

**BORDER CRISIS IMPACTS ON LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT
AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MITIGATION**

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 area, 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.

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.

D. Collateral Damage:

Goliad County Sheriff's Office is currently monitoring thirteen stash sites that are utilized intermittently by cartel members and operatives in Goliad County. Similar sites exist throughout our region. The sites in Goliad County are all on private property and are being used without the permission of the landowners. Sites are used for storing illegal aliens while fueling up at nearby stations, exchanging illegal aliens between traffickers, stripping stolen vehicles, and hiding traffickers, aliens, and stolen trucks during enhanced enforcement efforts.

As a result of this activity, landowners in Goliad County are unable to exercise their right to the pursuit of happiness by enjoying the use of their property. Property owners have expressed their fear of going onto their own ranches and staying in their own homes alone.

The following pictures are from stash sites used by the cartel and their operatives:



The above location was utilized to strip stolen trucks from the Houston area and to store illegal aliens being transported north. The property owner was unaware of the cartel presence and called law enforcement upon discovery.



The site shown above has been used exclusively for the purpose of hiding illegal aliens in thick brush near a county road. This location has been used intermittently for years without the permission of the landowner.

We are aware of thirteen such sites in Goliad County at this time.

II. ENFORCEMENT ISSUES:

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 has become untenable.

The Goliad County Sheriff's Office has two deputies on duty at any given time. They patrol 859 square miles. 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.

During bailouts, we typically will have twelve or more illegal aliens flee into thick brush. In years past, TDCJ would send tracking dogs to assist in the apprehension of those who fled. Several years ago, TDCJ reduced their dog program and would not respond as readily as in the past. Private tracking dog groups took on this task, however, in recent months they too have stopped responding with any certainty. This creates a problem in the fact that on most scenes we lack inadequate manpower to set up the proper perimeter. If we do not have enough manpower to set up a perimeter, we do not possess enough manpower to conduct a ground search through thick brush. Even if we abandon the perimeter in order to conduct a ground search, most small agencies do not possess the proper equipment to safely conduct such searches without unnecessarily endangering their personnel.



This picture is of a group of illegal aliens that fled on foot in Goliad County and attempted to bribe a private citizen at his house into giving them a ride north. At the point in which this picture was taken, the illegal aliens had traveled several miles through thick brush in a matter of about two hours.

This is the truck the above illegal aliens were being transported in at the time of the pursuit and crash.



III. Encounters:

The first encounter of this year with smuggling of illegal aliens in Goliad County occurred on January 21, 2021. While conducting traffic enforcement one block from the Goliad Sheriff's Office, the Sheriff attempted to stop a Camaro for running a stop sign. The attempted stop turned into a pursuit, then a wreck in a back yard of a residence, where four illegal aliens from Honduras and Guatemala were detained. Between eight and ten illegal aliens fled into a brushy area near the river and were not apprehended.



The above Camaro was reported stolen within minutes of being crashed. Due to the newly stolen status, the owner of the truck was left with the burden of paying for the damage to his vehicle.

On March 12, 2021, the Goliad Sheriff's Office responded to a call of a deceased female in the brush along Highway 183. Investigation revealed that Dina Gonzalez, who was an illegal alien from Honduras had been dumped along the roadside after dying while being transported to Houston from Mission, TX.

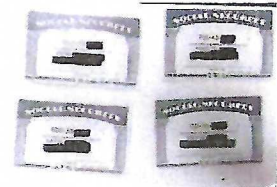
Working with Homeland Security, it was discovered that the victim had been kept at this stash house in Mission, TX during her journey to Houston in hopes of being reunited with her brother who was already living in the United States. The Sheriff visited this house as part of the investigation and was sent a letter by an attorney within hours stating that he represented the people who reside at the house.





In April of this year, the Goliad County Sheriff's Office stopped and arrested the woman in the mugshot seen here. She was transporting four young women classified by the cartels as "especials". The young women thought that they were being taken to Houston to be reunited with family members who are also in the United States illegally. Our investigation revealed that the girls were really being taken to Chinatown in Houston where they were to be placed into forced prostitution.

The woman in the mugshot above is an American Citizen who was hiding fake social security cards for each of the girls in her panties.



This investigation revealed details about the travel patterns of persons being smuggled and trafficked out of Mexico and into Texas. Our victims in this case had travelled across Mexico over a period of about a month. They had to pay as they moved from one stage of the journey to the next, making their way north. One of these victims had been delivered to the cartel by the Mexican authorities in Monterrey after a failed previous attempt to enter the US. From Monterrey, the victim had to pay to get moved to the Reynosa area into a warehouse where about 300 other soon to be illegal aliens were being held.



