too often exploit the porous border and return to Texas to commit additional crimes. Two IAs, who have been deported multiple times, have been charged in the recent murder of a Border Patrol agent in Willacy County. In another case, an IA who was deported multiple times has been charged in the sexual assault of a 9-year-old girl in Parker County. Violent transnational gangs such as MS-13 now have a stronghold in Texas and engage in a variety of crimes, and they have direct links to gang leadership in Central America. The porous border provides a dependable means for increasing the number of MS-13 gang members in Texas and elsewhere. MS-13 was recently linked in two separate murders of school-age children in the Houston area – one of which was ordered from El Salvador. Nearly all of the subjects had illegally crossed into the United States at the Texas border.

(U) Illegal aliens from countries documented by the U.S. Department of State as having a known terrorism presence continue to be smuggled into and throughout Texas and the nation on a regular basis,

and it is impossible to determine how many of these individuals have actually entered the U.S. undetected. Texas leads the nation in the apprehension of “special interest aliens” (SIA), and there is a legitimate concern that terrorists from around the world could exploit our country’s porous Southwest border to enter the U.S. undetected, if they have not done so already.

(U) For example, Ahmed Muhammed Dhakane, a Somali who had crossed into Texas, was identified in a federal fraud investigation by the FBI as an active al-Barakat and Al-Ittihad Al-Islami (AIAD) member, guerilla fighter, and human smuggler who helped smuggle several potentially dangerous Somali terrorists into the U.S., who he believed would commit violent acts if ordered to do so. There have also been other instances of Somalis covering up their terrorism involvement when seeking asylum. In May 2011, Deka Abdalla Sheikh and Abdullah Omar Fidse were indicted for lying to immigration authorities and the FBI about their connections to terrorism when they sought and obtained asylum after entering Texas through the Hidalgo Port of Entry in January 2008. According to court documents, Fidse came to the U.S. to conduct an unspecified “operation” and was once involved in a plan to attack the U.S. ambassador to Kenya.

(U) The consequences of a porous international border with Mexico are not limited to the border; rather, they reverberate throughout the state and nation. In fact, many of the most serious consequences do not occur in our border communities. Instead they occur in our major urban areas where there is a proliferation of gangs with direct access to the drugs and people smuggled into Texas within the high-demand retail markets.

(U) The Mexican cartels and the transnational and statewide gangs they work with continue to increase the level of organized criminal activity throughout the state, which is not reflected in the antiquated manner in which crime statistics are reported. The current system does not include organized criminal offenses such as extortion, kidnapping, drug and human smuggling and trafficking, and corruption. The statewide adoption of the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) would increase the transparency of crime reporting and better enable the detection of cross-jurisdictional crime.

(U) Texans living in border communities, where cartel drug and human smuggling operations are prevalent, face additional public safety issues, such as the recruitment of Texas children to transport drugs, people, and stolen vehicles across the border; home invasions; felony vehicle evasions; pseudo police stops; extortions, kidnappings, and sexual assaults of IAs held in stash houses; deaths of IAs on Texas ranches and farms; and shootings at law enforcement officers patrolling the Rio Grande River. The Mexican cartels have also been effective in corrupting U.S. law enforcement officials at all levels, which not only facilitates organized crime, but undermines the public trust in law enforcement.

(U) A confluence of factors resulted in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) of Texas becoming the nation’s epicenter for drug and human smuggling and trafficking, which was acutely evident in June 2014 with the dramatic influx of unaccompanied children (UAC), family units and other IAs smuggled into Texas, primarily from Central America.

(U) In 2011, 112,426 illegal aliens were apprehended in Texas, which increased to 166,449 in 2012; 242,669 in 2013; and in 2014, increased to 313,100. In FY2014, only 17 percent of the apprehensions were UACs. In FY2014, the RGV Sector of the Border Patrol experienced the highest number of IA apprehensions ever, which amounted to approximately 53 percent of all IA apprehensions by Border Patrol along the U.S.-Mexico border. Approximately 76 percent of the apprehensions in the RGV in 2014 were from countries other than Mexico – primarily El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. The Mexican cartels directly profited from the increased number of IAs paying smuggling fees to gain entry into Texas, and they also benefited as Border Patrol agents were diverted from patrol duties to cope with the lack of detention facilities needed to keep up with the high volume of IAs being apprehended.

(U) On June 18, 2014, the Speaker of the House, Lieutenant Governor, and Governor directed the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) to conduct a surge operation with its local, state and federal partners in the most heavily exploited areas along the Texas-Mexico border to substantially increase the detection and interdiction resources in those areas and sustain the operation until advised otherwise. The objective was to decrease cartel drug and human smuggling by increasing patrol presence and the amount of smuggling events detected and interdicted.

(U) A command structure was immediately established, and on June 23, 2014, ground, air, and marine saturation patrols on the border began, and continue around-the-clock to detect and interdict cartel operatives, transnational gang members, criminal aliens, and drugs before being smuggled into safe houses or onto the inland corridors in the RGV.

(U) As expected, the Mexican cartels reacted to the substantial increase in law enforcement resources through the surge operation by decreasing their smuggling activities to minimize losses, and deployed hundreds of scouts and other operatives to conduct surveillance on law enforcement officers to locate vulnerabilities, to exploit and employ diversion tactics, and to protect smuggling loads. After the first week of the operation, 6,606 IAs were apprehended in the area of operation, which includes the counties of Hidalgo and Starr. By week 11, the numbers had decreased below 2,000, and have consistently remained low through week 28. This outcome is in stark contrast to the significant three-year upward trend of IA apprehensions occurring in Texas prior to the operation.

(U) The number of IA apprehensions within the Border Patrol's RGV Sector in June 2014 was 38,446, which represents more than the combined total of Border Patrol apprehensions in the other eight Border Patrol sectors along the U.S.-Mexico border. After Operation Strong Safety commenced, the monthly total of IA apprehensions in the RGV Sector steadily decreased, with fewer than 12,000 apprehensions in December 2014 – a decrease of more than 25,000.

(U) This significant decrease in apprehensions eliminated the need for the additional capacity that the federal government was establishing to house and process IAs, UACs, and family units. At the outset of Operation Strong Safety, the federal government had predicted that the number of UAC apprehensions along the U.S.-Mexico border would rise to 90,100 in FY2014, with the majority of these apprehensions occurring in the RGV Sector. The actual number of UAC apprehensions along the U.S.-Mexico border for FY2014 was 68,541, of which 46,858 occurred prior to the state-led surge operation. DHS officials adopted a strategy of increased capacity with increases in facilities and immigration judges, while Texas focused on a strategy of increased curtailment. The operation has also resulted in the seizure of \$2.3 billion worth of cartel drugs that were destined for retail markets around the state and nation.

(U) The Texas State Legislature long ago recognized the importance and linkage of border security to public safety, and consistently, over the last several legislative sessions, has dedicated substantial resources to increase capabilities in the border region. These resources were instrumental in the execution of integrated ground, air, and marine patrol operations within five days of being directed to do so, and sustaining it around-the-clock for more than six months. The Department of Public Safety committed substantial resources to this operation, but equal partners in its success include several local law enforcement agencies, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), the Office of the Attorney General, Texas Military Forces, and the RGV Sector of the U.S. Border Patrol.

(U) The cost of the operation to date includes \$54.5 million for DPS, \$4.5 million for TPWD and \$43 million for Texas Military Forces – for a total of \$102 million. The details of expenditures are set forth in the attached report.

(U) Although Operation Strong Safety has been successful in elevating the security of the border and state, it has limitations. First, it deters cartel smuggling activity by increasing the risk of interdiction, but it does not secure the border. The border will be secure when all smuggling events between the ports of entry are detected and interdicted. Second, patrol operations are inefficient in the detection and interdiction of all smuggling events because local and state officers must have a reason to stop a potential smuggler, and random checkpoints are expressly forbidden by the U.S. Supreme Court as a means of detecting criminal activity. The cartels know this, and employ hundreds of scouts and other operatives to engage in diversion and blocking operations, and conduct surveillance of officers often photographing them at their posts or place of lodging. Third, the permanent assignment of a sufficient number of Troopers, Special Agents, and Texas Rangers to the border region is more effective and efficient than short-term deployments from around the state. This structure would eliminate travel time and costs, and ensure that officers have the benefit of familiarity of the area and working relationships with the local law enforcement community. Lastly, the Department of Public Safety is understaffed throughout the state, and a sustained deployment of personnel to the border region reduces the patrol and investigative capacity in other areas of the state that are also impacted by transnational crime.

(U) A comprehensive statewide strategy that relies heavily upon teamwork and technology is recommended to secure the Texas-Mexico border and effectively combat transnational crime throughout the state. All 2,641 local and state law enforcement agencies in Texas play an important role in addressing the consequences of an unsecure border with Mexico, and eight federal law enforcement agencies also have border security or investigative responsibilities related to transnational organized crime. These federal agencies have different geographical boundaries with multiple offices, resulting in 29 separate chains of command reporting to Washington, D.C.

(U) Integrating the expertise, capabilities and responsibilities of these numerous law enforcement agencies is vital to success, and requires a level of cooperation at all levels that can rarely be achieved outside of Texas. District Attorneys and United States Attorneys also play a vital role in addressing transnational crime, and their expertise and capabilities are essential to effective criminal enterprise investigations and prosecutions targeting those transnational criminal organizations and networks that constitute the greatest threat to Texas.

(U) It is recommended that the foremost priority be to secure the Texas-Mexico border, zone by zone, beginning with areas most heavily used by the cartels. The enormous length and varied terrain of the Texas-Mexico border requires the effective use of technology to detect and interdict all smuggling events. The impractical use of personnel alone would require more than the 76,100 local and state certified peace officers in Texas.

(U) The State of Texas, working with border sheriffs, South Texas landowners and the U.S. Border Patrol, has successfully implemented the Operation Drawbridge program, which employs low-cost, commercially available, motion-detection cameras to detect smuggling events in real time. This program is monitored around-the-clock, and is directly responsible for the detection of 118,352 people that resulted in 55,095 apprehensions and the seizure of 105 tons of drugs.

