



BORDER INVASION IMPACT UPDATE
Version III
(July 11, 2022)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Goliad County is located in the Gulf Coast region of South Texas, and is 160 miles from Laredo and 190 miles from McAllen. We are situated at the crossroads of US Hwy 59 and Hwy 183, with US 59 being an ingress/egress route leading from the U.S./Mexico border and into the interior of the United States.

Goliad is located between the border region and Houston, which is the main distribution hub for cartel slave trade and narcotics trafficking activities in Texas. This places us in a strategic staging and trafficking route utilized by transnational criminal organizations.

I. SITUATION

A. General Situation:

The Rio Grande Valley (RGV) continues to be at the forefront of border security. Transnational Criminal Organizations have established smuggling networks and travel routes along the border leading into the interior of the United States. As illicit activity increases in the RGV, it has caused a spike in illegal activity and cartel presence in communities such as Goliad. We have established partnerships with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to disrupt the illicit flow of humans and narcotics into the United States. However, the volume of criminal activity in our region has over run our capabilities at the local level.

On April 21, 2021, Goliad County issued a Declaration of Disaster in response to the local impacts of the ongoing crisis at the border. As a result of this Disaster, Governor Abbott and the Texas Legislature issued funding to local law enforcement agencies through Operation Lone Star. This funding was intended to provide local agencies with the personnel, equipment, and technology needed to combat cartel smuggling and trafficking activities in Texas.

B. Terrain/Transportation Routes:

Goliad and the surrounding counties are flat to rolling terrain with a mix of open fields, tree covered land, and thick brush predominately covered with huisache and mesquite. While 59 and 183 are the main thoroughfares through Goliad County, we are connected to our surrounding counties by a winding system of farm to market and county roads that provide twenty-six entry and exit points into the county. Many of these back roads have become the predominate smuggling routes due to the lack of manpower to patrol them in an adequate manner.

C. Criminal Element:

Transnational Criminal Organizations, to include domestic gangs, operate in illicit activities that include the smuggling of humans and narcotics into the interior of the United States, as well as the smuggling of weapons and bulk cash into Mexico.

II. OPERATION LONE STAR – LIFELINE FOR LOCAL JURISDICTIONS:

While the Goliad County Sheriff's Office works in partnership with the state, federal, and other local law enforcement agencies, the resources available to combat the overwhelming influx of criminal activity resulting from the open border became untenable.

Like most Sheriff's Offices in the area, Goliad County Sheriff's Office has two deputies on duty at any given time. They patrol 859 square miles, with 1,797.4 miles of roadway. With an average call load of just under 12,000 calls per year, day to day demands prevent the adequate patrolling of known trafficking routes on the rural roads near the edges of the county.

During pursuits and bailouts, the Goliad County Sheriff's Office is required to dedicate 100% of its resources to the resolution of the matter for time periods ranging from two hours to twelve hours. This includes investigators, the Chief Deputy, and the Sheriff. These events absorb all of the available EMS personnel and equipment.

The funding provided under Operation Lone Star has provided a lifeline for local law enforcement in their efforts to combat cartel incursion into their counties.

The Goliad County Sheriff's Office has added three deputies under the grant, who are dedicated to the interdiction and investigation of Transnational Criminal Activity. Knowing that even with the additional personnel, we would not be effective unless we combined forces with other agencies, Sheriff Boyd drafted the Taskforce Operation Lone Star plan. This plan, which is attached, provides coordinated law enforcement actions, real-time actionable intelligence sharing, and data collection through Texas A&M Kingsville.

Since beginning the operation, the Taskforce, intelligence gathering and sharing has increased the accuracy of targeting of specific groups responsible for smuggling and trafficking operations. Some of these groups have been dismantled within weeks of discovery due to the dedication and cooperation of law enforcement agencies funded under Operation Lone Star.



The truck pictured left was identified as part of a cartel sponsored smuggling and trafficking group that was operating between deep South Texas and Houston. Sheriff Boyd engaged this vehicle in a pursuit, while Taskforce Commander John Davis of the GCSO engaged one of the scout vehicles in a pursuit. There were other vehicles in this group that were being targeted. They were all encountered and taken down within a week of each other. This would not have been possible without Operation Lone Star funding.

The vehicle seen above was loaded with numerous illegal aliens who absconded into the brush of South Texas. That evening, Sheriff Boyd went back out to the scene and arrested one of the escapees from the event.

Two hours later, another vehicle from the organization (picture at right) was stopped in Jackson County, and eight illegals who had been picked up from the bailout in Goliad earlier were detained and turned over to Border Patrol. Thanks to communications developed through the Taskforce, Goliad was able to file criminal cases on the illegal aliens after they were positively identified as being in the truck pursued earlier that day by Sheriff Boyd.