From the warehouse, people were taken into groups of seven to nine to a staging point along the south banks of the Rio Grande to wait for nightfall and the vacating of the river by Border Patrol boats. The image to the left was captured from the video of people in Mexico waiting in the underbrush along the river.

After crossing the river in the night, the cartel moved the illegal aliens to a factory/warehouse near the Rio Grande, on the Texas side of the border. Just like the warehouse in Mexico, the location was a working site with employees in the same building as the people being housed by the cartel operatives. According to the account of one victim, there were hundreds of illegal aliens being kept at the location at a time with one single toilet for their use. Upon arrival at this location, more money was paid by those being smuggled.

From the warehouse along the border, the illegal aliens were taken to a hotel that was rented out to the cartel for staging of illegal aliens prior to being taken north to Houston. The Sheriff and County Judge of Goliad travelled to the Valley and staked out the hotel just prior to a raid by the Border Patrol that resulted from the investigation in Goliad.





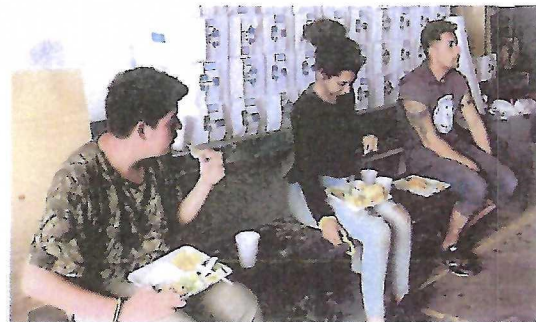
These are a few of the illegal aliens that Border Patrol apprehended in the hotel during the raid.

The “especials” in this case were young, attractive females. Prior to leaving the hotel to travel to Houston, they were cleaned up, given “American” clothes and makeup, and posed for a series of pictures to match the cover story they were to use if stopped and questioned along the way. When they arrived at the Border Patrol checkpoint at Sarita, three of the girls pretended to be asleep in the back seat of the car. By design, the most attractive of the illegal aliens was placed in the front passenger seat. When the Border Patrol Agent began asking the driver too many questions, another cartel operative in a car following them began honking his horn as if he had grown impatient. This caused the agent to stop his questioning and waive all of the waiting cars through without stopping any of them.



This gentleman caught the eye of the Sheriff at a convenience store in Goliad. His reaction to seeing law enforcement was telling. The Sheriff took a picture of him and sent it to Homeland Security. He was identified as a cartel operative and was likely in Goliad due to the fact that they had stolen a truck in a neighboring county the night before and stored it on private land in Goliad County before taking it south. His fingerprints were found on a stolen truck that was involved in a pursuit and bailout in Lavaca County a few weeks prior. His face is blacked out, because he has not been apprehended as of this time.

The following pictures are of incidents from our area:





Signs like this one have been placed along roadways entering Goliad County as a warning to traffickers of humans and drugs to keep out of the County.



IV. RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS:

The overall solution to the problem as it exists in our state must be one that is multi-jurisdictional, contains the partnership of local, state, and federal agencies, possesses advanced communications and technological capabilities, provides for enhanced personnel allocations for smaller agencies, and operates under a unified plan that guarantees all parties involved are working in coordination and are reporting progress to a central location for tracking of results.

Recommendations for the functionality of each portion of the overall suggested solution are broken down below. They are the recommendations as seen by the Sheriff of Goliad County as a result of the oversight of multiple border security operations and a long-standing participation in Border Star and pre-Border Star efforts.

A. Multi-Jurisdictional Cooperation:

The blueprint for this portion exists through the Border Star program and the weekly teleconference meetings. However, because of limitations on the use of Border Star funding and the proliferation of Operation Stonegarden funding, local participation in the DPS coordinated Border Star program has been reduced greatly.

Governor Abbott stated in our recent meeting that he intends to create a new funding source at the state level that would be similar to Stonegarden. If this funding stream is more flexible in nature and allows for the use of funds for overtime, additional personnel within the grant cycle, vehicles, equipment, the purchase of technology, and the cost of administering the grant, we could see a drastic increase in participation.

It is my recommendation that any participation in a grant as mentioned by the Governor should come with the requirement of participation in asset laydown reports, joint operation plan participation, intelligence sharing, and open participation in JOIC teleconferences.

The Goliad County Sheriff's Office is working on a cooperative with other local law enforcement at this time in an effort to share personnel and resources as the need arises. We also work in close cooperation with the Department of Homeland Security and Border Patrol out of Corpus Christi.