(U) The border can only be secure if every smuggling event is detected, and currently, there are 1,224 cameras deployed throughout the border region. On December 1, 2014, the Legislative Budget Board directed DPS to acquire and deploy an additional 4,000 cameras. A sufficient number of these cameras can establish an impenetrable detection capability within zones along the border that would provide, for the first time, a way to document and evaluate the exact level of detection coverage on the border, and provide photographic evidence of the detections to accurately assess the interdiction rate and level of security. The private sector continues to improve upon the camera-detection technology, which will further enhance this initiative through increased capabilities at decreased costs.

(U) Detections without interdictions do nothing to secure the border, and a sufficient number of permanently assigned Troopers, Special Agents, and Texas Rangers are needed to ensure that every smuggling event detected is also interdicted. In a state the size of Texas, aircraft equipped with detection, tracking, and communication technology to coordinate interdictions among local, state, and federal law enforcement personnel is essential, especially considering the many refuge areas along the Rio Grande River that are exploited by the Mexican cartels. The Texas Legislature has provided DPS with several state-of-the-art aircraft that have played a vital role in day and night time interdiction operations along the border, as have the aviation assets of the Texas Military Forces. Operating a sufficient number of these aircraft is a tremendous force multiplier and the most effective way to ensure detections are interdicted day and night.

(U) The integration of local, state, and federal ground, marine, air, and tactical border security assets around-the-clock is an absolute imperative. Therefore, it is recommended that the unified command structure and doctrine adopted for Operation Strong Safety remain in place, and that other unified commands be established as needed to ensure the detection and interdiction of all smuggling events.

(U) It is also important to address the consequences of an unsecure border in our communities. Cartels, gangs, and international sex trafficking organizations have worked closely together for many years now, uncharacteristically crossing traditional rivalries in order to traffic drugs and people for large profits.

(U) Such organized crime throughout the state can be reduced using proven strategies that dismantle the command and control networks of those criminal organizations that most threaten public safety in Texas. This approach is recommended, and it is most effective when agencies across jurisdictions integrate their efforts as has been done successfully in Houston to target gangs at the Texas Anti-Gang Center (TAG), where area gang enforcement resources are co-located.

(U) The Mexican cartels have a strong presence in Texas and must be aggressively pursued with our federal partners using enterprise investigations and prosecutions. Particularly, transnational and statewide gangs that work with the cartels should be a state priority because of their direct impact on the safety and security of our communities. These gangs have also expanded their criminal operations to engage in sex trafficking because of its relatively low risk and high profit.

(U) As directed, the following recommendations are respectfully submitted to the Honorable Members of the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, Speaker of the House, Lieutenant Governor, and Governor:

- Expand the workday for all DPS commissioned officers to 10 hours a day to immediately increase smuggling interdiction capabilities and statewide patrol and investigative capacity.
- Increase the number of DPS commissioned officers by 500 positions to provide a permanent increase in patrol, interdiction, and investigative personnel in the border region of the state.
- Authorize the hiring of police officers at the Trooper II level, who have served as certified police officers in Texas for more than four years. These peace officers will be required to attend an abbreviated DPS recruit school.
- Maintain the current level of Texas Military Force aviation assets to support interdiction operations.

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- As resources become available, replace Texas Military Force staffing of observation posts with commissioned officers and smuggling-detection technology.
- Increase the number of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department game wardens on the border by 22 positions and two administrative positions.
- Provide \$25 million in grant funds to local law enforcement agencies to support interdiction operations and combat transnational crime in their jurisdictions.
- Establish a training and firearms facility in the RGV to support the additional increase in law enforcement personnel and reduce the travel time and costs away from duty stations.
- Expand Operation Drawbridge to provide a border-wide detection capability using Texas State Guard personnel to expedite the deployment of detection coverage.
- Provide an immediate increase in border interdiction capabilities by providing Troopers 320 all-wheel-drive SUV patrol vehicles.
- Increase the number of intelligence analyst positions by 47 to support border security operations and criminal enterprise investigations targeting Mexican cartels, transnational and statewide gangs, and sex trafficking organizations.
- Increase the aircraft interdiction coverage on the border to enable around-the-clock air patrols along the entire border, to include two Pilatus aircraft (one stationed in El Paso and one in the RGV); three Cessna Caravans (one stationed in Laredo, one in Alpine, and one Houston); and two helicopters to replace two aging and underpowered helicopters currently assigned to the border.
- Continue the Border Prosecution Unit initiative, which targets transnational crime in the border region, working closely with local and state law enforcement agencies.
- Increase information technology (IT) capacity and redundancy to support border security operations and organized crime investigations.
- Increase the level of security of DPS IT systems essential to statewide daily operations of DPS and other law enforcement agencies throughout the state.
- Provide Texas Parks and Wildlife Department game wardens with a long-range marine vessel to conduct interdiction operations in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Increase the number of DPS Tactical Marine Unit boats by four to expand interdiction capabilities on the Rio Grande River and the intracoastal waterway.
- Expand the Texas Anti-Gang Center initiative in Houston to include the Rio Grande Valley, El Paso, San Antonio and Dallas areas to fully integrate organized crime investigations targeting the state's most dangerous gangs.

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- Authorize the establishment of a DPS Officer Reserve Corps comprising retired and former DPS officers in good standing with the department, to assist the department in background investigations, sex offender compliance checks, and other duties as necessary.
- Remove references in the statute to specific vehicles used in the smuggling of persons to ensure all types of smuggling are included.
- Add aggravated compelling of prostitution as an enumerated offence in the state wiretap statute.
- Adopt the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) to increase the transparency of crime throughout the state.

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## Acknowledgments

(U) A significant reason for the success of Operation Strong Safety is the multi-agency collaborative approach that has been adopted since the operation began. This collaboration underscores the commitment among agencies across the state to share information, intelligence and capabilities to effectively address public safety threats across all jurisdictions and disciplines at all levels, and we are grateful for these continued partnerships.

(U) Agencies participating in Operation Strong Safety include:

- Texas Department of Public Safety
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- Texas Military Forces
- Texas Attorney General's Office
- Texas Commission on Law Enforcement
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office
- Starr County Sheriff's Office
- Hidalgo Police Department
- Hidalgo County Constable Precinct 2
- Hidalgo County Constable Precinct 3
- Pharr Police Department
- Mission Police Department
- Rio Grande City Police Department
- Roma Police Department



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## 1. Introduction

(U) This report is submitted in response to a requirement of the letter dated June 18, 2014, from the Speaker of the House, Lieutenant Governor, and Governor, who directed the Department of Public Safety to plan and execute a border surge operation. The letter reads, in part:

“DPS shall prepare a full report for the 84th Legislature and Office of the Governor detailing the cost of this operation, its effectiveness and any recommendations regarding the cost of continuing or expanding border security operations.”

(U) The purpose of this report is to inform State of Texas leaders of the need for this operation, how it has been executed, its cost, and its impact. As required, this report also includes recommendations for securing the Texas border.

(U) This report is the unclassified version of an original report containing Law Enforcement Sensitive information. All information and citations from the original report that are confidential by law or excepted from public disclosure requirements have been redacted from this unclassified version. Additional sensitive intelligence information related to the effectiveness of Operation Strong Safety was not included in the original report, though we are prepared to brief this information to members of the Texas legislature at their convenience.

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## 2. Current Situation

(U) The consequences of an unsecure border do not only affect the border region; they have an impact on the entire state and nation. Human stash houses operate in Houston. Cartel assassins have committed murders as far north as the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The Gulf Cartel has been enriched from the surge of illegal aliens from Central America. MS-13 continues to expand. Female illegal aliens have been forced into sex trafficking in multiple cities. And throughout the state and nation, Mexican cartels dominate the drug trade, trafficking wholesale quantities along our highways and into our communities.

(U) The RGV has become the epicenter of smuggling activity. In FY2014, the RGV accounted for approximately 53 percent of illegal alien apprehensions, 37 percent of cocaine seizures, and 34 percent of marijuana seizures along the entire U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>1</sup>

