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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. To provide a more thorough accounting of the operation and update of the current situation, this report contains law enforcement sensitive information. An unclassified version of this report will be produced for public dissemination at a later date.

(U) Additional classified information received from the U.S. Intelligence Community related to the effectiveness of Operation Strong Safety could not be included in this report; however, we have received authorization to brief members of the Texas Legislature and state leadership, and we are prepared to brief members at their earliest 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.

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(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 illegally crossed into Texas, was identified in a federal fraud investigation by the FBI as an active al-Barakat and Al-Ittihad Al-Islami (AIAI) 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,

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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 there 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 \$1.87 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.

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(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, 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 110,500 smuggling events, resulting in 52,250 apprehensions and the seizure of 92 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

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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, 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 84th Texas Legislature, Speaker of the House, Lieutenant Governor, and Governor:

- Expand the work day 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.

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- **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.**
- **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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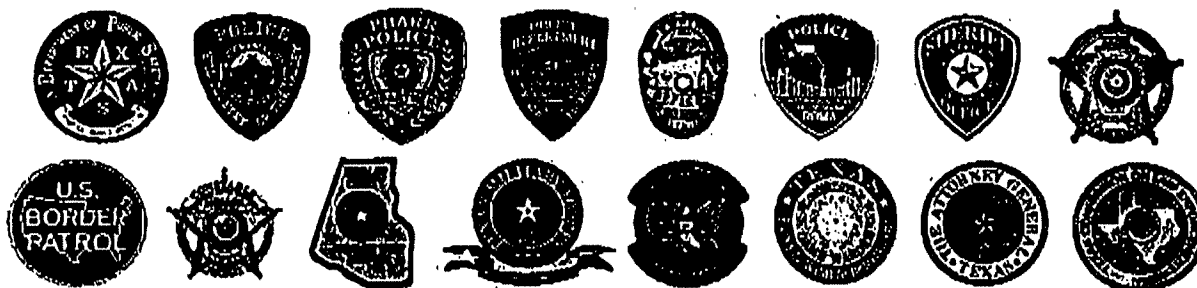
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Acknowledgments

(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) In order to provide a complete and thorough account of this operation, this report contains information that is Law Enforcement Sensitive (LES), including information from multiple law enforcement agencies. This includes operationally sensitive information regarding the deployment of law enforcement resources, as well as sensitive information from active investigations and intelligence sources. This information may be a record required to be kept confidential by law or excepted from public disclosure requirements. The department is sharing this information with you in accordance with Section 552.008 of the Texas Government Code. We request that the information be labeled as confidential and kept securely, and not be disclosed to anyone outside your office.

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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.¹

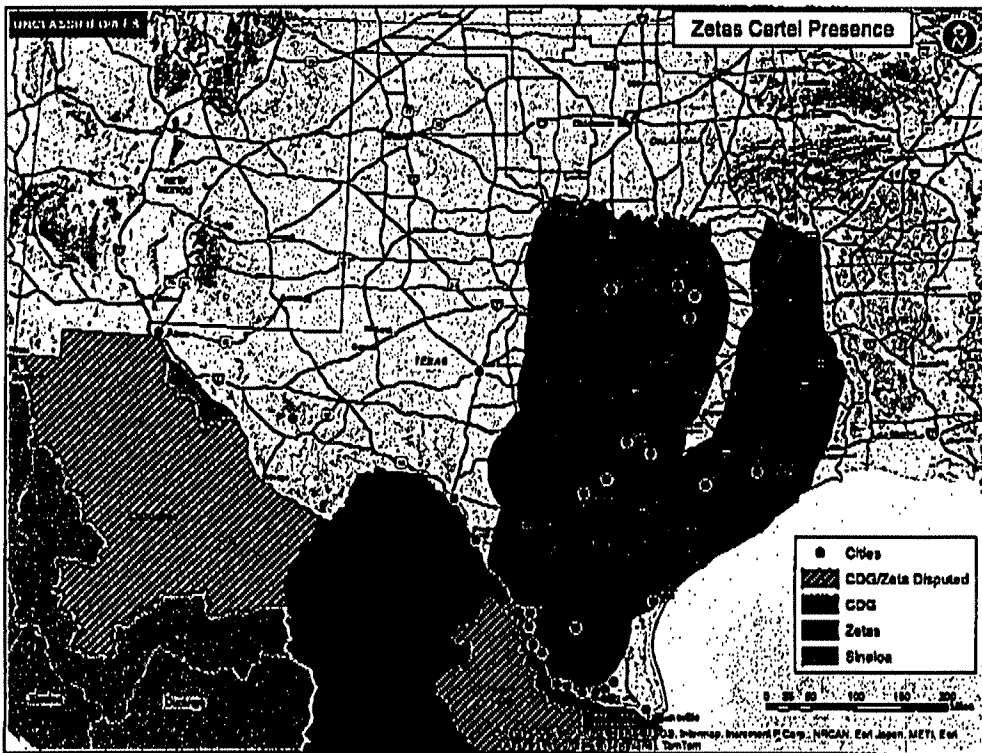
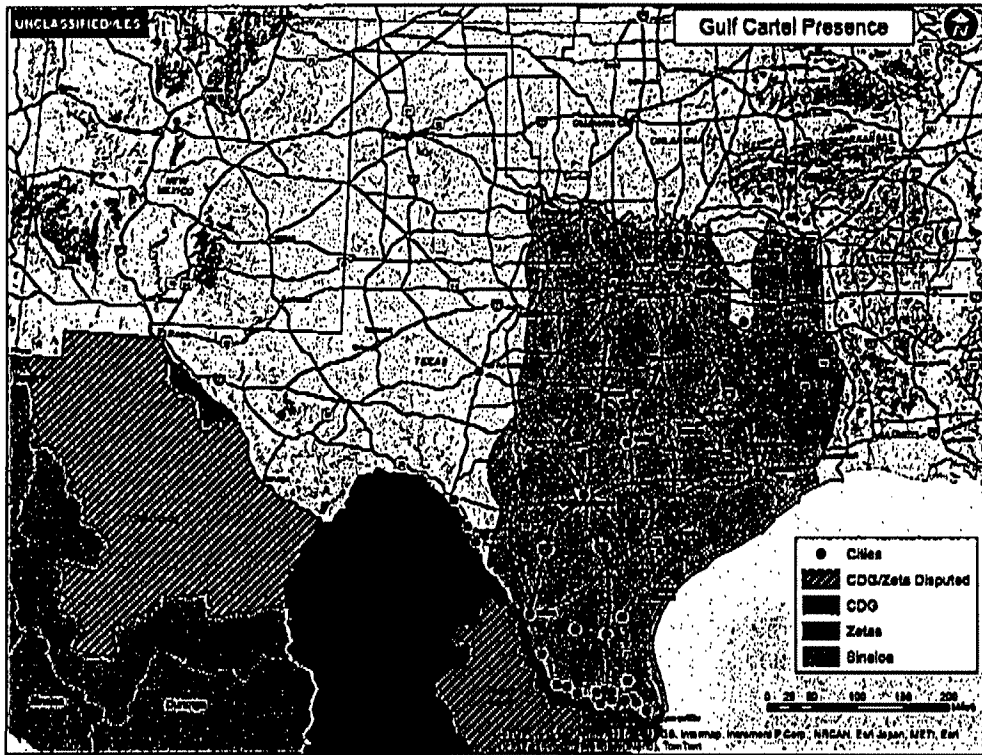
2.1 Mexican cartels

(U) Mexican cartels constitute the greatest organized crime threat to Texas. These powerful and ruthless criminal organizations use military and terrorist tactics to battle each other and the government of Mexico for control over the lucrative U.S. drug and human smuggling markets. The cartels have also expanded their involvement in other criminal activities beyond drug smuggling, including profiting from human smuggling, weapons smuggling, extortion, kidnapping for ransom, and robbery.

(U//LES) Mexican cartels control virtually all illegal smuggling activities through the U.S.-Mexico border and continue to supply most of the illicit drugs in the U.S. market.² They produce and/or smuggle methamphetamine, marijuana, and heroin, and they have close and extensive ties with cocaine supply sources in Central and South America.

