



Operation Lone Star Taskforce Update

February 2023



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a result of the wave of transnational criminal activity invading Texas in 2021, Governor Abbott provided relief to local jurisdictions through the Operation Lone Star grant. In order to maximize the effectiveness of the funds provided, the Goliad County Sheriff's Office set out to ensure coordinated enforcement efforts at the local level. This document is a brief overview of what participating agencies have done as a result of the OLS funding provided by the Texas Legislature and Governor Abbott.

OPERATION LONE STAR TASKFORCE UPDATE

A. Formation

Shortly after receiving funding from the Governor's Office, Sheriff Boyd hired John Davis of Jackson County to act as Commander of Taskforce efforts under OLS. Additionally, three interdictors and an intel/investigator were hired for the sole purpose of enforcing laws pertaining to transnational criminal activity.

In order to maximize the use of funds provided, the Goliad County Sheriff's Office initiated the formation of a taskforce to work in a cooperative effort. Knowing that we lacked the ability to solve the illegal entry problem at the border as local entities, we set out to create an environment through intelligence and enforcement efforts that would deny cartels and their operatives the ability to freely operate within our region of the state.

The Operation Lone Star Taskforce has now grown to include the following agencies:

Goliad Co. SO	Bee Co. SO	Live Oak Co. SO
McMullen Co. SO	Wilson Co. SO	Wharton Co. SO
Jackson Co. SO	Edna PD	Refugio Co. SO
San Patricio Co. SO	Kleberg Co. SO	Kleberg Co. Attorney Taskforce
Kingsville PD	Brooks Co. SO	Falfurrias PD
Cuero PD	Yoakum PD	Gonzales Co. SO
Gonzales PD	Nixon PD	Zapata County SO
Aransas County SO	US Border Patrol	US Coast Guard
	Dept. of Homeland Security	

B. Methodology of the Operation Lone Star Taskforce

After beginning our combined efforts in March of 2022, we quickly began to understand that Mexican cartels were utilizing other organizations (contractors) within Texas to oversee and coordinate their smuggling efforts. These contractors then employed lesser organizations, or subcontractors to insulate their operations from detection and prosecution.

Thanks to our relationship with the Department of Homeland Security (HSI) office in Victoria, the OLS Taskforce was soon receiving and disseminating real-time intelligence obtained by HSI by informants within the contractor and subcontractor groups. This information was combined with investigative material from debriefs of smugglers and illegal aliens arrested by OLS Taskforce member agencies, data revealed from search warrants on phones recovered from bailouts and arrested individuals, and license plate reader data. As a result of this intelligence gathering, the OLS Taskforce began to form a greater understanding of the operational habits of cartel operatives at different levels and went as far as placing trackers on vehicles used by smuggling operations.



Interdiction deputies and officers shared the actionable intelligence throughout the Taskforce via an app. This real-time intelligence sharing was used to intercept scouts, intercept load vehicles, and disrupt pickup areas used to load illegal aliens into vehicles.

Abandoning the traditional method of law enforcement agencies, which usually involved arresting a smuggler caught in the act while releasing the illegal aliens to Border Patrol, the Goliad County Sheriff's Office OLS unit began conducting long-term investigations into the organizations. This usually involved bringing in HSI to initiate a federal case while GCSO assisted and ran a parallel state case for prosecution. As is shown in the following section, this led to a more effective way of handling smuggling cases.

Specific cases have been highlighted in previous documents submitted.

C. Result of the Effort

The result of the obtaining and sharing of real-time intelligence provided several benefits. First, we were able to identify numerous members of the criminal organizations, what they drove, where they conducted business, the routes they utilized, and when they were on the road conducting smuggling operations. In some cases, we learned where they lived and where the businesses were that they utilized to provide false legitimacy to their finances. With this intelligence in hand, we began coordinated multi-jurisdictional enforcement actions that apprehended and disrupted criminal activity.

Eventually the efforts resulted in the identifying of the primary smuggling organization operating out of the RGV sector (Name withheld due to an ongoing investigation). This organization was responsible for overseeing all major smuggling efforts in the area from Roma, east to the Gulf of Mexico, from Roma north to Falfurrias, and back across from Falfurrias to the Gulf of Mexico. This organization was also responsible for the taxation in this region for multiple cartels.

The disruption of this organization began with the OLS Taskforce enforcement efforts and led to them altering their path from the RGV sector of the border to Houston. The Taskforce denied direct passage from the border to Houston via main roadways such as Hwy 77, Hwy 281, and Hwy 59. Within months of our collective efforts, the organization began travelling to San Antonio and taking I-10 to Houston. This was a more costly and time-consuming means of smuggling, which impacted the profit margin for this organization and their subcontractors.

With the intelligence about the new smuggling routes in hand, the OLS Taskforce refocused on the routes from pickup locations which lead to San Antonio. In a short period of time, member agencies intercepted and arrested smugglers taking the new routes. We also intercepted and arrested smugglers from subcontractor organizations working under the primary organization.

During late 2022, the Goliad County Sheriff's Office, HSI, and other agencies from the Houston area executed search and arrest warrants on upper and mid management members of the primary organization in Houston. This action, in combination with the arrest of many lesser smugglers, led to the immediate reduction in smuggling activity in the jurisdictions participating in the OLS Taskforce. Goliad County Sheriff's Office then began a clean-up operation on other smaller smuggling organizations and executed arrest and search warrants in the Houston area with the help of the US Marshal's Office. More search and arrest warrants in the Houston area are to come.



D. Effects of the Effort

After the long efforts of the OLS Taskforce agencies, we noticed a drastic reduction in smuggling apprehensions in our areas of responsibility. Upon meeting with Border Patrol, we were advised that illegal alien apprehensions in the RGV for January 2023 were at the lowest level since President Trump was in office. They advised that there were three primary reasons for this:

- The formation of and enforcement activities of the OLS Taskforce disrupted smuggling operations in the area and caused the smugglers to select new routes on their way to Houston.
- Once the smugglers began altering their routes, the OLS Taskforce identified the new routes and adapted enforcement actions. This denied smuggling organizations access to their secondary travel patterns.
- Federal prosecutors in Corpus began accepting smuggling cases, creating an additional punitive deterrent for smugglers.

Additionally, HSI agents explained that the arrest of so many management level primary organization members caused a void in the organizational structure. As a result, the newly promoted members decided that in order to continue their operation, it was in their best interest to move west. This organization is now operating along the border, west of Eagle Pass, as far out as Terrel County.

The reality of this effort is that Operation Lone Star funding has made the citizens in our region of Texas safer from cartel criminal activity.

E. Future Enforcement Actions

Recently, Sheriff Coe of Kinney County sent out a written request for assistance due to the overwhelming smuggling activity in his county. This was followed by a similar request from Sheriff Cleveland in Terrel County.

The OLS Taskforce recently conducted a planned enforcement operation in Kinney County. This initial operation involved 35 deputies, dispatchers, and jailers from the OLS Taskforce and was a test to work out the logistics for more lengthy operation to come. If manpower and funding allow, it is our plan to provide assistance to Terrel County in the near future as well.

We are already aware of up-and-coming organizations with the potential to fill the vacuum left by the primary organization. Working with Border Patrol intelligence personnel, we are developing a plan to place trackers on their vehicles and take the group down before they can become more difficult to dismantle.

God Bless Texas

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. J. Coe", is located below the "God Bless Texas" text.

"...For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

Luke 12:48