*The remainder of this chapter has been redacted.*

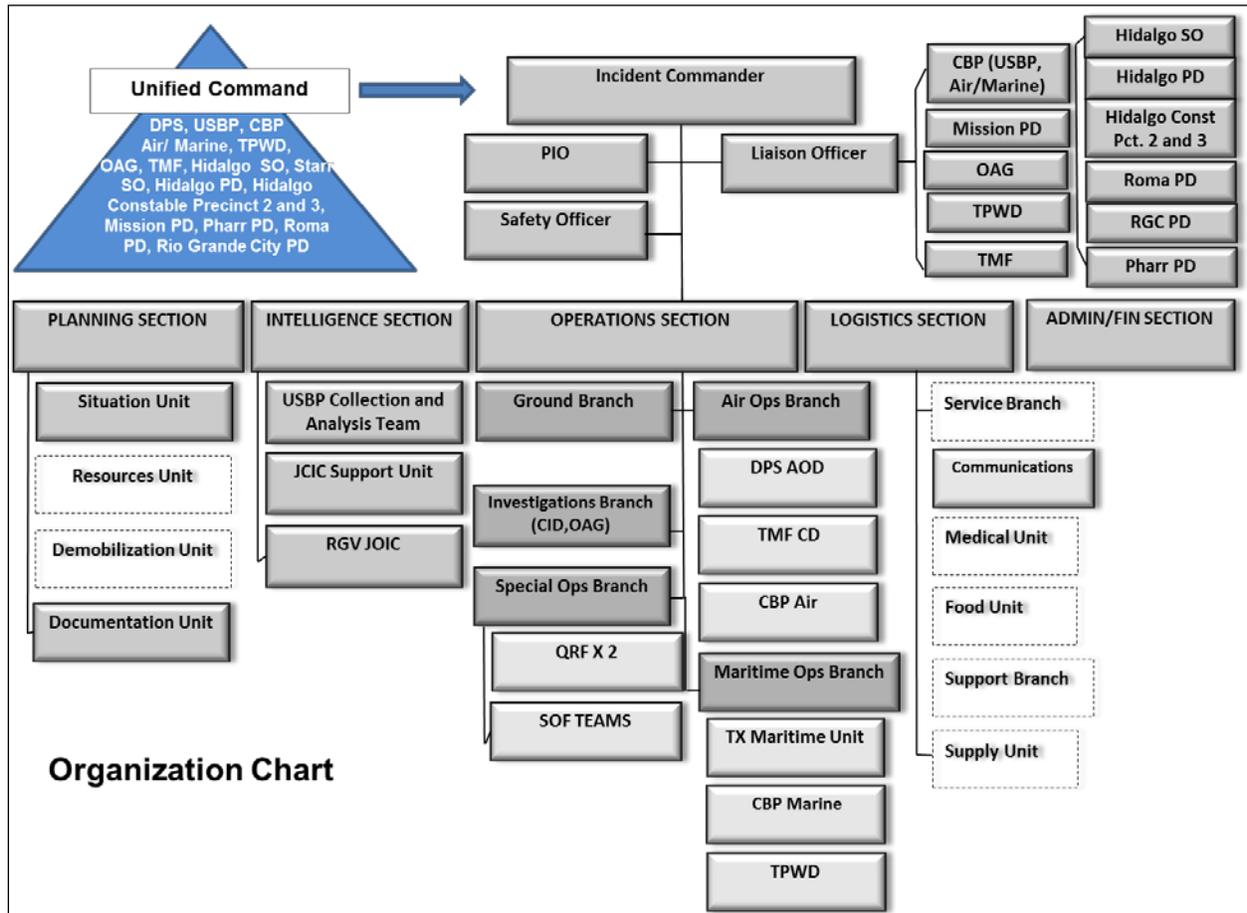
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### 3. Operation Strong Safety Concept of Operations

(U) A June 18, 2014, letter from the Speaker of the House, Lieutenant Governor, and Governor, directed the Department of Public Safety to conduct a border surge operation. A command structure was established, and on June 23, 2014, ground, air and marine saturation patrols on the border began.

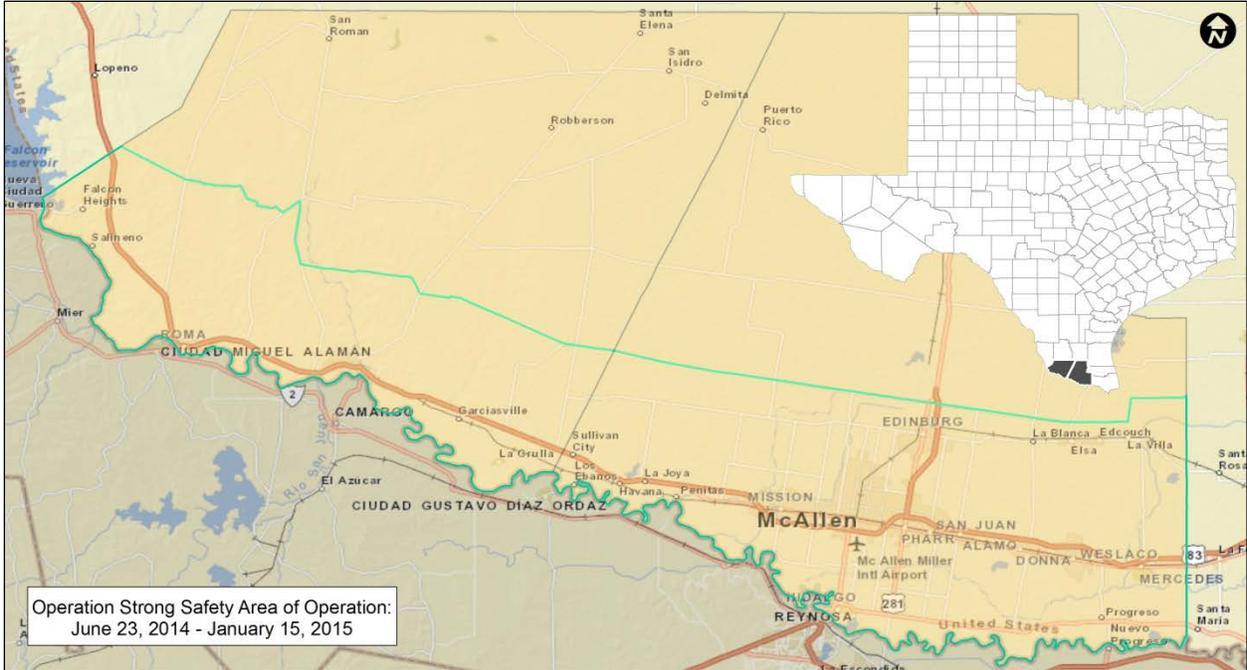
#### 3.1 Command Structure

(U) OSS uses a unified command structure that encompasses multiple participating agencies. The OSS Incident Commander is the DPS Region III Commander, who oversees all aspects of the operation.



#### 3.2 Area of Operation

(U) The area of operation (AO) for Operation Strong Safety 2014 includes a portion of Starr County and Hidalgo County in the immediate vicinity of the Rio Grande River and nearby smuggling routes. Supporting operations are conducted in the larger area along the border from Brownsville to Del Rio. The area of operation may be modified by the Unified Command based on emerging requirements during the course of the operation.



### 3.3 Operational Components

(U) Assets and personnel involved in OSS are coordinated to ensure unity of effort. These efforts include ground operations, air operations, maritime operations, special operations, and investigations.

#### 3.3.1 Ground Operations

(U) **Concept:** Deploy federal, state, and local law enforcement partners to conduct fixed and mobile border security operations 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Assigned personnel primarily remain at or near fixed points located at major egress routes in the AO. Their purpose is to prevent and deter illegal trafficking/smuggling and other border related criminal activity associated with the ongoing border crime and violence currently being experienced along the Texas-Mexico Border within the Rio Grande Valley. Officers conduct traffic stops when they observe violations or suspicious activity.



(U) Texas Military Forces has dedicated assets assigned to observation posts in the OSS AO. Their purpose is to assist law enforcement in deterring criminal activity along the border through observing and reporting suspicious activity, and the number and location of OPs has changed throughout the operation.

### 3.3.2 Air Operations

(U) **Concept:** Conduct random-route criminal air patrol along known smuggling corridors. Serve as air support and force multiplier to Operation Strong Safety 2014 personnel along the Rio Grande River boundary in the specified target zones. Provide visible and sustaining air support presence along the known smuggling corridors to deter criminal activity. Locate and capture criminal offenders being searched for by Operation Strong Safety personnel.



(U) The Texas Legislature has invested in state-of-the-art helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft, which serve as a force multiplier in combatting transnational crime along the border. Additional aviation assets supporting Operation Strong Safety include Texas Air National Guard, Texas Military Forces, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and Drug Enforcement Administration.



### 3.3.3 Maritime Operations

**(U) Concept:** Deploy tactical marine assets on the Rio Grande River to disrupt criminal enterprise operations of transnational organizations exploiting the immediate river area of the RGV between the Ports of Entry along the Texas-Mexico border. All tactical marine vessels conduct open, overt and sustained maritime patrol operations in the Rio Grande River.



### 3.3.4 Special Operations

(U) **Concept:** Deploy a joint special operations force through covert interdiction operations, and provide for rapid deployment to ensure Unified Command officer safety. Special Operations components supporting Operation Strong Safety include Texas Rangers, USBP BORTAC, and TPWD Scout Team personnel.



### 3.3.5 Investigations

(U) **Concept:** Identify and disrupt networks, contacts and facilities/locations used by criminal enterprises in an effort to cut off the supply of drugs, money, weapons, and smuggled/trafficked persons in the OSS AO. Analyze and report intelligence gathered and documented from sources of information and suspect/witness debriefings. Investigators from DPS, USBP, the Attorney General's Office, and local prosecutors are supporting Operation Strong Safety.