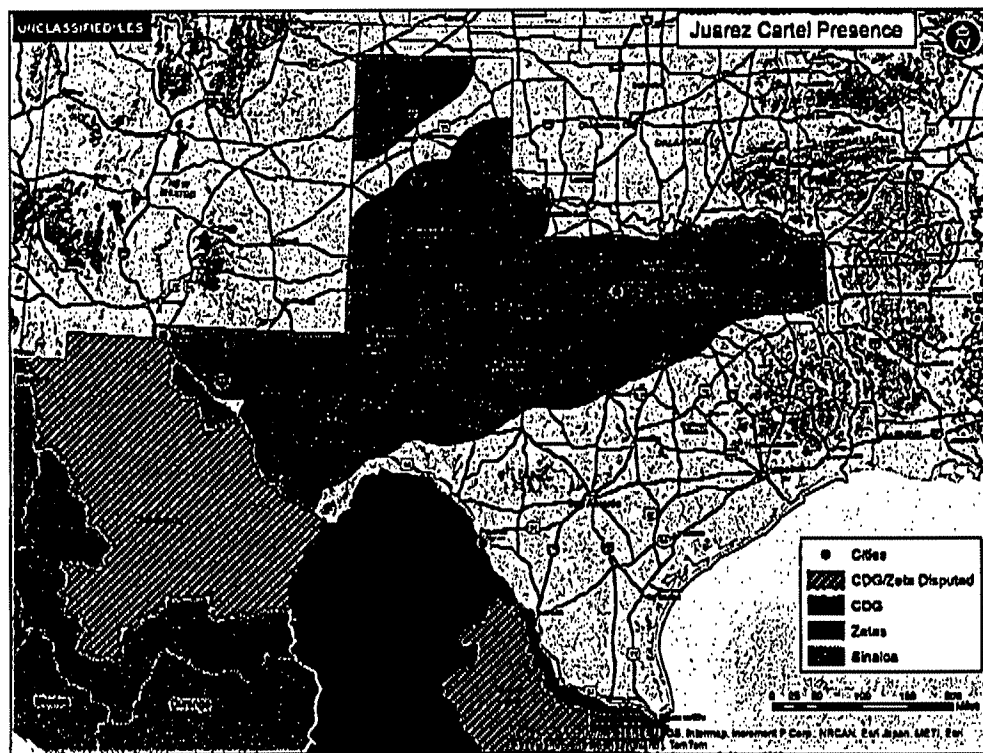
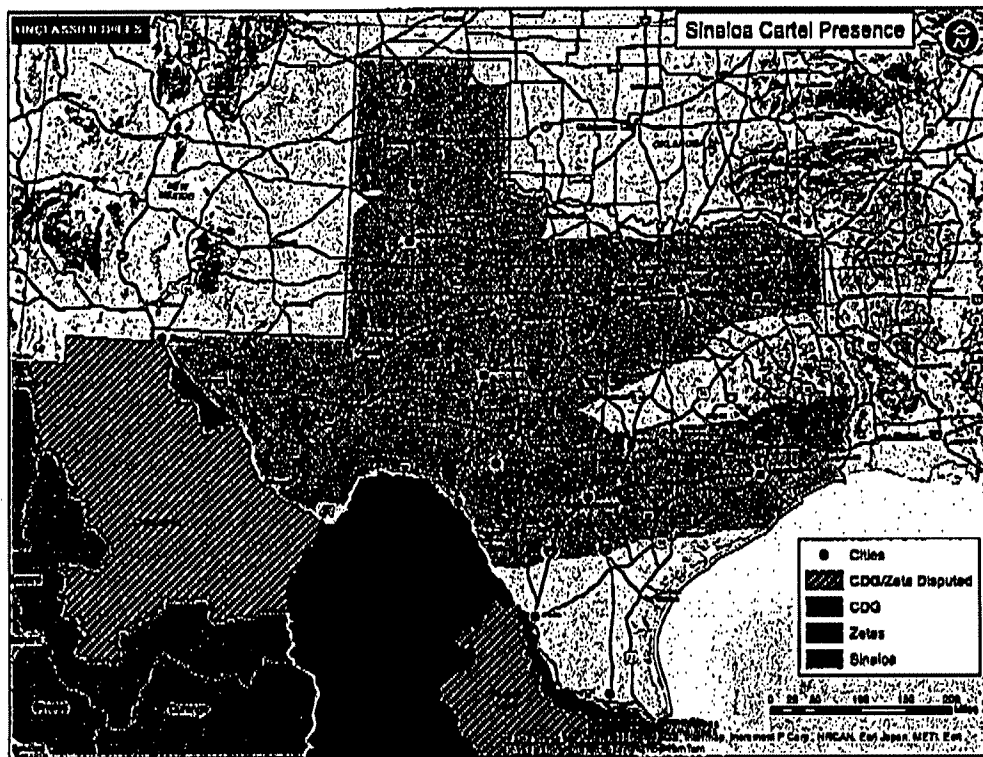
(U) Seven of the eight major cartels operate in the state, moving drugs and people into the United States, and transporting cash, weapons and stolen vehicles back to Mexico. These include the Gulf Cartel, Los Zetas, Juarez Cartel, Sinaloa Cartel, Knights Templar, La Familia Michoacana, and the Beltran Leyva Organization. Of these, the Gulf Cartel, Los Zetas, the Sinaloa Cartel, and the Juarez Cartel have the most extensive presence and influence throughout Texas.

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(U) Mexican Cartel Violent Crimes in the United States

(U) In addition to controlling the flow of drugs and illegal aliens across the border, the Mexican cartels have also carried out acts of violence in Texas and elsewhere in the U.S., including murders and kidnappings, aimed at recovering lost drug loads, intimidating or silencing rivals and witnesses, and retaliating against their enemies.

- (U//LES) Since late September 2013, Mexican cartels or their associates have conducted and planned several kidnappings in multiple U.S. states in retaliation for the theft or loss of the cartels' illicit drugs or proceeds by U.S.-based individuals, according to the FBI. The kidnapers targeted individuals or relatives of those who the Mexican cartels believed had lost or stolen illicit drugs or proceeds. The FBI assesses that Mexican cartels' and their associates' enforcement tactics during the past year highlight their intent and capability to conduct targeted violence throughout the U.S. The FBI assesses that these types of kidnappings serve as a strong indicator of Mexican-cartel-related criminal activity in a domain. The Southwest Border region continues to experience the most Mexican-cartel-related criminal activity in the U.S.; however, recent kidnappings underscore the nationwide reach of Mexican cartels.³
- (U//LES) In May 2013, a Southlake, Texas attorney was ambushed, shot and killed by three Mexican nationals while sitting in his SUV. The victim was also a Mexican national and reportedly a former attorney for a leader of the Gulf Cartel.⁴ At the time of the murder, two defendants held U.S. Border Crossing Cards (BCC) and the third defendant was a legal permanent resident.⁵ From approximately March 2011 to May 2013, the three defendants traveled from Mexico to Southlake, and elsewhere with the intent to kill the victim. The three defendants used e-mail to exchange personal information about the victim as well as his location, family, residence, and vehicles. They purchased and placed surveillance cameras around the victim's neighborhood to track him and his family, in addition to placing tracking devices on their vehicles. While in the area, the defendants bought and rented new vehicles in order to avoid detection. The three men were arrested in McAllen in September 2014.⁶
- (U) Two Edinburg PD officers were shot and wounded on July 22, 2014, while attempting to serve an arrest warrant on a Texas Syndicate member who was a confirmed Gulf Cartel associate. The subject was wanted for the murder of a 19-year-old who was shot in the back of the head over an apparent drug deal. Officers from multiple agencies responded as the subject remained inside a La Joya residence. The law enforcement response included multiple DPS assets who were participating in Operation Strong Safety, including DPS Troopers, CID agents and a DPS pilot who assisted on the ground in escorting nearby children to safety. The incident ended when the subject attempted to shoot a deputy U.S. Marshal, and DPS SWAT members fatally shot the suspect.⁷
- (U) In June 2013, a cartel member from Mexico was arrested in La Joya, Texas, for allegedly holding five illegal immigrants against their will. Law enforcement officers found a man walking and crying along the side of the road, and then learned that a group was being held in a home. According to the La Joya police chief, the illegal immigrants claimed that they were actually kidnapped by the suspect, and that he was asking for money in order for them to be released. They claim he is part of a cartel operating in the La Joya area part of the county.⁸

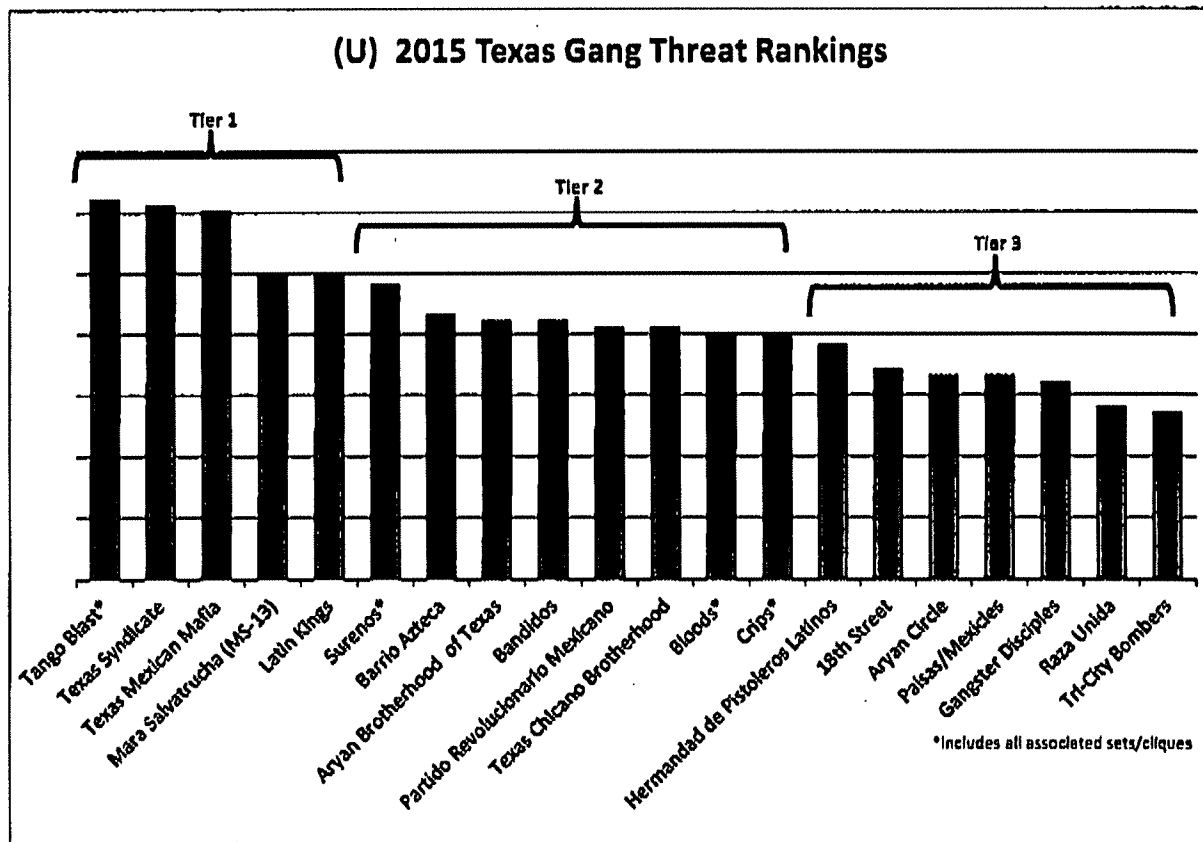
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2.2 Gangs

(U) Gang activity remains widespread throughout all areas of Texas, and is especially prevalent in the counties adjacent to Mexico since many Texas-based gangs are involved in cross-border smuggling and trafficking.