B. Enhanced Communications and Technology:

To this day, some agencies cannot utilize radios to communicate with their neighboring agencies. Small groups of interdictors have taken to using either text groups or various apps on their phones to communicate information for real time information sharing. Some apps are not secure, causing potential problems with information leaks. I recommend that the State of Texas coordinate the use of a singular app that can be verified as secure for law enforcement use for voice or text communications across groups or for person to person. Some of the Sheriffs are utilizing Secured Communications, however I cannot guarantee that it will provide for all of the needs of field personnel. This decision is best left to the Texas DPS or a committee of state and local personnel.

Knowing to some extent the operational habits of the cartel and their operatives is only of limited use due to the unpredictable nature of their organization. Their constant changes in travel patterns and counter intelligence measures make it hard to keep up with and catch them due to our limited manpower at the local level. We have been looking to technology to counter the unpredictable nature of the cartel and their operatives.

At the recent National Sheriffs Association Conference in Phoenix, AZ, Sheriff Pinky Gonzales (Refugio), Sheriff Benny Martinez (Brooks), Sheriff Louderback (Jackson), and Sheriff Roy Boyd of Goliad County met with the representatives from a technology firm that will provide us with the actionable intelligence we need to take precise action, as well the information needed to assist the various agencies who aid in the follow up investigations.

C. Personnel:

Like many small agencies, the Goliad Sheriff's Office field response consists of a total of eight patrol deputies. This is split into four shifts of two deputies on duty at any given time. As stated above, this lack of manpower does not provide for adequate coverage to handle daily call volume and conduct consistent pro-active enforcement against the ongoing problems resulting from the border crisis.

The recommendation on this portion is three parts as follows:

Overtime – The Goliad County Sheriff's Office currently has limited funds from Border Star and Stonegarden grants. These grants afford us the opportunity to conduct limited enhanced enforcement actions and are often saved for regional operations in conjunction with other law enforcement partners. Overtime allocations under the annual county budget do not adequately cover the needs of normal annual overtime expenses and does not provide for enhanced activities needed during a crisis like we are currently experiencing.

If a supplemental grant could be provided from the State of Texas for local law enforcement for the purposes of enhanced enforcement efforts and multi-jurisdictional operational cooperatives, we could place deputies on the road in an overtime capacity. This would increase our capacity to fight the surge of cartel activities in our county and in our region, thereby creating a lasting deterrent to conducting illicit business in Texas.

Part of this funding should also cover dispatch, investigative requirements directly tied to the issue, EMS needs that arise, and administrative costs. Enhanced enforcement will create additional work throughout these areas, and additional work hours that are needed and can be directly tied to these efforts should be covered as well.

Personnel – As has been stated, the Goliad County Sheriff's Office is only staffed to place two deputies on the streets at a time. I am recommending that the Goliad SO be provided with funding (for a limited time to be specified by the State) for the hiring and outfitting of two additional deputies to be tasked with enforcing laws related to transnational criminal activities negatively impacting our county and region. They can be placed on a floating schedule that would allow for the flexibility needed to combat the ever-changing tactics of the cartels and their operatives. These deputies would also be utilized for multi-agency operations directed at intercepting illegal activities.

Field work conducted by deputies necessitates the need for investigative follow up work in order to gather, categorize, and disseminate intelligence, prepare cases for prosecution, and conduct forensic analysis of cell phone and social media information. The Goliad County Sheriff's Office currently has two investigators. One is assigned to normal case assignment work, while the other is tasked to the Crossroads Area Taskforce with an emphasis on narcotics and trafficking cases. While we work close with Homeland Security in an effort to move cases to the federal side, our current case load is already at the level of requiring triage in order to successfully work more important cases to completion. For these reasons, I am requesting that for the duration of the program or grant, we be funded an additional FTE in investigations for the purpose of focusing on cases related to transnational criminal activity.

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

V. Summary

During most days there are multiple police pursuits and bailouts in our region of the state. Cartels and their operatives are taking over land of private citizens who are too fearful to exercise their right to use property they lawfully own and should be able to enjoy.

Thousands of stolen trucks are being used to transport illegal aliens into indentured servitude across the United States. These people are predominately distributed to markets across the country from the main distribution center of Houston.

The illegal aliens are being taken advantage of by cartels who see people as a valuable commodity instead of a fellow human being. Many of them enter the United States believing that their debt to the traffickers has been paid in full, only to find that they now owe more money that must be paid off through labor, participation in criminal acts, or forced prostitution.

Until someone steps up and enacts a comprehensive plan that causes Mexico cease their partnership with the cartels in this mass transfer of slaves into the United States, the only thing we can do is enforce the laws that fall under each of our jurisdictions. This effort must be a cooperative that combines local, state, and the few willing federal agencies that exist. However, local law enforcement is not funded to combat this unprecedented wave of criminal activity invading our state and our counties. If we are to be considered effective, funding must be part of this solution. This funding must be robust enough to enhance the manpower and capabilities of local law enforcement, but it must be done so in a manner that is temporary so as not to be seen as a means by which commissioners courts can use the State to supplant budgets and abdicate their responsibility to fund county operations.