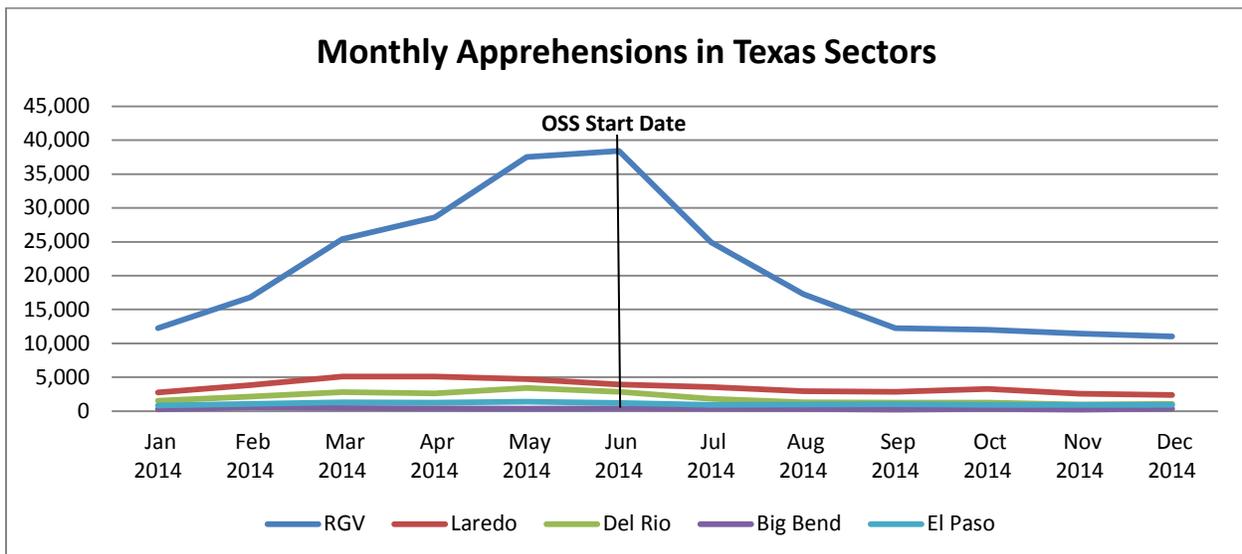
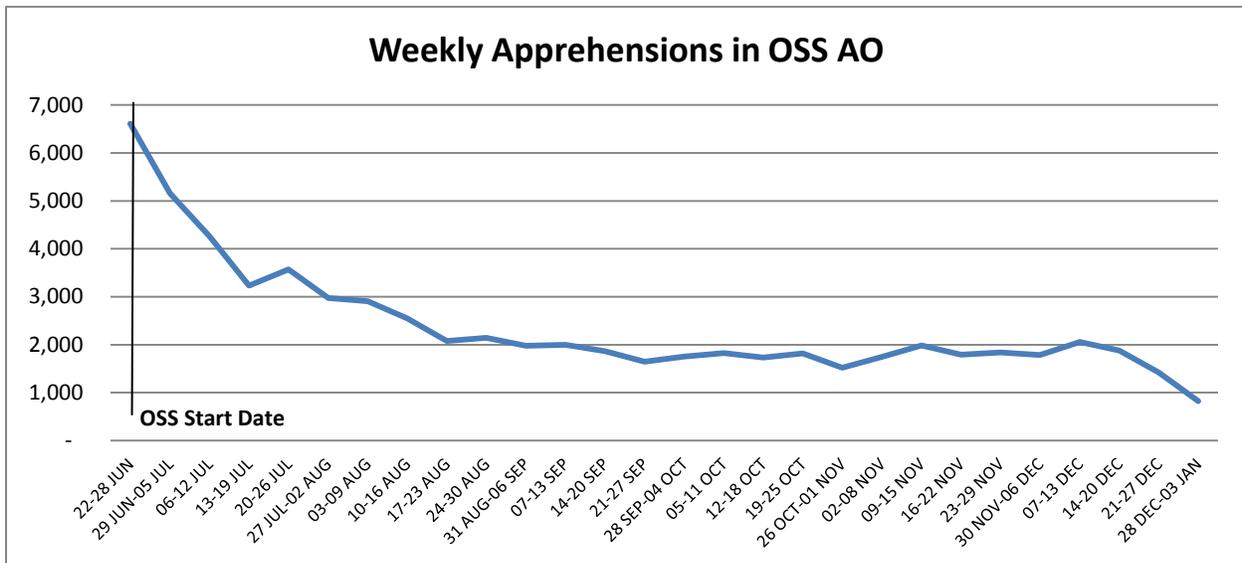
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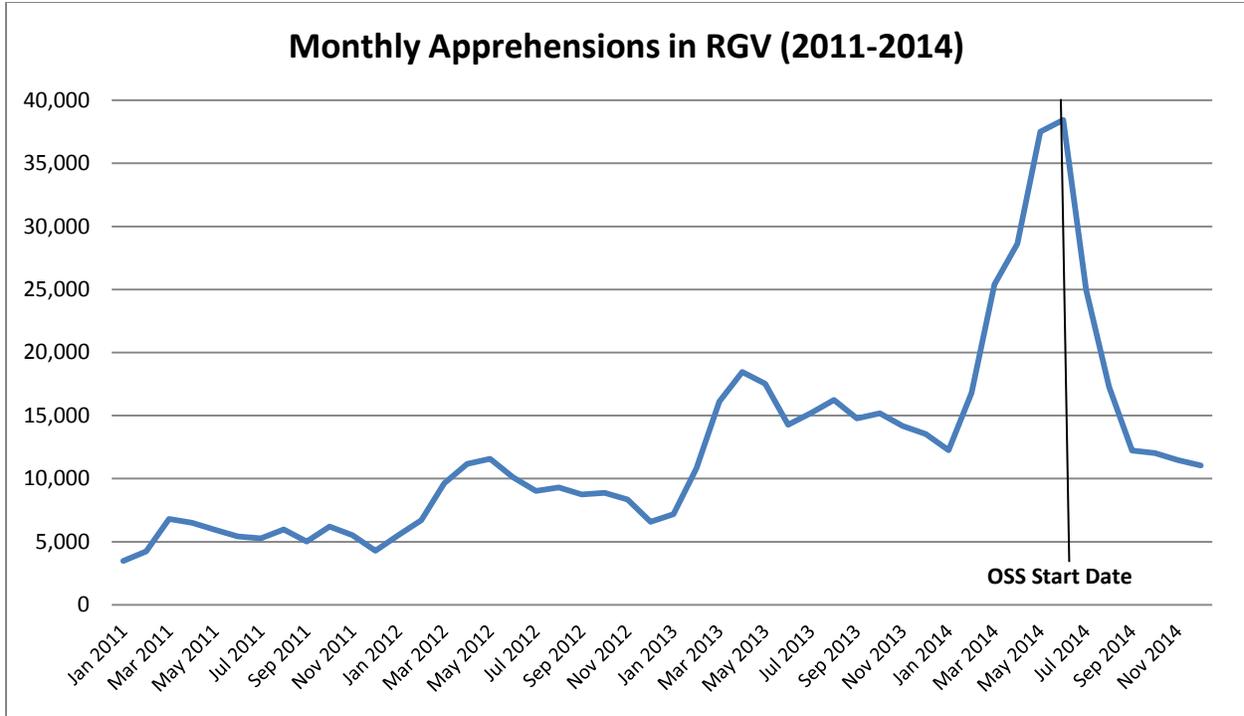
## 4. Operation Strong Safety Results

(U) OSS has had a clear impact on criminal activity in the RGV, as shown in the following results. The results highlighted here are based on data and incidents that continue to develop, with new data and information emerging on an ongoing basis as investigations and reporting continue.

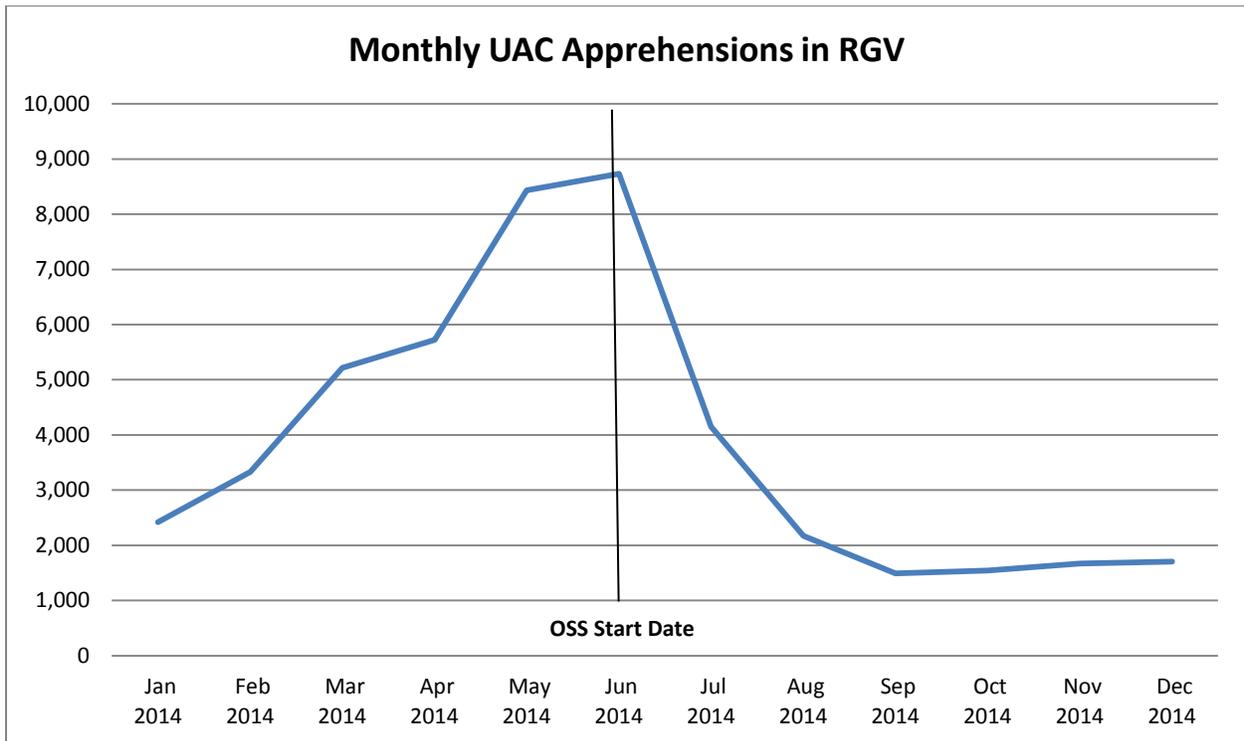
### 4.1 OSS has stemmed the large influx of illegal alien traffic across the border

(U) In FY2014, the number of apprehensions in the RGV reached its highest level since records are available beginning in 1960.<sup>2</sup> Since the launch of OSS in June, the number of illegal alien apprehensions in the OSS AO has fallen sharply, as shown in the chart below. This trend marks a sharp contrast to the increase that had been trending before OSS. After the first week of the operation, there were 6,606 illegal alien apprehensions in the AO. By week 11, the numbers had decreased below 2,000 and have consistently remained low through week 28.