(U//LES) Gangs within the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) are responsible for a wide range of transnational criminal activity and frequently work in collaboration with Mexican cartels. Multiple transnational gangs – such as MS-13 and 18th Street – operate in the United States, Mexico, and Central America. In FY2014, the total number of gang members encountered in the RGV increased 30 percent from FY2013, with MS-13 representing 43 percent of all gang encounters within the RGV sector.

(U//LES) Drug-related crimes and violent crimes are among the most common charges for gang members in the RGV, according to 2014 data provided by the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office. The Tango clique known as the Vallucos is the most encountered gang in the county, constituting almost half of Hidalgo County's total gang arrests and committing the most crimes in virtually every offense category. Other highly active gangs are the Sureños, Tri-City Bombers (TCB), Latin Kings, and the Texas Chicano Brotherhood (TxCB). The active Mexican-based gangs include the Partido Revolucionario Mexicano (PRM) and the Paisas.

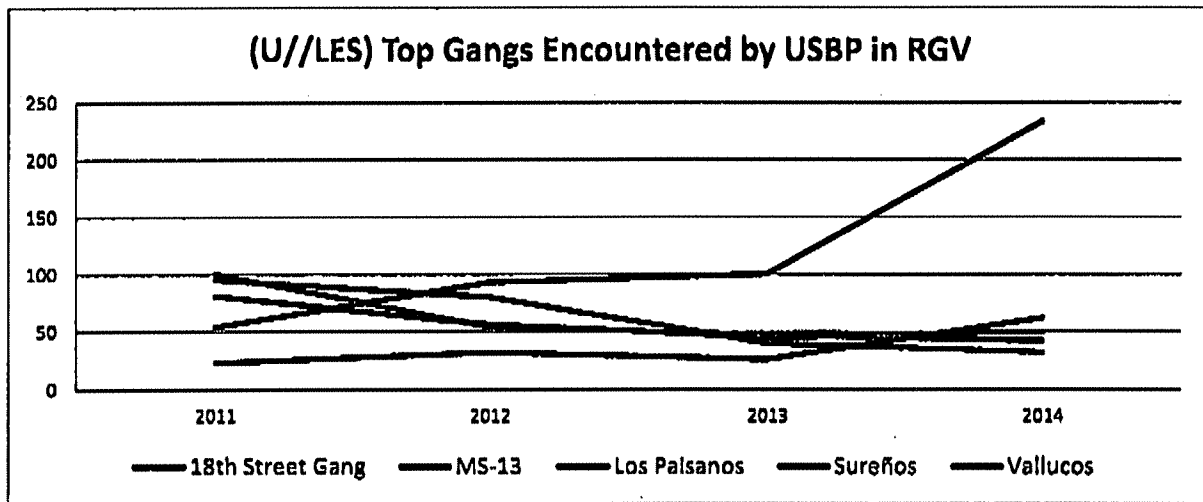


(U//LES) We are particularly concerned about the expansion and influence of MS-13 in Texas, and assess that a further influx of MS-13 members across the border is likely. MS-13 is a large transnational gang with members in the United States, Mexico, and Central America. The gang is composed of loosely

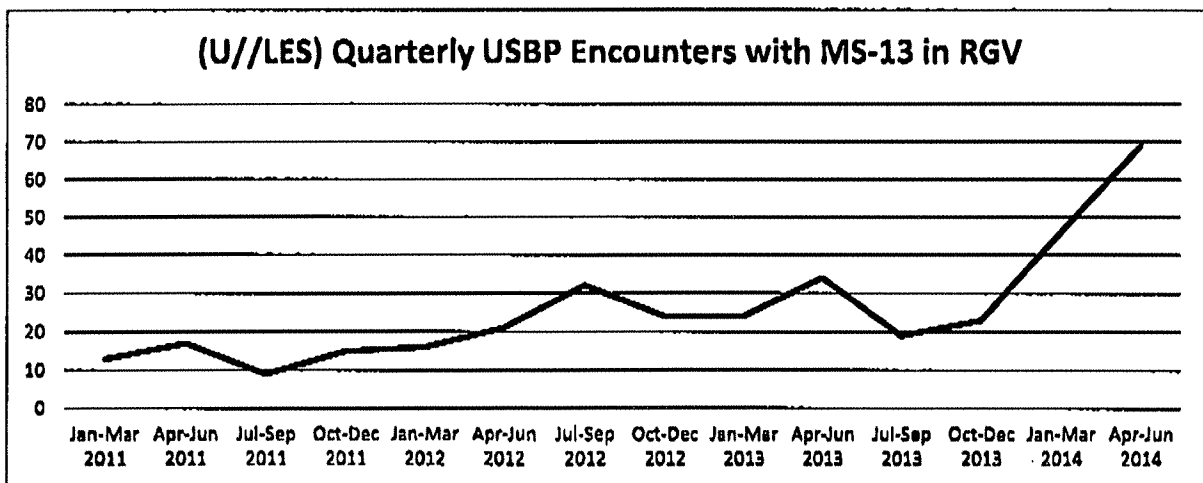
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organized cliques with no known centralized hierarchy. U.S.-based MS-13 cliques exhibit varying degrees of loyalty to the central leaders in El Salvador, who typically make decisions on strategic matters. Several U.S. cities have large concentrations of MS-13 members, including Los Angeles, Charlotte (North Carolina), New York, Houston, and the Washington, D.C. area.⁹

(U//LES) As of December 2013, the National Gang Intelligence Center assessed that MS-13 has been expanding as a result of travel to and from the United States and Central America, and that the gang will continue to expand and strengthen its presence and transnational connectivity.¹⁰ MS-13 members in the U.S. and Central America engage in international and interstate travel to deliberately spread the MS-13 "brand," support fellow cliques, enforce gang rules and enhance the gang's reputation through violent criminal activity. The number of MS-13 members encountered by USBP in the RGV has been trending upward since 2011. This increase coincides with MS-13's expansion in the United States.



(U//LES) Since 2011, the number of MS-13 members encountered by USBP in the RGV sector has increased each year, accelerating in 2014. This coincides with increased illegal migration from Central America during the same time period. In FY2014, MS-13 represented 43 percent of all gang encounters within the RGV sector, and approximately 11 percent of MS-13 members encountered were juveniles.¹¹



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(U//LES) We are concerned about the criminal threat from MS-13, which is known for highly violent crimes, including brutal murders and dismemberments. Several recent crimes in Texas illustrate the criminal threat associated with MS-13 members, including some who were illegal aliens who had recently crossed the border illegally.

- (U) On September 15, 2014, the mutilated body of a 14-year-old middle school student was discovered in the woods near Houston after he was murdered with a machete.¹² Initial information from the investigation indicates the victim was a U.S. citizen and an MS-13 member who was murdered after refusing to murder his own cousin and for becoming a practicing Christian and trying to leave the gang. In October 2014, a 14-year-old and three adult males were arrested and charged with murder in this case. The adult males are from El Salvador, and at least one is in the U.S. illegally and is a documented MS-13 gang member.¹³ Among the group of MS-13 members connected to this murder, at least four individuals revealed that they entered the U.S. at the border in the past 3-8 months.
- (U) In mid-August 2014, a 29-year-old 18th Street gang member was stabbed to death in Houston by a 16-year-old El Salvadoran member of MS-13.¹⁴ The victim suffered multiple stab wounds outside of a bar and was discovered a few days later in a bayou.¹⁵ According to investigators, the juvenile suspect revealed he illegally crossed into the U.S. in March 2014.
- (U) On August 5, 2014, a 17-year-old MS-13 gang member was arrested and charged with murder after choking, beating, and stabbing a 35-year-old male in a Houston motel room.¹⁶ The two men allegedly got into a fight, and according to investigators, the juvenile was also committing this murder to "prove himself" to the MS-13 gang. The suspect also admitted to illegally crossing into the U.S. in the recent months prior to this homicide.¹⁷
- (U//LES) In October 2013, a Stafford, Texas PD officer was shot in the face and chest during a traffic stop involving three suspects associated with MS-13 who had been planning to commit robberies before the officer approached their vehicle.¹⁸ The wounded officer then pursued the suspects, who included two illegal aliens and one individual with unconfirmed immigration status, all of whom have a criminal history in Texas. One suspect is from El Salvador and was deported in 2005 and again in 2009. The alleged primary shooter is from Honduras with a lengthy criminal history in Texas, including a prior aggravated assault on a public servant in 2007.^{19 20}
- (U//LES) On September 22, 2013, a 16-year-old sophomore at a high school in Houston was killed by three illegal-alien MS-13 gang members from El Salvador. The suspects used a machete and bat to kill the victim, whose body was discovered beaten and dismembered in the Sam Houston National Forest.²¹ The murder was ordered by a MS-13 leader in El Salvador because the victim, who was also associated with the gang, had provided information to Salvadoran authorities that had resulted in the arrest of seven people.²² After the murder, one suspect sent photos of the victim's body to two people in Virginia, which has a strong MS-13 presence. One suspect discussed the victim's hit on Facebook before and after the murder in a conversation with an unidentifiable account.²³