VI. PROPOSED BUDGET

The following budget spreadsheet is based upon a two-year cycle of funding for personnel and overtime allocations. It is the Sheriff's recommendation to Governor Abbott and was submitted for consideration on July 15, 2021.

Goliad County Sheriff's Office

Law Enforcement Personnel

Category	Narrative/Justification	Amount
Personnel, Overtime, & Fringe	Fiscal Breakdown	
Law Enforcement Operational Personnel Needs & Overtime	GCSO- Two additional Deputies assigned as FTE to Patrol for targeted operational period @ \$19.00 Rate/hour (2 years of pay)	\$173,888
	GCSO- One additional Investigator FTE assigned to related operation @ \$20.56 Rate/hour (2 years of pay)	\$94,082.56
	GCSO- Law Enforcement Operational Overtime 2,400hours @ \$28.50 OT Rate/hour	\$68,400.00
	GCSO- Telecommunications Overtime 2000 hours @ \$21.11 OT Rate/hour	\$42,220.00
	GCSO - Administrative/Grant Management Overtime 416 hours @ \$24 OT Rate/hour	\$9,984.00
Personnel Fringe Benefits	GCSO - Fringe Benefits for additional FTE Deputies & Investigator	\$96,370.56
	GCSO - Fringe Benefits for Overtime	\$42,952.00
	GCSO - Fringe Benefits for Administrative OT	\$3,016.00
Total Personnel and Overtime Request Amount For a 2 Year Period		\$530,913.12

Prosecutor Expenses

Category	Narrative/Justification	Amount
Compensation	Criminal DA Prosecutor at \$45 Rate/hour for an estimated 4 hours per week working on related cases (416 hours over a 2-year period)	\$18,720.00
Fringe Benefits	Criminal Prosecutor - Fringe Benefits	\$6,364.48
Mileage	Travel for Prosecutor from his office and back in Refugio (54.4 miles round trip estimated at once per week for two years)	\$3,055.01
Total for Expense for Prosecutor		\$28,139.49

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EMS Personnel and Ambulance Utilization		
Category	Narrative/Justification	Amount
Personnel, Overtime, & Fringe	Fiscal Breakdown	
	Goliad EMS Medics Response to Associated Scenes @ \$15.07 Rate/hour (40 deployments at estimated 2 hours per deployment, 2 medics per deployment)	\$2,411.20
	Goliad Medics Fringe Benefits Based Upon Above Calculations	\$1,020.80
Ambulance & Equipment	Goliad EMS Ambulance & Equipment Rate of \$100 per Hour based off 40 2-hour deployments	\$8,000.00
Total Cost for EMS		\$11,432.00
Equipment		
Category	Description	Amount
Uniforms	Uniforms for 2 additional Patrol Deputies to include 3 short sleeve shirts, 3 long sleeve, and three pairs of uniform pants	\$4,797.64
Hand Held Radios	3 Motorola APX 4000 VHF MHZ Model 2 Portable Radios for 2 Patrol Deputies and 1 Investigator	\$8,418.33
Vehicles	3 Ford F150 4x4 Crew Cab Trucks	\$113,919
Fuel for Vehicles	15,000 miles per Vehicle per year at @\$0.54 per mile for 2-year period x 3 Vehicles	\$48,600
Prisoner Partitions	2 Prisoner Partitions Installed for Trucks Assigned to Patrol	\$1,345.00
Mobile Radios	3 Motorola APX 4500 VHF Radios Installed in Ford 150 Police Trucks	\$6,817.47
Emergency Equipment for Vehicles	Emergency Lights, Consoles, Grill Guards, Siren, etc. for 3 Ford F150 Patrol Trucks	\$23,880
Vehicle Graphics	Material and Installation for graphics on 2 Ford F150 Patrol Trucks assigned to Patrol Division	\$900.00
Night Vision	10 Sets of ATN NVG7-2WPTI Night Vision Goggles for night time recovery operations and safety of Deputies in the field	\$16,499.99
4 Wheelers	2 Honda Foreman 520CC 4x4 4 wheelers for apprehension, search and rescue, tracking dog recovery, etc.	\$18,362.86
Trailers for 4 wheelers	2 Texas Bragg 12' single axle trailers with rear loading ramp for deployment of ATV's @\$2875.00 each	\$5,750.00
Total Cost of Equipment		\$249,290.29
CONTINUED		

Software for Regional Investigative Cooperative	
Description	Amount
<p>This information was removed due to the sensitive nature of the software requested.</p>	\$126,000
TOTAL REQUESTED AMOUNT	\$945,774.90