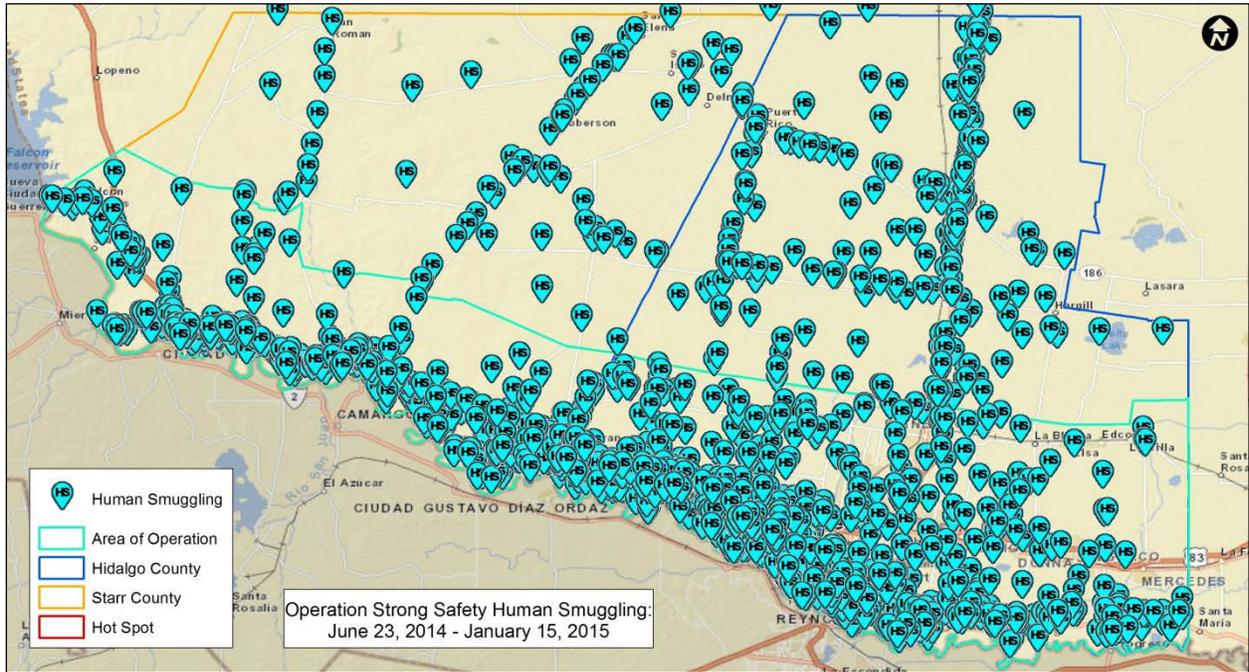




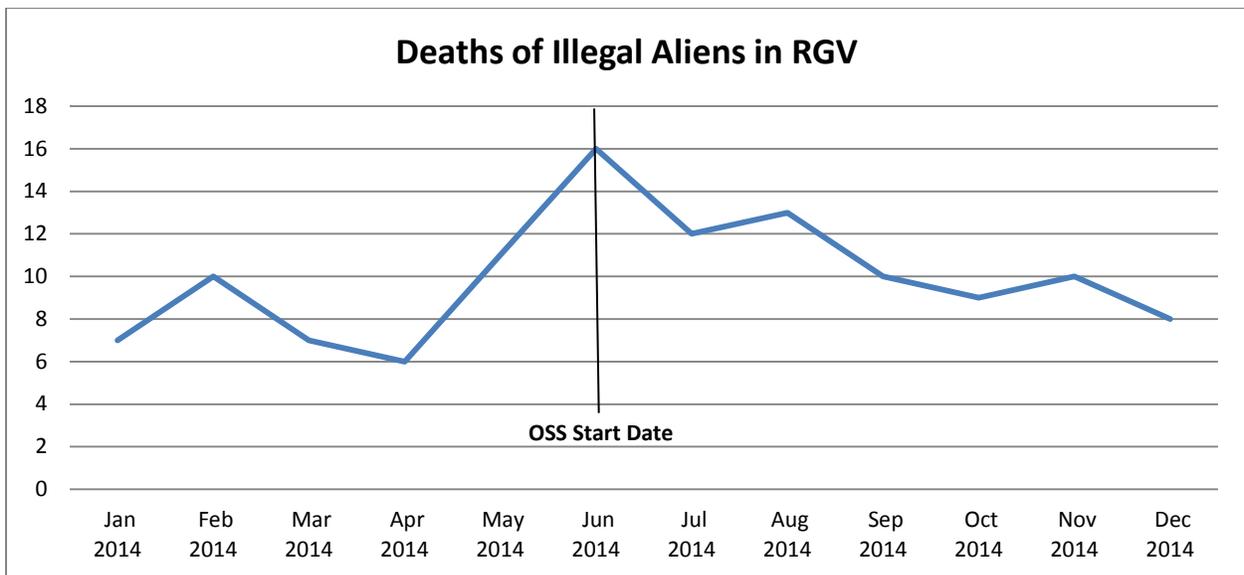
(U) Apprehensions of UACs also declined. As of June, the federal government had projected that the number of UAC apprehensions along the U.S.-Mexico border could rise to 90,100 in FY2014 and 142,000 in FY2015, with the majority of these apprehensions occurring in the RGV. The actual number of UAC apprehensions along the U.S.-Mexico border in FY2014 was 68,541, and 46,858 of these apprehensions occurred prior to the start of OSS.



(U) Human smuggling activity and illegal alien apprehensions have occurred throughout the OSS AO, but have been more concentrated in some zones than in others.



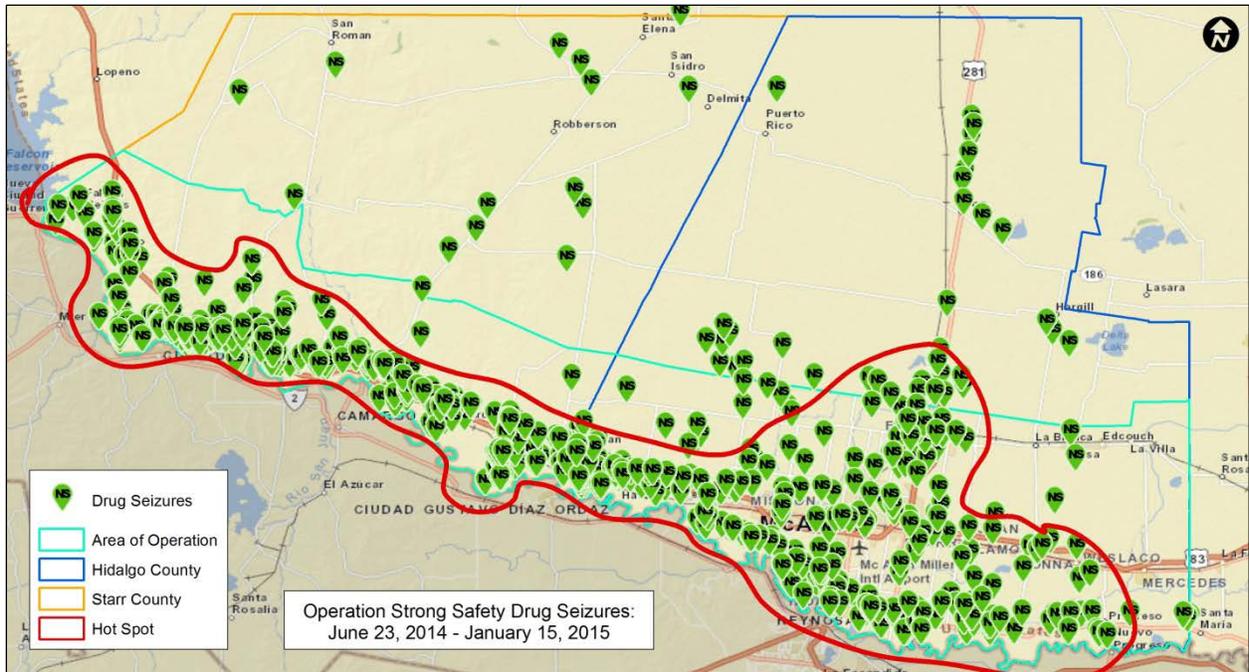
(U) Illegal alien deaths in the RGV have decreased during OSS, including during the hot summer months of July, August, and September.



**4.2 OSS has resulted in the seizure of more than 180 tons of illegal drugs**

(U) OSS-related seizures have totaled more than 180 tons of illegal drugs that had been smuggled across the border and were destined to be distributed throughout the state and nation.

OSS SEIZURES AREA OF OPERATION (06/23/2014 – 02/14/2015)	WEIGHT (LBS)	PRICE PER LB <sup>3</sup>	STREET VALUE
MARIJUANA	362,767	\$6,069	\$2,201,632,316
COCAINE	746.62	\$61,479	\$45,901,451
METHAMPHETAMINE	642.10	\$87,117	\$55,937,826
HEROIN	33.46	\$128,661	\$4,304,997
<b>STREET VALUE OF CONTRABAND SEIZED</b>			<b>\$2,307,776,590</b>