2.3 Drug Smuggling

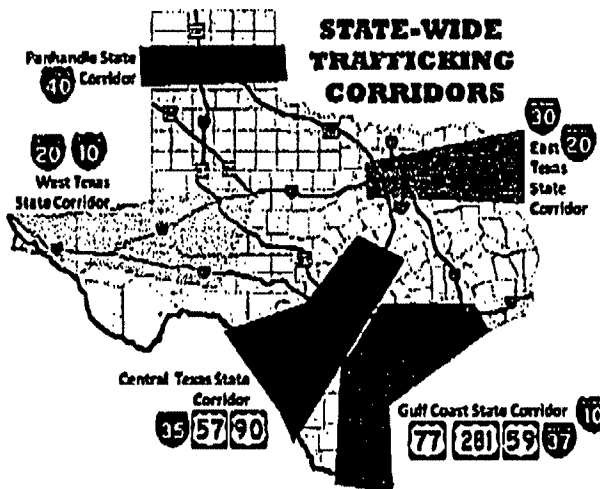
(U) The Mexican cartels dominate the lucrative U.S. drug and human smuggling markets and use the resulting billions of dollars of profit to battle each other and the government of Mexico to maintain control or expand their smuggling operations into the U.S. Mexican cartels directly supply illicit drugs to cities throughout the U.S., and rely on the U.S.-based gangs to further distribute drugs within the U.S.²⁴

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(U) The Texas–Mexico border area is one of the most active drug smuggling areas in the United States. There are 27 land Ports of Entry (POEs) spread along the border, including El Paso, Del Rio, Eagle Pass, Laredo, McAllen, Brownsville, and numerous small border towns. The five principal Texas corridors are West Texas, Central Texas, Gulf Coast, Panhandle, and East Texas. These corridors coincide with clusters of POEs along the border and major highways throughout the state. The Southwest Border remains the primary gateway for moving illicit drugs into the United States, mostly through overland smuggling.

- (U) West Texas: There are four land POEs in El Paso. Interstate Highway 10 (IH10) is the main route into and out of the El Paso region. IH10 crosses the country from California to Florida, serving as a transcontinental smuggling corridor. Once on IH10, traffickers can travel to San Antonio or Houston, or to Dallas-Fort Worth via IH20.
- (U) Central Texas: The Central Texas Corridor includes the Laredo area and extends up to the Del Rio/Eagle Pass region. There are three major highways: US57, US90, and IH35. All three are used regularly by traffickers going to and from San Antonio, Dallas, and Austin.
- (U) Gulf Coast: This corridor extends along the border from Brownsville to the Rio Grande Valley area, north to Houston and San Antonio. This is the most utilized cross-border smuggling corridor, and includes highways US281, US77, IH37, IH10, and US59. These highways provide direct routes to and from Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas-Fort Worth, all of which are major consolidation points for drugs and currency.
- (U) Panhandle: The main highway in the panhandle corridor, IH40, is a main artery for drug trafficking movement from Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and California to other states.
- (U) East Texas: IH20, IH30, and IH35 are the main highways in the East Texas Corridor. IH20 and IH30 leave the east side of Dallas and connect with numerous other interstates and secondary roadways, while IH35 provides access to the north.



(U) Mexico is the dominant foreign producer of heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine for the U.S. market, according to the Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community.²⁵ Marijuana availability appears to be growing due to sustained high levels of production in Mexico along with domestic production, according to the Office of National Drug Control Policy.²⁶ Marijuana is the most widely available illegal drug in the United States due to large-scale marijuana importation from Mexico, along with increasing domestic production.²⁷ Heroin availability is increasing throughout the U.S. as seizures at the Southwest border are also rising as Mexican cartels increase heroin production and transportation. The availability of Mexico-produced methamphetamine is increasingly available in the U.S. due to sustained production in Mexico. Large shipments of 50 pounds or more are regularly seized at the Southwest border. The majority of cocaine available in the U.S. is produced in Colombia and smuggled across the Southwest border. Despite the overall decrease in its availability, cocaine remains

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available in many U.S. markets. According to historical data included in the National Drug Control Strategy Data Supplement, national street-level prices for marijuana, cocaine, and methamphetamine have decreased from 2008 to 2012, while heroin prices displayed a nearly unchanging trend.

- (U//LES) On December 26, 2014, CBP officers assigned to the Brownsville port of entry seized 852 pounds of methamphetamine concealed within the fuel tank of a commercial vehicle at the Los Indios Cargo Bridge.²⁸

2.4 Human Smuggling

(U//LES) We judge that nearly all illegal aliens who have illegally entered the United States made use of alien smuggling organizations (ASOs), nearly all of which are associated with Mexican cartels. These criminal organizations guide groups of illegal aliens across the border and, in many cases, continue to move them through a series of stash houses in the United States en route to a destination beyond the immediate border.

(U//LES) Human smuggling along the U.S.-Mexico border involves aliens voluntarily hiring ASOs to illegally transport them into or through the United States. This includes bringing illegal aliens into the country, as well as the unlawful transportation and harboring of aliens already in the U.S. Although we refer to them as ASOs, many transnational criminal organizations involved in human smuggling also engage in other cross-border crimes, such as the illicit smuggling of drugs, weapons, and bulk cash, as well as violent crimes.²⁹

(U//LES) After smuggling a group of illegal aliens across the border, ASOs often move them through a series of human stash houses, which may be occasionally abandoned houses, ranches, business locations, storage sheds, warehouses, mobile homes, hotels, or apartments.^{30 31 32 33 34 35} ASOs generally make use of multiple stash houses, moving illegal aliens from one to another as they transport them along a route that includes various cities and locations. The length of stay in a stash house may range from a few hours to several weeks. Some stash houses are used by multiple smugglers or ASOs.

- (U//LES) In August 2014, USBP agents conducted a traffic stop on a pickup outside El Indio in Maverick County, Texas. The driver had been observed entering and leaving a motel room involved in an earlier apprehension of eight illegal aliens and was suspected of being an alien smuggler or scout. A notebook/ledger was located near the driver's seat containing names and dollar amounts, indicating cash was paid in Mexico. Agents discovered two handguns located underneath the seat. The agents also located 81 rounds of ammunition in the center console. The subject was arrested.³⁶
- (U//LES) In July 2014, a law enforcement officer responded to a motel room in Roma, Texas, and discovered 15 illegal aliens inside. The illegal aliens were from Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras, and El Salvador. They revealed that they had been there for about two weeks and had not been given food or water for about five days.³⁷
- (U//LES) In May 2014, two illegal aliens waved down a deputy in Hidalgo County, Texas, and revealed that they were from El Salvador. The female stated that they came across near Havana by La Joya and then were taken north in a truck carrying 21 people. They were taken to one house for four days, and then another house for two days. They were then taken to a brushy area and left without food or water for three days.³⁸

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- (U) In March 2014, 115 illegal aliens were discovered in a Houston-area stash house. Five defendants from Mexico were all convicted of conspiracy to harbor and transport illegal aliens and use of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence. While in the stash house, the defendants seized the victim aliens' shoes, clothes, phones, and other possessions. They also used guns, tasers, paddles, and other equipment to prevent the illegal aliens from escaping from the stash house.³⁹

(U) ASOs move illegal aliens through a series of human stash houses where they occasionally may be held against their will or not free to leave, with the stash houses physically secured or watched by armed guards. In the stash houses, ASOs regularly use violence, threats, or intimidation against illegal aliens who are held hostage as they extort ransom payments from their family members. In some cases, ASO members have murdered or contributed to the death of illegal aliens in their custody. The tactics used by ASOs to transport illegal aliens between stash houses and other locations are diverse, and routes typically involve a combination of different means of transportation. These ASO tactics also involve dangerous means and methods that subject illegal aliens to high degrees of risk, resulting in hundreds of deaths in the United States each year.

(U) ASOs use a variety of means to hold illegal aliens in stash houses, including violence, threats, bars and chains on windows and doors, and armed guards – some of whom have been identified as members or associates of gangs.^{40 41 42} Illegal aliens often pay ASOs a portion of the smuggling cost up front, with an agreement to pay other installments during later legs of the journey. However, once the illegal aliens are in the custody of the ASO or the guard of a stash house, the smugglers and guards frequently increase the payment amount or demand additional money, and they routinely threaten captive illegal aliens as they hold them hostage and extort ransom payments from their families.^{43 44 45} Most stash houses are characterized by squalid conditions, and they are ill-equipped to safely hold large numbers of people. Some stash houses are used by multiple smugglers or ASOs. The operation of stash houses is common in some areas of the border, including the Rio Grande Valley and Tucson sectors. Based on our knowledge of ASO tactics and the available information on stash houses, we judge that it is rare for illegal aliens in stash houses to be completely free to leave.