The event above consisted of the cooperation of Goliad County Sheriff's Office, Bee County Sheriff's Office, Refugio County Sheriff's Office, Jackson County Sheriff's Office, Ganado Police Department, and the Border Patrol.

III. Encounters:



This female was sent to pick up illegal aliens who bailed out and were on foot. She was stopped on a remote county road and arrested for Engaging In Organized Crime. She is from Houston.

The female in the tan dress was a scout that was escorting a vehicle loaded with illegal aliens encountered in Goliad. Keen observations by GCSO personnel funded under OLS made the discovery and arrested her for multiple criminal charges.



This toolbox was in a truck that ran from Taskforce members. It contained a small area of holes drilled in it for limited air access for the illegal alien who was locked inside on the way to Houston.



This truck was stolen from another county and stashed on remote property in Goliad County. GCSO OLS interdictors recovered it and returned it to the owner.



The GCSO set up a sign for the returning thieves and placed a game camera in the area in order to know when they returned. Unfortunately, the camera did not send the image in time for apprehension. However, the camera did catch operatives returning late in the night with night vision goggles on as they approached the location where the truck had been.



These illegal aliens were apprehended in Goliad County. It was a group of young women and one juvenile female.

Many illegal aliens encountered during operations are dehydrated and complain of being kept in crowded conditions while being deprived of food and water for days at a time. Like all local agencies, we keep supplies on hand to hydrate and care for those we apprehend.



IV. MOVING FORWARD:

As has been stated above, Operation Lone Star funding has been a lifeline for local agencies. However, even with the current funding we are not able to effectively conduct operations in a manner that will make a noticeable dent in cartel smuggling and trafficking operations throughout South Texas.

Governor Abbott's July 6th, 2022 announcement of additional funding for local jurisdictions is extremely timely. The cartels in Mexico stacked an estimated 500,000 people on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande Valley BP Sector in anticipation of the ending of Title 42. Due to large number of people being held, the cartels have had an enormous cost related to the logistics of holding so many people, along with the expense of paying off ever increasing bribes to the Mexican government who allow the illegal enterprise in exchange for cash payments.

Due to the logistics and expense, we have seen a different kind of smuggling than previously encountered. Historically, groups would run a scout vehicle in conjunction with a load vehicle. Now we are encountering multiple scouts and multiple load vehicles in the same group as they work to reduce their inventory of people on the Mexico side of the river.

The following areas are seen as necessary for enhanced enforcement success with regards to fighting Transnational Criminal Activity throughout Texas:

A. Multi-Jurisdictional Cooperation:

The blueprint for this exists in Operation Taskforce Lone Star, where local law enforcement works in cooperation with Border Patrol, the Department of Homeland Security, etc. Law enforcement agencies must work together, while providing regular reporting to Texas DPS through the Border Star JOIC system. This is taking place for Taskforce members, however, regionalized replication of this effort could be beneficial.

B. Enhanced Communications and Technology:

Communication issues have been greatly overcome through the use of mobile apps which are being used by officers involved in the Taskforce. As a result of Taskforce Lone Star, agencies are now sharing actionable intelligence instead of outdated or unimportant information as has been traditionally provided by Texas DPS through the JOICs.

Due to operational security the details of technology cannot be expounded upon in this document, however, we are looking at platforms that are focused on real-time operational intelligence. We have traditionally utilized technology as an investigative tool. Now we are looking to use technology to enhance operational capabilities.

C. Personnel:

The recommendation on this portion is three parts as follows:

Overtime – As was done in the previous OLS grant, overtime should be calculated by each agency and requested at a rate that will increase their presence in the field of operations.

Personnel – The Goliad County Sheriff's Office was provided with three additional personnel dedicated to transnational criminal interdiction and investigations. Under the additional funding, it would be beneficial to extend the timeline for this funding, while providing an opportunity for agencies to expand where additional personnel can be justified.

- D. Equipment** - Work directed at apprehending, deterring, and investigating criminal offenses related to transnational criminal activity will require support equipment in order to outfit any additional deputies, provide transportation, and complete tasks in the field that are specialized to this type of event.

V. Summary

It is not the responsibility to State of Texas to fund local law enforcement efforts under normal conditions. However, as a result of the ongoing invasion by transnational criminal organizations, we find ourselves in extraordinary times. As such, it has become necessary to provide resources to law enforcement in order to ensure that Texas residents are kept safe.

The funding provided by Governor Abbott and the Texas Legislature has been important in enhancing our operational capabilities during these difficult times. It is my recommendation that the current Operation Lone Star grant cycle be extended for two years, with application being allowed for new or additional resources as can be justified.

The latest version of Operation Taskforce Lone Star has been attached for your review.