**4.3 OSS impact on other crime in the RGV**

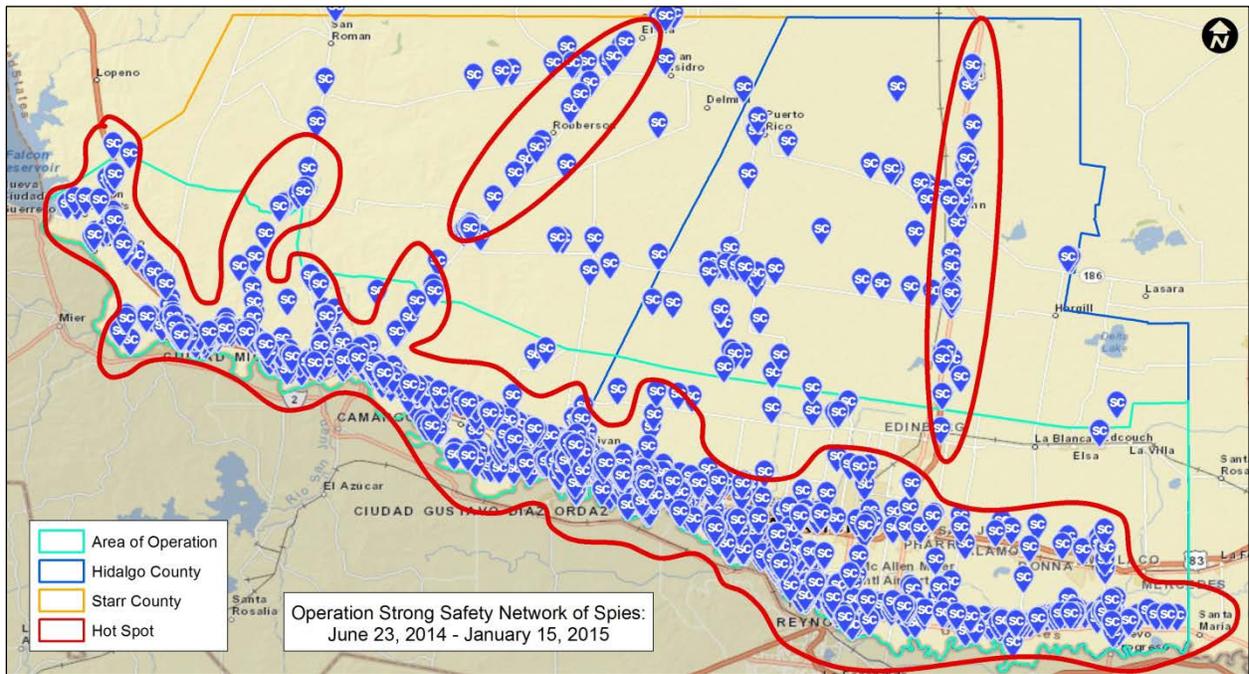
(U) Law enforcement leaders in the RGV have commented on OSS’s impact.

- (U) The Chief of the Mission Police Department expressed his appreciation for the increased law enforcement presence in the community through Operation Strong Safety, noting that there had been a decrease in property crime since the beginning of the operation.<sup>4</sup>
- (U) The Chief of the Pharr Police Department has reported that Operation Strong Safety has allowed for the enhancement of the border security partnership, and that while participating in the operation, his agency succeeded in identifying criminal organization scouts, which resulted in a positive impact on smuggling cases in the Pharr area.<sup>5</sup>

- (U) The Chief of the McAllen Police Department announced in January 2015 that the city of McAllen had experienced a 10 percent reduction in the crime rate in 2014, and he credited DPS' enforcement efforts and concentration in the community as making a difference.<sup>6</sup>

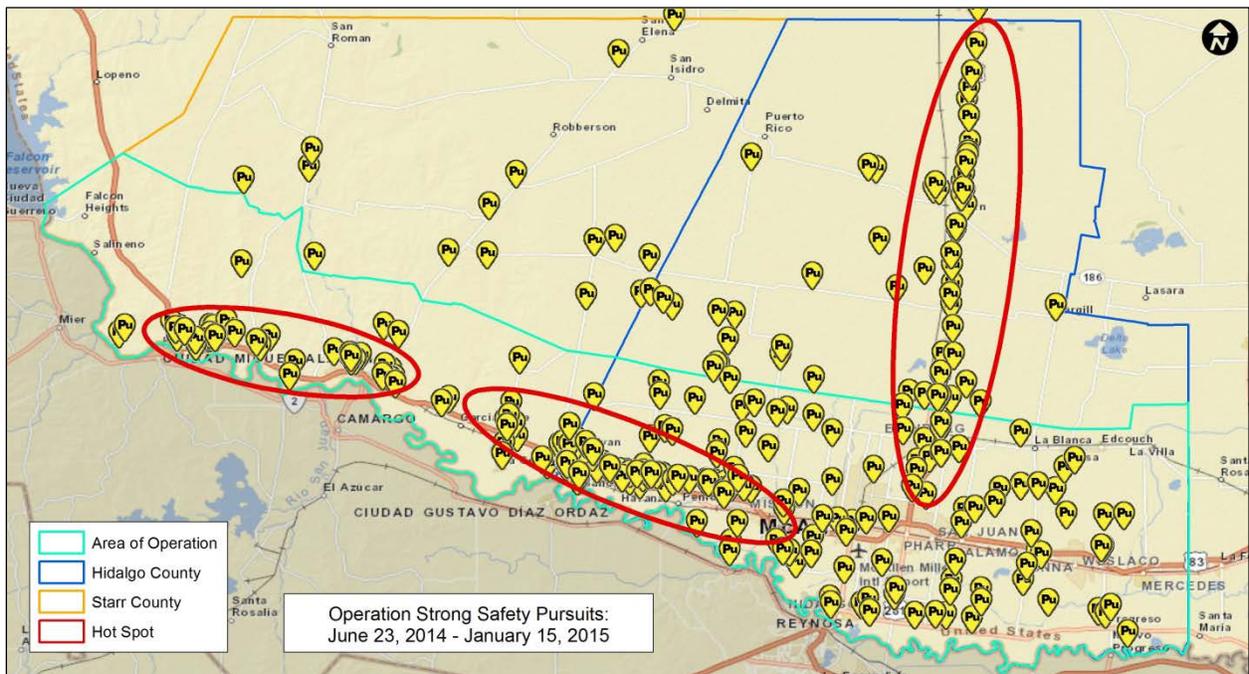
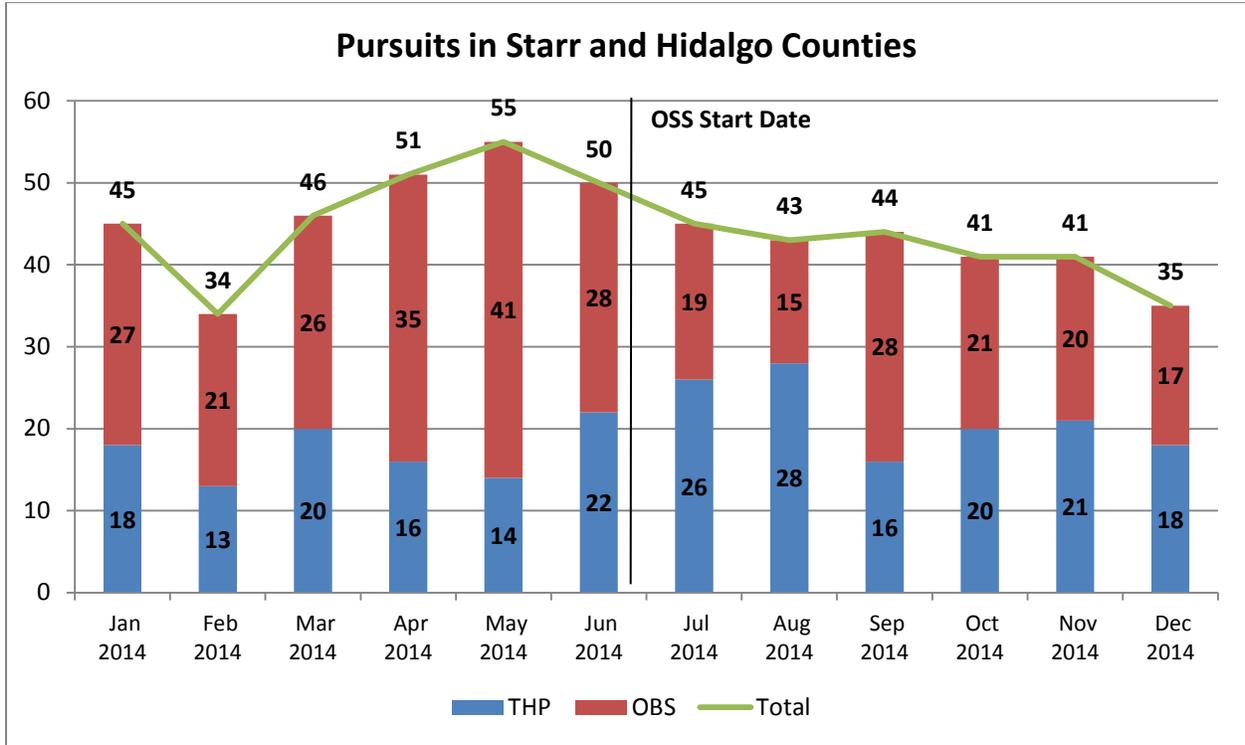
**4.4 OSS has made life more difficult for the cartels and their associated criminal organizations**

(U) Operation Strong Safety has created confusion among the cartels and succeeded in disrupting their operations, according to a body of intelligence reporting and investigative information. This can be seen in their evolving tactics, the pervasiveness of scouting, their difficulty moving drugs, and indications that they now view the RGV as a hostile operating environment due to the increased law enforcement presence. As OSS began, the cartels and their associated criminal organizations significantly ramped up their scouting operations of law enforcement, beginning a somewhat constant and increased level of scouting. These scouts represent a network of spies for the cartels, who observe and report on the activities of law enforcement in the area. While OSS has succeeded in disrupting the cartels, these criminal organizations are well-resourced, adaptable and innovative, and they can be expected to continue probing for information and seeking ways to circumvent the law enforcement presence.