- (U//LES) In May 2014, officers in Dimmit County, Texas received information that six illegal aliens were being held captive in a mobile home behind a residence. Law enforcement executed search and arrest warrants at the residence. The six illegal aliens had been held captive and tortured in the mobile home. One illegal alien's knees were beaten with a stick, another had his fingers cut with a box cutter, one had his hand smashed with a hammer, and another was sexually assaulted. Some ransom money had been paid. All seven subjects were arrested on warrants.⁴⁶
- (U//LES) Officers in Hidalgo County, Texas received a call from a subject who stated that he was being held against his will, along with about 30 other people inside a human stash house. Deputies responded to the residence and observed the front door open. Deputies made contact with 26 illegal alien subjects inside the home.⁴⁷

(U) Through some legs of a route across the border, ASOs lead illegal aliens by foot through rugged and remote terrain, often in dangerous conditions and without adequate equipment or supplies. Illegal aliens who are not capable of keeping pace with the group are frequently left behind. ASOs also use a variety of commercial and personal vehicles to transport illegal aliens, often attempting to blend in with normal traffic.⁴⁸ However, some of these vehicles are modified to hold or conceal large groups of people, occasionally carrying an excessive number of passengers, concealing them in unsafe ways, or driving recklessly or dangerously.^{49 50} Less commonly, smugglers use other means such as trains and aircraft to transport illegal aliens into and through border states.^{51 52}

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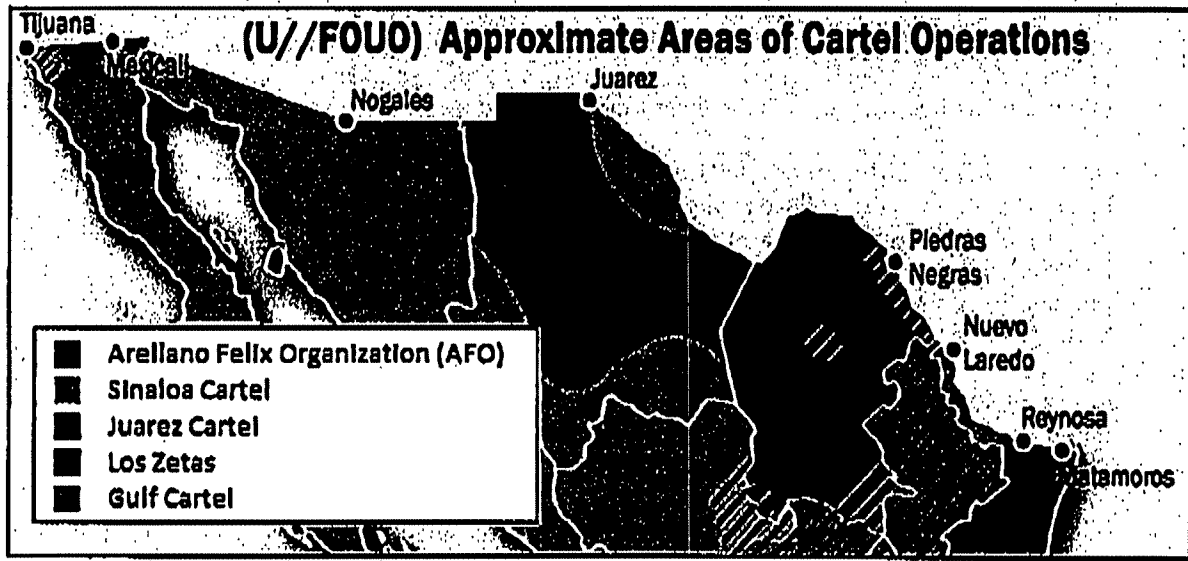
(U//LES) Mexican Cartel Control of Human Smuggling Along the U.S.-Mexico Border

(U//LES) We judge that Mexican cartels control, facilitate, or benefit from nearly all human smuggling activity along the U.S.-Mexico border. The leaders and members of Los Zetas, the Gulf Cartel, the Juarez Cartel, and the Sinaloa Cartel command and control human smuggling operations or employ cartel operatives to manage or oversee human smuggling operations in their territory along the U.S.-Mexico border.^{53 54 55 56 57 58} In some cases, cartel members and associates participate in human smuggling operations, possibly independently of the orders or oversight of cartel leaders. Some cartel-ASO connections are indirect and are limited to ASOs being required to provide payment to a cartel for operating in its territory.^{59 60 61}

(U//LES) However, even with an indirect relationship, the cartels facilitate or benefit from the ASOs' operations, and, in most cases, the cartels set rules on whether, how, or where ASOs may operate. We assess that the cartels have profited from the increase in illegal crossings in 2014, with one intelligence report indicating that by July 2014 the Gulf Cartel had made approximately \$38 million during the influx.⁶²

(U//LES) We assess with high confidence that nearly all ASOs operating along the U.S.-Mexico border are connected to Mexican cartels. We judge that the Gulf Cartel, Los Zetas, and the Juarez Cartel most frequently exercise direct control of human smuggling operations in their territory along the border, while the Sinaloa Cartel's involvement is more often indirect and limited to profiting from the activity, based on a large body of intelligence and law enforcement reporting.^{63 64 65 66 67 68 69}

(U//FOUO) Approximate Areas of Cartel Operations⁷⁰



(U) Some female illegal aliens have been sexually assaulted or threatened with sexual assault by their smugglers.^{71 72 73} In some cases, ASOs are suspected of forcing or compelling women and girls to work as prostitutes or delivering smuggled women and girls to sex traffickers. In some rare cases, groups of illegal aliens have been kidnapped or hijacked by criminals from smugglers, subjecting them to further exploitation. In Mexico, the kidnapping or hijacking of immigrants bound for the United States is common.

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- (U//LES) In October 2014, a female immigrant from Honduras was sexually assaulted by two Hispanic males in La Joya, Texas. The victim stated that two male subjects had forced her into a truck, taken her south into the brush area, and raped her. They left her beaten on the grass and she later came across Border Patrol and reported the incident.⁷⁴
- (U//LES) In May 2014, a Kenedy County Sheriff's Office deputy, at the Sarita Checkpoint, made contact with a female illegal alien who stated that she was sexually assaulted in Hidalgo County. She stated two men assaulted her after she and a group of people had walked for an hour to a warehouse. At the warehouse, the two subjects took her to a room, where one subject touched her and then the other subject sexually assaulted her.⁷⁵

(U) Hundreds of illegal aliens have died while entering or transiting border states. These include deaths caused by environmental exposure (heat and cold), train and motor-vehicle-related deaths, drownings, deaths by other causes, and cases in which only skeletal remains were recovered or a cause of death could not be determined.^{76 77 78} In FY2013 and FY2014, 729 deaths of suspected illegal aliens were reported along the U.S.-Mexico border, including 294 in the Tucson sector and 261 in the RGV sector.⁷⁹ An even greater number of illegal aliens have been rescued from such conditions; in FY2013 and FY2014, 3,710 people were rescued along the border, including 1,262 in Tucson and 1,062 in RGV.

- (U//LES) In August 2014, the Brooks County Sheriff's Office was dispatched to a ranch regarding the dead body of a male found in the brush. A deputy located a decomposed body under a mesquite tree. The Justice of the Peace pronounced the time of death and the body was transported to the South Texas Mortuary service in Laredo for analysis.⁸⁰
- (U//LES) In late July 2014, the Texas Department of Public Safety Marine Unit observed a deceased individual floating in the Rio Grande River. The Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office and the Palmview Fire Department responded for body recovery, and identified the deceased as a minor illegal alien who drowned while trying to cross the border.⁸¹
- (U//LES) In July 2014, officers in Hidalgo County responded regarding a deceased subject in the brush. Deputies identified the decomposing body as that of a young male. An autopsy was performed and a preliminary cause and manner of death was determined to be dehydration and heat stroke. The victim's family indicated that the victim was crossing into the U.S. about 25 days previously with his uncle. The uncle allegedly was detained by USBP, and the victim had not been seen or heard from since then.⁸²
- (U//LES) In May 2014, officers in La Joya, Texas, were engaged in a pursuit that ended when the suspect vehicle rolled over, resulting in one death and multiple injuries of the occupants. The driver was apprehended and 16 illegal aliens were taken to a hospital for treatment.⁸³
- (U//LES) In December 2014, Border Patrol pursued a van smuggling illegal aliens and attempted to conduct a vehicle stop. The van driver refused to stop and subsequently rolled the vehicle, which was found by other officers who attempted to render aid on scene. The juvenile driver was killed in the crash and the USBP agents found 39 illegal aliens from various countries who had been riding in the back of the van. The van had previously been observed with AT&T magnetic logos on the sides.

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2.5 Human Trafficking

(U) Human trafficking involves the recruitment, harboring, transporting, or procurement of a person for labor or services for the purpose of involuntary servitude, slavery, or forced commercial sex acts. In Texas, this crime is committed by criminal organizations and individual criminals who target male and female victims of different ages, nationalities, and socioeconomic classes.⁸⁴

(U) Labor traffickers often recruit, transport, and employ legal and illegal immigrants whom they bring into the United States for the purpose of forced labor and indentured servitude. These immigrants originate from various countries around the world. Labor trafficking victims can be exploited in both rural and urban areas in a variety of industries.⁸⁵

2.5.1 Smuggling of Sex Trafficking Victims into the United States Across the Texas Border

(U) We are concerned about the overlap between human smuggling and human trafficking, as some sex trafficking organizations use ASOs to transport victims across the U.S.-Mexico border en route to destinations throughout the United States. These cases highlight the extent to which human smuggling and human trafficking can be intertwined, as well as the nature of the human trafficking threat in Texas, which serves not only as a destination but also as a transit route for victims.