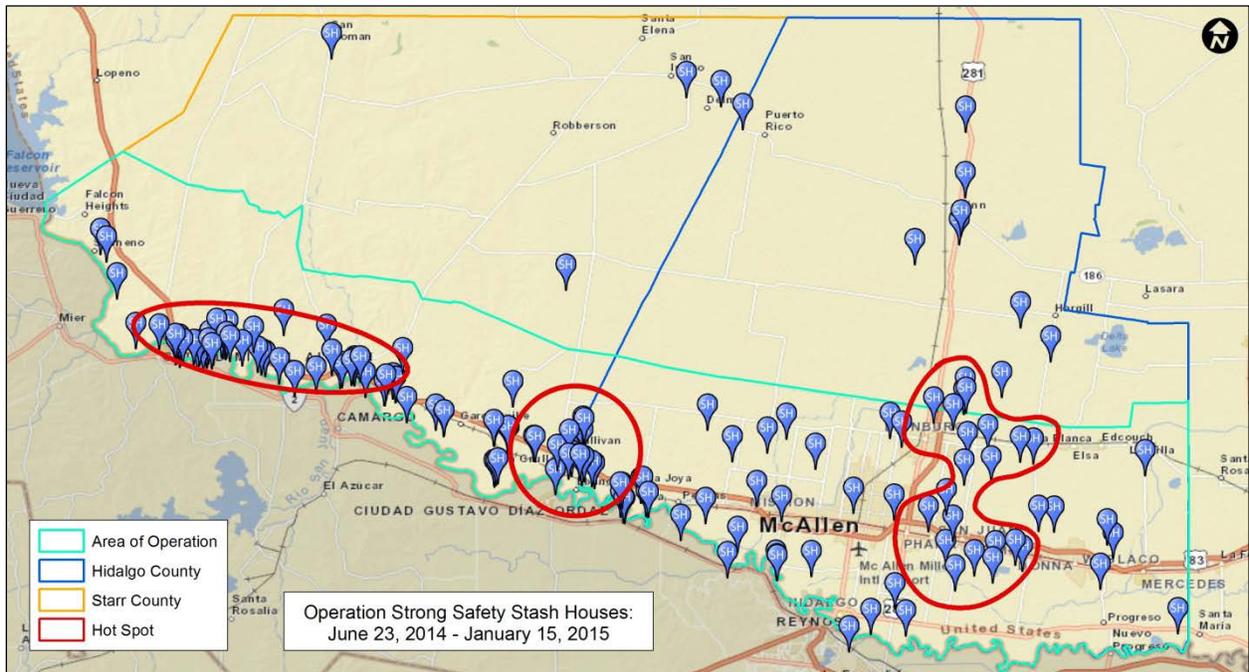
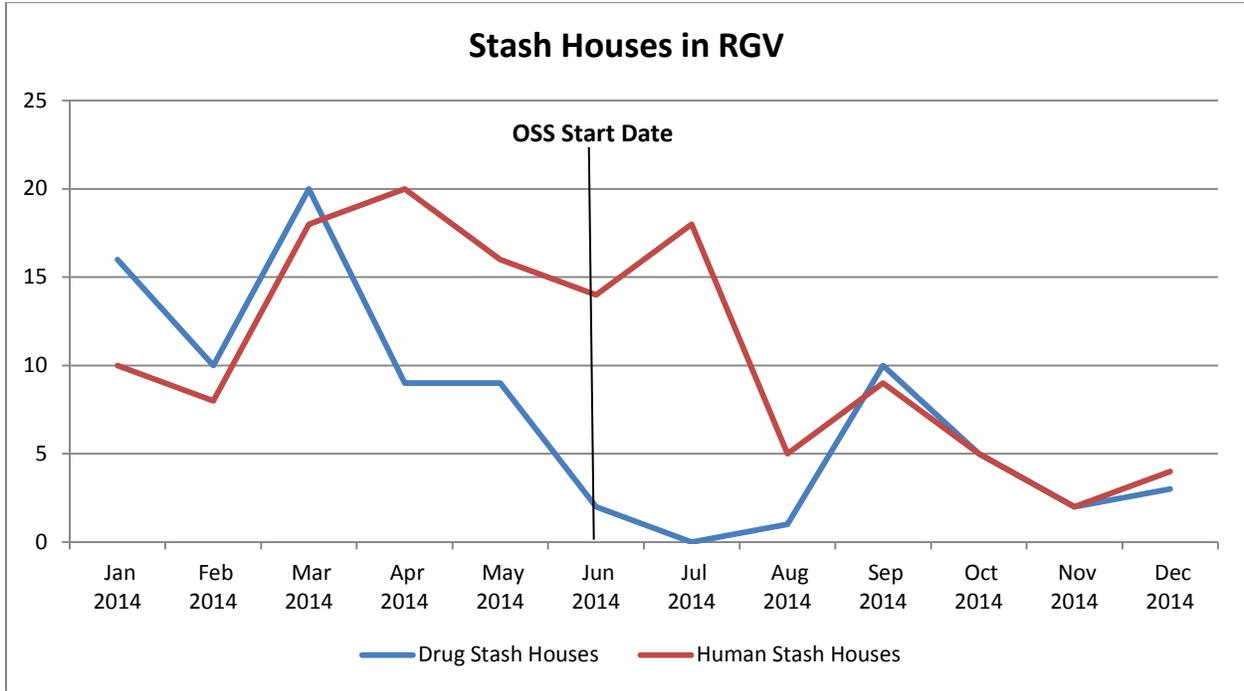
4.5 Pursuits

(U) Pursuits in Hidalgo and Starr Counties have declined since June, after trending upward since January.



### 4.6 Stash houses

(U) The number of stash houses documented prior to OSS declined after the operation began.



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## 5. Operation Strong Safety Costs

(U) The cost of Operation Strong Safety through January 14, 2015, has been \$102 million, including \$54.5 million for DPS, \$4.5 million for TPWD and \$43 million for Texas Military Forces.

Ongoing Cost	\$27,215,686.00
Incremental Cost	\$31,795,203.15
<b>Total Estimated Cost for Reporting Agencies</b>	<b>\$59,010,889.15</b>

(reporting period: Jun 18, 2014 to Jan 14, 2015)

DPS & TPWD	Aviation	CID	Communi- cations	Director's Office	Intelli- gence	Marine Unit	Rangers	TDEM	THP	TPWD	TOTAL
Straight Time	\$647,829	\$2,670,880	\$416,187	\$104,866	\$813,962	\$1,229,215	\$576,454	\$127,728	\$13,926,962	\$1,545,400	\$22,059,483
Overtime	\$528,657	\$2,806,542	\$169,938	\$58,350	\$878,579	\$1,272,050	\$1,668,622	\$131,594	\$13,128,372	\$1,200,300	\$21,843,004
Travel	\$281,374	\$807,582	\$106,852	\$7,074	\$141,854	\$344,443	\$397,312	\$52,407	\$4,164,433	\$737,100	\$7,040,431
Vehicle Fuel & Maintenance	\$27,895	\$581,710	\$32,160	\$5,753	\$34,958	\$122,828	\$107,358	\$23,386	\$3,402,555	\$817,600	\$5,156,203
Materials - Watercraft	--	\$1,253	\$375	--	--	\$20,807	\$1,750	\$586	--	\$6,450	\$31,221
Rentals	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Watercraft / Generator & UTV Fuel	--	--	\$3,847	--	--	\$154,343	\$949	--	--	\$200,100	\$359,239
Contracts	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Leases	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Repairs	--	--	--	--	--	--	\$10,995	--	--	\$29,300	\$40,295
Flight Cost	\$2,478,850	--	\$366	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	\$2,479,216
Other	--	--	\$1,797	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	\$1,797
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,964,606</b>	<b>\$6,867,968</b>	<b>\$731,523</b>	<b>\$176,044</b>	<b>\$1,869,353</b>	<b>\$3,143,685</b>	<b>\$2,763,439</b>	<b>\$335,701</b>	<b>\$34,622,321</b>	<b>\$4,536,250</b>	<b>\$59,010,889</b>

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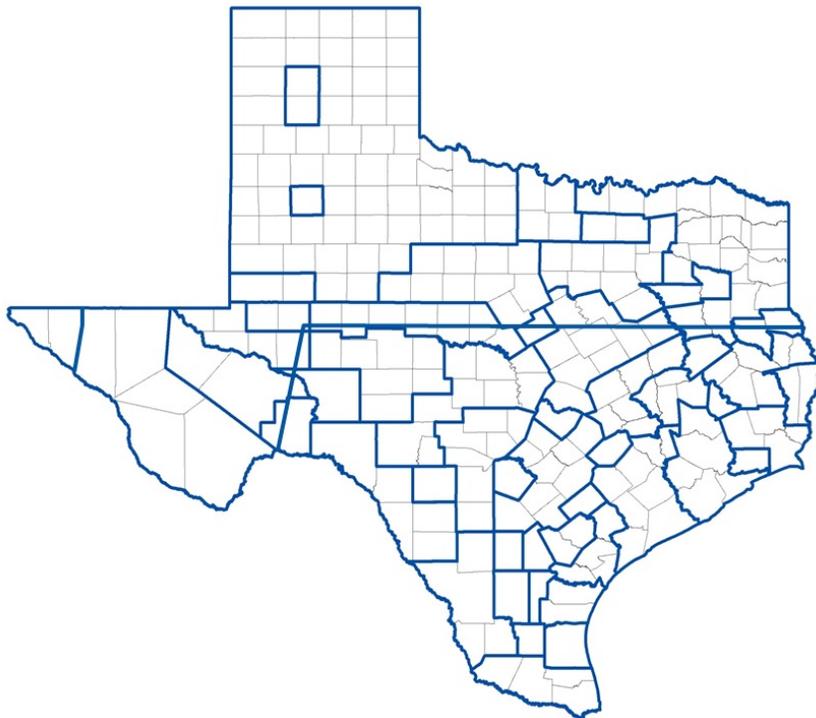
<b>Texas Military Forces</b>		<b>Original Budget</b>	<b>Adjusted Budget</b>	<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>Encumbrances</b>	<b>Remaining Budget</b>	<b>% of Budget Remaining</b>
1001	Salaries and Wages	26,610,270.00	0.00	16,103,320.40	2,429,364.59	8,077,585.01	47%
2001	Professional Fees and Services	0.00	0.00	1,006.80	0.00	(1,006.80)	0%
2002	Fuels and Lubricants	1,597,500.00	0.00	181,236.25	360,994.14	1,055,269.61	102%
2003	Consumable Supplies	58,007.69	0.00	116,874.01	0.00	(58,866.32)	-156%
2004	Utilities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%
2005	Travel	0.00	0.00	9,510.90	0.00	(9,510.90)	0%
2006	Rent - Bldg	0.00	0.00	78,484.19	80,397.47	(158,881.66)	0%
2007	Rent - Machine and Other	1,459,615.38	0.00	77,870.60	31,334.22	1,350,410.56	142%
2009	Other Operating Expense	16,120,760.77	0.00	16,031,087.55	6,829,467.85	(6,739,794.63)	-64%
3002	Food for Persons - Wards of State	4,153,846.15	0.00	550,114.87	221,882.06	3,381,849.22	125%
<b>Appropriation Balance</b>		<b>\$50,000,000.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$33,149,505.57</b>	<b>\$9,953,440.33</b>	<b>\$6,897,054.10</b>	<b>21%</b>