- (U) In October 2013, a female running a sex trafficking enterprise paid human smugglers to bring her victims into the U.S. The trafficking victims were illegal alien Mexican and Honduran nationals as young as 14 years old. The victims were recruited by means of force, fraud, and coercion to engage in prostitution in the U.S. Law enforcement charged 14 defendants and rescued 12 victims.⁸⁶
- (U//LES) As of August 2013, a sex trafficking ring has been operating in Texas, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Tennessee, and possibly other southern states. Traffickers approach young Mexican and Central American girls, including minors, and offer to smuggle them across the border into the United States, promising them legitimate jobs. Upon arrival in the U.S., victims are taken to a stash house in the Houston area, where they are forced to work as prostitutes to pay off smuggling fees.⁸⁷
- (U) In April 2014, a year-long joint investigation resulted in the disruption of a sex trafficking ring operating in Dallas and Houston. Young women from Central America and Mexico were recruited for work in the U.S. as housekeepers and nannies, but forced into prostitution upon entering the U.S. One 21-year-old woman rescued had been smuggled into the U.S. via Texas and trafficked since she was 13 years old. As a result of the investigation, 10 criminal aliens were indicted, and 13 young women were rescued.⁸⁸
- (U) In October 2014, three Salvadoran men were arrested in Houston and charged in a sex trafficking conspiracy. The indictment alleges the defendants instructed illegal alien minor victims and young women, from 2010 to the present, how to solicit and charge for sexual services. The men collected the fees that were paid to the victims.⁸⁹
- (U//LES) As of June 2014, the Gulf Cartel was coordinating the transportation of underage Central American girls to Tamaulipas, Mexico, and into the United States, according to intelligence reporting. Approximately half of the females smuggled into the U.S. were forced into prostitution. The females were smuggled into the U.S. through South Texas and were sent to cities along the East Coast. Any females discovered to be pregnant were beaten by their captors to

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induce a miscarriage. If a female died, the smugglers were not too concerned, because the victims were viewed as merchandise, and they knew more girls would be coming soon.⁹⁰

- (U//LES) As of April 2013, sex trafficking networks based in Tenancingo, Tlaxcala, Mexico, orchestrated trafficking activity in Georgia and the Southeast U.S. by using ASOs to transport minor and adult sex trafficking victims. The traffickers remained in Mexico and benefited monetarily.⁹¹ Some victims were minor girls who were kidnapped in Mexico, smuggled across the border, and then prostituted. Other victims include women and minor girls from Mexico who were forced to work as prostitutes in Georgia to pay for smuggling fees and under the threat their families in Mexico would be harmed.

2.6 Vulnerability of Unaccompanied Alien Children

(U//FOUO) The number of UAC apprehensions has increased for several years in South Texas, spiking sharply in 2014. Although many illegal aliens could be targeted for criminal activity, we consider UACs to be especially vulnerable to exploitation by criminals, both while they are traveling through Mexico and also while in the United States. Some ASOs that smuggle children may use multiple individual smugglers in various locations, which represents multiple opportunities for criminals to take advantage of them. In recent months, ASOs have seen and treated UACs as a valuable business commodity.⁹²

(U//LES) During the recent influx of illegal crossings in the Rio Grande Valley, many legitimate families sought asylum as a family unit when surrendering to law enforcement. However, intelligence reporting indicates that in some cases unaccompanied alien children were co-opted by a stranger and coached to act like a family member on the Mexico side of the border in order to cross the river and present themselves as a family unit to law enforcement in the U.S.⁹³ In such cases, the UAC may be processed, detained, and released with a stranger. Such a scenario puts the unaccompanied child at risk for sexual assault, trafficking, kidnapping, extortion, and abuse.

(U//LES) Also of concern are illegal alien sex offenders who have been convicted of sexual crimes in the U.S. After being deported following their conviction, some of these individuals travel back to the U.S. to attempt illegal re-entry.^{94 95 96 97} UACs traveling and crossing among these sex offenders would be vulnerable to these criminals.

- (U//LES) As of December 2014, homeowners in the Rio Grande Valley cities of La Grulla, Penitas and Sullivan City continue to stash illegal aliens in their homes until they can be transported, according to intelligence reporting. Males are being held for \$200 and "young girls" for \$500. Individuals stashing the illegal aliens are "regular" homeowners, not the typical organized crime members who run and operate stash houses. This has become endemic throughout these communities since the neighborhoods are out of the "hot zones" in the RGV. Homeowners have very little fear of getting caught. The young girls are being picked up and forced to work as prostitutes in local border town "cantinas." The cantinas are also being utilized as illegal gambling locations called "casinos" located along highway 83 from La Grulla to the Hidalgo County line. There are eight cantinas/casinos in the mentioned area.⁹⁸
- (U//FOUO) As of April 2014, a partially-identified, Honduran-based coyote smuggled illegal aliens from Honduras to the U.S. border, paying a fee to Los Zetas to allow safe passage during part of the journey. The coyote informed the children that they would have no problems remaining in the United States if they followed his instructions. The coyote turned over the illegal aliens to a partially identified individual based in Houston.⁹⁹

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- (U//LES) As of January 2014, a Mexican citizen working as an alien smuggler associated with the Gulf Cartel was arrested in the Rio Grande Valley after guiding a group of illegal aliens from Mexico into the U.S. The subject revealed that he profited the most from smuggling unaccompanied children, and everyone was trying to smuggle as many children through as possible. An alien smuggler only needed to get them to Border Patrol to get paid – unlike the adult illegal aliens, who needed to arrive at the stash house on the U.S. side before the smuggler was paid – and delivering the unaccompanied children to USBP was the equivalent of arriving to their final destination because the children would eventually be released to family members.¹⁰⁰
- (U//FOUO) As of August 2013, an alien smuggling organization based in El Progreso, Honduras, smuggled the children of illegal aliens into the United States, according to intelligence reporting. Their trip from Honduras took approximately four days. Once they were in Reynosa, another unidentified individual smuggled the children to the U.S.¹⁰¹

2.7 Criminal Arrests of Illegal Aliens in Texas

(U) According to DHS status indicators, between June 1, 2011, and December 31, 2014, more than 96,000 illegal aliens were arrested for criminal offenses and booked into Texas jails. During their criminal careers, these criminal illegal aliens have been charged with more than 247,000 criminal offenses. Those arrests include 561 homicide charges, 27,588 assault charges, 8,984 burglary charges, 31,154 drug charges, 394 kidnapping charges, 17,133 theft charges, 23,476 obstructing police charges, 1,972 robbery charges, 2,836 sexual assault charges, and 3,770 weapons charges.

(U) These numbers are not a complete count of all crimes committed by illegal aliens in Texas, and likely represent an undercount of all such crime.

- (U) This data includes only individuals who were in federal immigration databases at the time of arrest and who at that time were identified by DHS as being illegally present in the United States. Only illegal aliens who had previously encountered U.S. immigration authorities and had been fingerprinted (such as through a previous border-related apprehension or through previous legal entry) would be counted. The unknown number of illegal aliens who had successfully entered the United States illegally – without encountering and being fingerprinted by immigration authorities – and were later arrested on a criminal charge is not counted.
- (U) These numbers do not account for the unknown number of illegal aliens who were arrested prior to June 2011.
- (U) This data is not incident-based, and therefore does not account for crimes that did not result in arrest. It also does not account for the disposition of charges.

(U) The criminal activity of illegal aliens has a clear impact on public safety in Texas, as is evident from several recent examples.

- (U) In August 2014, two illegal alien Mexican nationals were arrested and charged with the murder of an off-duty Border Patrol agent, who was shot and killed while fishing with family members in Willacy County, Texas. The suspects had been arrested and deported multiple times, and had also been charged with unlawful carrying of firearms, assault, and DWI.¹⁰²
- (U) In June 2014, a 9-year-old girl in Parker County, Texas, was asleep on a couch in her home when she was awakened by a man groping her. She told police he asked her to follow him to a

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bedroom where he had entered the home. Instead, she ran screaming into her parents' room. The suspect is an illegal alien who had been deported four times.¹⁰³

- (U//LES) In January 2015, an illegal alien sex offender was arrested near his residence in Austin. The subject, who had been deported in 2012 following a conviction for indecency with a child, had last entered the United States in 2013 by swimming the Rio Grande River near Laredo.¹⁰⁴

2.8 Special Interest Aliens

(U//LES) The illegal entry of special interest aliens (SIAs)^a poses a significant potential threat to homeland security, as we are concerned about the possibility that SIAs could be associated with terrorist organizations. We judge that foreign terrorists almost certainly are aware of the U.S.-Mexico border's vulnerability to illegal entry, though we currently are not aware of any specific and credible information indicating a terrorist plot associated with the border.

(U//LES) The number of CBP encounters with SIAs in Texas sectors increased 15 percent during the first nine months of 2014 compared to the same time period in 2013.¹⁰⁵ In total, 493 SIAs from the 35 countries of interest (compared to 428 during the same period last year) either were encountered illegally entering between Ports of Entry (apprehensions) or presenting themselves at Ports of Entry (inadmissible aliens) in Texas sectors along the border. Over the past few years, these have included SIAs from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, and Turkey.

- (U//LES) In January 2014, an Iranian national was identified by Texas law enforcement officers as an illegal alien during a human smuggling incident in Houston.¹⁰⁶
- (U//LES) On August 6, 2014, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department game wardens patrolling the Rio Grande River detained and referred 33 illegal aliens to USBP. Some of the illegal aliens in the group were from Nepal and Bangladesh.¹⁰⁷

(U//LES) We are concerned about the potential threat associated with SIA travel across the border. Although no known intelligence specifically linked any illegal immigrant to a specific terrorism plot, we are concerned about the potential for extremists to be among the flow of illegal aliens from these countries. In addition, we judge that it is likely that foreign terrorists are aware that human smuggling networks are capable of successfully moving people to the U.S. border.

(U//LES) We judge that this threat persists along the entire border but is greatest in Texas, based on the concentration of SIA apprehensions and Terrorist Screening Center land border encounters in Texas. The Terrorist Screening Center reported 143 land border crossing encounters with watch-listed individuals in southwest border states between November 2013 and July 2014, which is the only time period for which data is currently available. These included 97 in Texas, one in New Mexico, two in Arizona, and 43 in California.¹⁰⁸

^a (U//LES) Special interest aliens are citizens of 35 countries that could represent a terrorist threat: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, UAE, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.

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- (U//LES) In June 2014, a Somali member of al-Shabaab was encountered at the Hidalgo, Texas POE. He stated that he had been trained in April 2014 for a suicide attack in Mogadishu. The Somali, whose credibility was unverified and who is seeking immigration benefits, stated that he instead escaped and confessed to African Union troops, who were able to thwart the planned terrorist operation. He stated that he was trained with 13 other Somalis for about 10 weeks to use suicide belts, AK-47s, and grenades.¹⁰⁹
- (U//LES) On March 18, 2012, Border Patrol agents in McAllen, Texas, apprehended three Sri Lankan nationals. One of them stated that he belonged to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, a designated foreign terrorist organization, and that his group was en route to Canada.¹¹⁰
- (U//FOUO) On May 18, 2011, a Somali national who had previously been denied a U.S. immigration visa crossed at the San Ysidro, California POE. He was on multiple U.S. terrorism watch lists. His mother, father and four siblings were also watch-listed.¹¹¹
- (U//LES) On June 25, 2010, U.S. Border Patrol agents near Naco, Arizona detained two Bangladeshi citizens who had recently entered illegally from Mexico. One of the detainees claimed that they worked in the General Assembly for Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh,¹¹² which is a designated foreign terrorist organization.¹¹³ Subsequently, one of the two detainees was deported, and the other was granted bond on an asylum claim and absconded.¹¹⁴
- (U) For a period of several years until January 2010, a U.S. citizen smuggled a total of 272 Somalis into the U.S. through Cuba and Mexico. Investigators stated that he acknowledged that leaders of al-Shabaab solicited his services but that he declined. However, investigators found an email exchange in which he acknowledged, "I helped a lot of Somalis and most are good but there are some who are bad and I leave them to Allah."¹¹⁵
- (U) A San Antonio asylum fraud prosecution disclosed that FBI investigators believed that Ahmed Muhammed Dhakane, a Somali who had illegally crossed into Texas, was an active al-Shabaab member, guerilla fighter, and human smuggler who knowingly helped move into the U.S. several potentially dangerous Somali terrorists who he believed would commit violent acts if ordered to do so.^{116 117}

2.9 Concentration of Activity in the Rio Grande Valley

(U//LES) The Rio Grande Valley is at the epicenter of human and drug smuggling, as well as other criminal activity to include but not limited to burglary, kidnapping, extortion, home invasions, aggravated assaults, and police impersonation. The area is flooded with drug and human stash houses that are controlled and operated by members and associates of transnational criminal organizations and other criminals looking to profit from illegal border crossers and the ruthless drug trade.

2.9.1 Felony Evasions from Law Enforcement

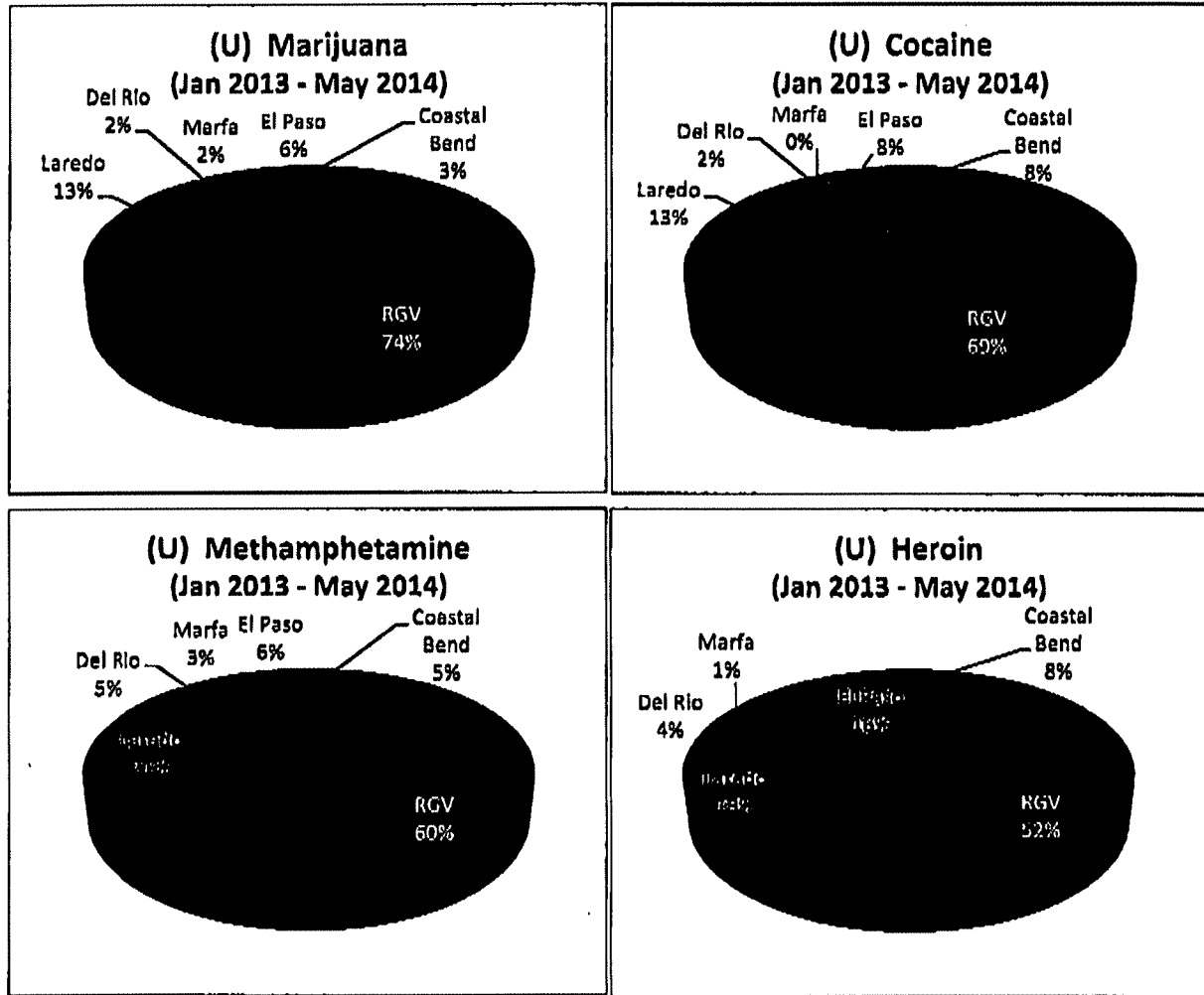
(U//LES) Drug and human traffickers regularly flee from law enforcement and in some cases they are directed to engage in high-speed pursuits using blocking vehicles and spikes. Such activity jeopardizes public safety and endangers law enforcement officials. Although felony vehicle evasions occur statewide, they occur disproportionately in Hidalgo and Starr counties in the Rio Grande Valley. From January through May 2014, 21 percent of all Texas Highway Patrol pursuits occurred in just Hidalgo County and Starr County.

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2.9.2 Concentration of Drug Seizures in the RGV

(U//LES) From January 2013 through May 2014, Operation Border Star drug seizures were disproportionately concentrated in the Rio Grande Valley counties. Over 50 percent of the marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin seized in all 54 Operation Border Star counties during this time period was seized in the RGV.

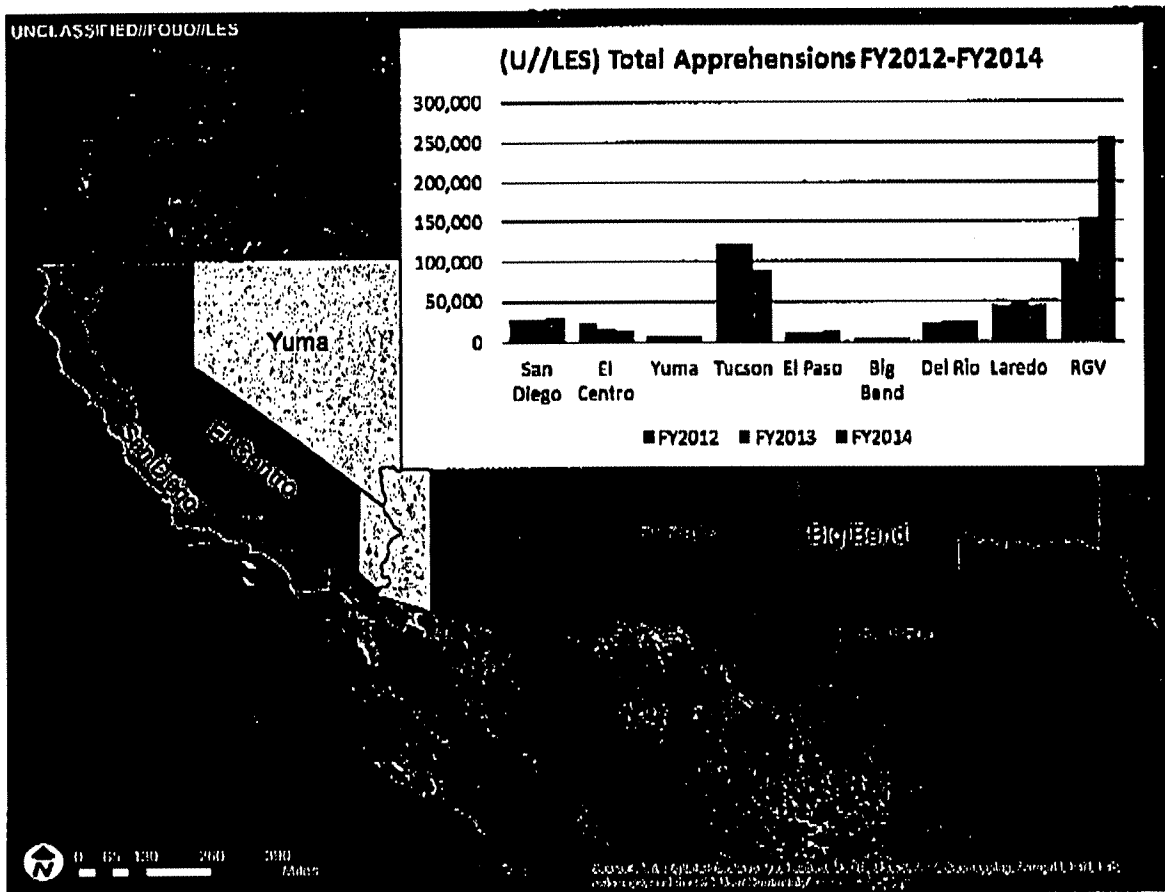


2.9.3 Accelerating Apprehensions in 2014 Concentrated in RGV

(U//LES) The U.S.-Mexico border has long been vulnerable to illegal entry between ports of entry. After trending downward for several years from a peak in FY2000, the number of illegal alien apprehensions along the border has increased each year since FY2011, reaching 479,371 in FY2014, which represents the highest number since FY2009.^{118 119}

(U//LES) Although apprehensions occur along the entire border, they are currently most concentrated in the Tucson and Rio Grande Valley sectors. Similarly, the increases in apprehensions over the past three years have been concentrated in the Rio Grande Valley, with the other sectors remaining relatively consistent during this time period.