## 6. Recommendations

(U) Although Operation Strong Safety has been successful in elevating the security of the border and state, it has limitations. First, it deters cartel smuggling activity by increasing the risk of interdiction, but it does not secure the border. The border will be secure when all smuggling events between the ports of entry are detected and interdicted. Second, patrol operations are inefficient in the detection and interdiction of all smuggling events because local and state officers must have a reason to stop a potential smuggler, and random checkpoints are expressly forbidden by the U.S. Supreme Court as a means of detecting criminal activity. The cartels know this, and employ hundreds of scouts and other operatives to engage in diversion and blocking operations, and conduct surveillance of officers often photographing them at their posts or place of lodging. Third, the permanent assignment of a sufficient number of Troopers, Special Agents, and Texas Rangers to the border region is more effective and efficient than short-term deployments from around the state. This structure would eliminate travel time and costs, and ensure that officers have the benefit of familiarity of the area and working relationships with the local law enforcement community. Lastly, the Department of Public Safety is understaffed throughout the state, and a sustained deployment of personnel to the border region reduces the patrol and investigative capacity in other areas of the state that are also impacted by transnational crime.

(U) A comprehensive statewide strategy that relies heavily upon teamwork and technology is recommended to secure the Texas-Mexico border and effectively combat transnational crime throughout the state. All 2,641 local and state law enforcement agencies in Texas play an important role in addressing the consequences of an unsecure border with Mexico, and eight federal law enforcement agencies also have border security or investigative responsibilities related to transnational organized crime. These federal agencies have different geographical boundaries with multiple offices, resulting in 29 separate chains of command reporting to Washington, D.C.

(U) Integrating the expertise, capabilities and responsibilities of these numerous law enforcement agencies is vital to success, and requires a level of cooperation at all levels that can rarely be achieved outside of Texas. District Attorneys and United States Attorneys also play a vital role in addressing transnational crime, and their expertise and capabilities are essential to effective criminal enterprise investigations and prosecutions targeting those transnational criminal organizations and networks that constitute the greatest threat to Texas.



(U) It is recommended that the foremost priority be to secure the Texas-Mexico border, zone by zone, beginning with areas most heavily used by the cartels. The enormous length and varied terrain of the Texas-Mexico border requires the effective use of technology to detect and interdict all smuggling events. The impractical use of personnel alone would require more than the 76,100 local and state certified peace officers in Texas.

(U) The State of Texas, working with border sheriffs, South Texas landowners and the U.S. Border Patrol, has successfully implemented the Operation Drawbridge program, which employs low-cost, commercially available, motion-detection cameras to detect smuggling events in real time. This program is monitored around-the-clock, and is directly responsible for the detection of 118,352 people that resulted in 55,095 apprehensions and the seizure of 105 tons of drugs.

(U) The border can only be secure if every smuggling event is detected, and currently, there are 1,224 cameras deployed throughout the border region. On December 1, 2014, the Legislative Budget Board directed DPS to acquire and deploy an additional 4,000 cameras. A sufficient number of these cameras can establish an impenetrable detection capability within zones along the border that would provide, for the first time, a way to document and evaluate the exact level of detection coverage on the border, and provide photographic evidence of the detections to accurately assess the interdiction rate and level of security. The private sector continues to improve upon the camera-detection technology, which will further enhance this initiative through increased capabilities at decreased costs.

(U) Detections without interdictions do nothing to secure the border, and a sufficient number of permanently assigned Troopers, Special Agents, and Texas Rangers are needed to ensure that every smuggling event detected is also interdicted. In a state the size of Texas, aircraft equipped with detection, tracking, and communication technology to coordinate interdictions among local, state, and federal law enforcement personnel is essential, especially considering the many refuge areas along the Rio Grande River that are exploited by the Mexican cartels. The Texas Legislature has provided DPS with several state-of-the-art aircraft that have played a vital role in day and night time interdiction operations along the border, as have the aviation assets of the Texas Military Forces. Operating a sufficient number of these aircraft is a tremendous force multiplier and the most effective way to ensure detections are interdicted day and night.

(U) The integration of local, state, and federal ground, marine, air, and tactical border security assets around-the-clock is an absolute imperative. Therefore, it is recommended that the unified command structure and doctrine adopted for Operation Strong Safety remain in place, and that other unified commands be established as needed to ensure the detection and interdiction of all smuggling events.

(U) It is also important to address the consequences of an unsecure border in our communities. Cartels, gangs, and international sex trafficking organizations have worked closely together for many years now, uncharacteristically crossing traditional rivalries in order to traffic drugs and people for large profits.

(U) Such organized crime throughout the state can be reduced using proven strategies that dismantle the command and control networks of those criminal organizations that most threaten public safety in Texas. This approach is recommended, and it is most effective when agencies across jurisdictions integrate their efforts as has been done successfully in Houston to target gangs at the Texas Anti-Gang Center (TAG), where area gang enforcement resources are co-located.

(U) The Mexican cartels have a strong presence in Texas and must be aggressively pursued with our federal partners using enterprise investigations and prosecutions. Particularly, transnational and statewide gangs that work with the cartels should be a state priority because of their direct impact on the safety and

security of our communities. These gangs have also expanded their criminal operations to engage in sex trafficking because of its relatively low risk and high profit.

(U) As directed, the following recommendations are respectfully submitted to the Honorable Members of the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, Speaker of the House, Lieutenant Governor, and Governor:

- Expand the workday for all DPS commissioned officers to 10 hours a day to immediately increase smuggling interdiction capabilities and statewide patrol and investigative capacity.
- Increase the number of DPS commissioned officers by 500 positions to provide a permanent increase in patrol, interdiction, and investigative personnel in the border region of the state.
- Authorize the hiring of police officers at the Trooper II level, who have served as certified police officers in Texas for more than four years. These peace officers will be required to attend an abbreviated DPS recruit school.
- Maintain the current level of Texas Military Force aviation assets to support interdiction operations.
- As resources become available, replace Texas Military Force staffing of observation posts with commissioned officers and smuggling-detection technology.
- Increase the number of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department game wardens on the border by 22 positions and two administrative positions.
- Provide \$25 million in grant funds to local law enforcement agencies to support interdiction operations and combat transnational crime in their jurisdictions.
- Establish a training and firearms facility in the RGV to support the additional increase in law enforcement personnel and reduce the travel time and costs away from duty stations.
- Expand Operation Drawbridge to provide a border-wide detection capability using Texas State Guard personnel to expedite the deployment of detection coverage.
- Provide an immediate increase in border interdiction capabilities by providing Troopers 320 all-wheel-drive SUV patrol vehicles.
- Increase the number of intelligence analyst positions by 47 to support border security operations and criminal enterprise investigations targeting Mexican cartels, transnational and statewide gangs, and sex trafficking organizations.
- Increase the aircraft interdiction coverage on the border to enable around-the-clock air patrols along the entire border, to include two Pilatus aircraft (one stationed in El Paso and one in the RGV); three Cessna Caravans (one stationed in Laredo, one in Alpine, and one Houston); and two helicopters to replace two aging and underpowered helicopters currently assigned to the border.
- Continue the Border Prosecution Unit initiative, which targets transnational crime in the border region, working closely with local and state law enforcement agencies.

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- Increase information technology (IT) capacity and redundancy to support border security operations and organized crime investigations.
- Increase the level of security of DPS IT systems essential to statewide daily operations of DPS and other law enforcement agencies throughout the state.
- Provide Texas Parks and Wildlife Department game wardens with a long-range marine vessel to conduct interdiction operations in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Increase the number of DPS Tactical Marine Unit boats by four to expand interdiction capabilities on the Rio Grande River and the intracoastal waterway.
- Expand the Texas Anti-Gang Center initiative in Houston to include the Rio Grande Valley, El Paso, San Antonio and Dallas areas to fully integrate organized crime investigations targeting the state's most dangerous gangs.
- Authorize the establishment of a DPS Officer Reserve Corps comprising retired and former DPS officers in good standing with the department, to assist the department in background investigations, sex offender compliance checks, and other duties as necessary.
- Remove references in the statute to specific vehicles used in the smuggling of persons to ensure all types of smuggling are included.
- Add aggravated compelling of prostitution as an enumerated offence in the state wiretap statute.
- Adopt the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) to increase the transparency of crime throughout the state.

## References

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<sup>1</sup> United States Border Patrol. Sector Profile Fiscal Year 2014.

<http://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USBP%20Stats%20FY2014%20sector%20profile.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> United States Border Patrol. Illegal alien apprehensions.

<http://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/documents/U.S.%20Border%20Patrol%20Fiscal%20Year%20Apprehension%20Statistics%201960-2013.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Drug price data is calculated based on the 2014 U.S. National Drug Control Strategy Data Supplement, which includes DEA STRIDE data from 2012 in Tables 66, 67, 68, and 69. This calculation of the retail street price of illegal drugs uses the “Purchases of 10 grams or less” price point multiplied by the “Seizures greater than 100 grams” purity percentage, with the exception of marijuana, for which no purity or potency adjustment is made.

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/policy-and-research/ndcs\\_data\\_supplement\\_2014.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/policy-and-research/ndcs_data_supplement_2014.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Mission PD Chief to DPS. December 3, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Pharr PD Chief to DPS. December 3, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Lu, Kevin. “McAllen Police: crime rate lower in 2014.” *NewsCenter 23*. January 16, 2015.