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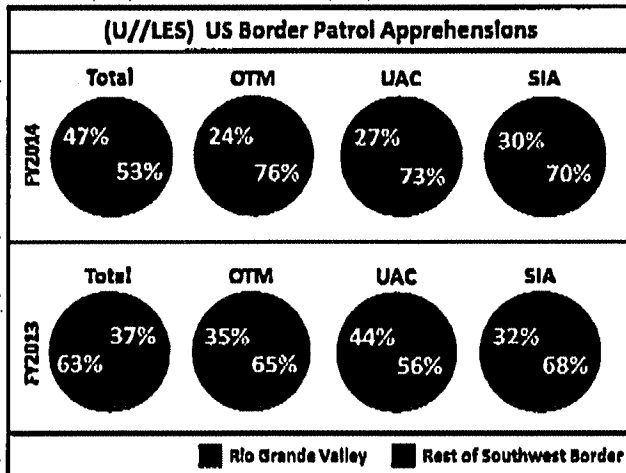


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(U) Concentration of Apprehensions in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas

(U//FOUO) The Rio Grande Valley (RGV) of Texas has become the center of gravity for human smuggling along the U.S. Southwest Border. During the past two years, the RGV has accounted for a disproportionate share of apprehensions of all illegal aliens, other-than-Mexicans (OTM), UACs, and SIAs. By most measures, the concentration of this activity in the RGV increased further in FY2014, driven primarily by a large increase in crossings by illegal aliens from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala.



(U//LES) Illegal alien apprehensions in the RGV have reached their highest level in history, and in FY2014 included the majority of all OTM, UAC, SIA and total apprehensions along the entire border. From FY2013, total apprehensions increased 66 percent, OTMs increased 99 percent, and UACs increased 132 percent.

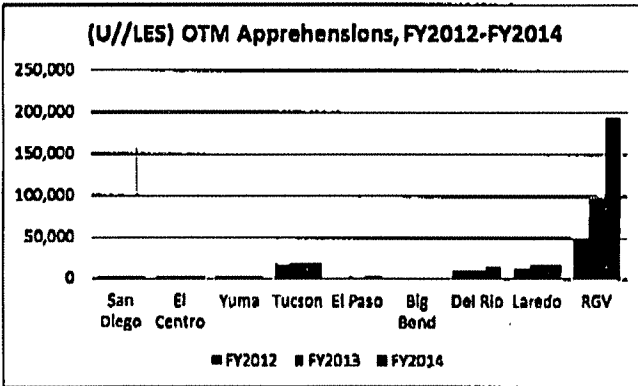
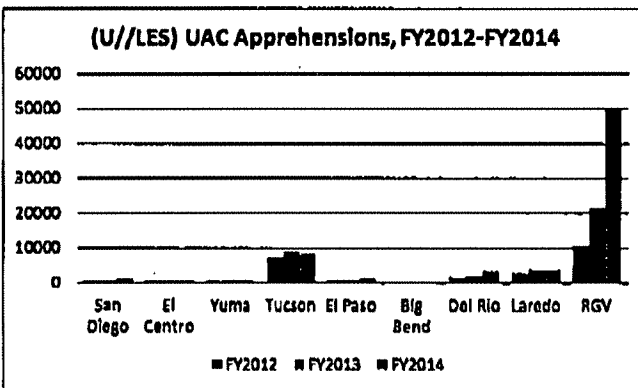
(U//LES) Multiple factors likely account for the geographic concentration of OTM crossings in the RGV. South Texas is the closest point geographically to Central America, and established transportation networks – including bus routes and rail lines – facilitate movement to this part of the border.¹²⁰

(U//LES) The recent increase in apprehensions in the Rio Grande Valley is attributable primarily to a rise in OTMs from three Central American countries: Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.¹²¹

(U//LES) This also included a higher-than-usual number of unaccompanied alien children (UACs) from these countries, though the increases seen in the apprehensions of UACs follow the overall increases in apprehensions of adults from those countries over the same time period.¹²² Indeed, despite the 132 percent increase in UAC apprehensions in the Rio Grande Valley from FY2013 to FY2014, the share of UACs only increased from 14 percent in FY2013 to 19 percent in FY2014.¹²³

(U//LES) While apprehensions in the RGV have been trending upward for several years, the rate of increase accelerated in January 2014, peaking in June.

(U//LES) In some cases, illegal aliens have been released by ASOs upon crossing the



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border. For example, the Rio Grande Valley experienced regular incidents in 2014 in which large groups of illegal aliens sought out law enforcement to surrender immediately after crossing the border.^{124 125 126}

We judge that the high frequency of these incidents in 2014 was due to the perception among many illegal aliens that apprehension would result in permission to reside in the U.S. without deportation, and the increased volume of illegal aliens surpassing the ASOs' capacity to move them all through the traditional means.^{127 128 129} Smugglers have adapted to use these conditions to their advantage, orchestrating these human smuggling events to divert law enforcement attention while drug loads or other contraband were smuggled during the diversion.¹³⁰

- (U//LES) As of July 2014, there were so many immigrants arriving in Mexico that the Gulf Cartel did not know what to do with them. Immigrants arrived in Reynosa via train from Chiapas, Mexico, according to intelligence reporting.¹³¹
- (U//LES) As of April 2014, a Mexican citizen was forced to work for an organization, ostensibly linked to the Gulf Cartel, that smuggles drugs and illegal aliens, including UACs, into the U.S. through Matamoros and Reynosa, Mexico. In the smuggling of UACs, the organization employs tactics that overburden the U.S. immigration system and draw attention away from other illicit activity. The organization charges \$3,500 to smuggle illegal aliens across the river in Reynosa, and \$8,000 to cross illegal aliens through Brownsville by utilizing 18-wheelers.¹³²
- (U//LES) As of August 2013, a juvenile Mexican brush guide working for an ASO in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico indicated that two separate groups cross the river simultaneously in close proximity to each other and then separate on the United States side. Recently, the organization has been using people from countries other than Mexico (OTMs), primarily utilizing unaccompanied juveniles or family units, as bait for Border Patrol Agents. The bait group is either left on the river bank or left in an open area where they can easily be spotted. They are told to stay and wait for a guide to return or instructed to walk straight north in order to increase the chances of detection. The source has also seen bait groups used for drug loads.¹³³

2.9.4 Home Invasions in the Rio Grande Valley

(U//FOUO) Home invasions are prevalent in the RGV. A home invasion is the pre-planned, forcible entry of an occupied residence with the intent to steal property or kidnap a person from the premises.

(U) Mexican cartels and transnational gangs are actively involved in smuggling operations in the Rio Grande Valley, using stash houses to conceal and warehouse drugs, weapons, bulk cash, and illegal aliens. We have seen a trend in which these stash houses have also become attractive targets for home invasions by opposing criminal organizations, who seek to steal drugs, cash, and even illegal aliens, who they use to extort money from their families. Stash houses can be ordinary houses located in residential neighborhoods. Home invasions often involve the use of highly violent tactics by criminals armed with rifles, handguns, and other weapons.

(U) From January to December 2014, DPS identified 147 human stash houses and 97 drug stash houses along the Texas border. Of the 174 home invasions documented by DPS in the RGV since 2012, 44 occurred between June 1 and December 29, 2014. Nearly half of those home invasions occurred in the months of July and August.

- (U) In July 2014, following a report of a home invasion in Roma, a green SUV was seen leaving the location. Soon after, a DPS Trooper pulled over a green SUV in Los Ebanos and positively

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identified the driver as the same person seen leaving the scene of the home invasion. The suspect is a confirmed Raza Unida gang member with an extensive criminal history.¹³⁴

- (U) In July 2014, officers responded to a residence in Edinburg in reference to a report of a suspicious person, which was later reclassified as an attempted home invasion and homicide. Deputies located the homeowner bleeding and unresponsive by the front door of his residence. A witness stated that three masked and armed suspects arrived in a red, older model pickup truck and demanded undocumented aliens. The witness also struggled with one of the suspects, which resulted in an injury to the side of his head.¹³⁵
- (U) In August 2014, a small rental house in Alton known to law enforcement to be involved with drug trafficking, was the target of a home invasion carried out by two or three suspects armed with pistols. While the suspects searched the house for valuables or contraband, the victims fought back, shooting two of the suspects and killing one of them. The getaway vehicle, which was later found by the Mission Police Department, had been burned to hide evidence. The suspect who was killed was confirmed to be from Michoacan, Mexico. The victims of the home invasion fled the scene and evaded apprehension.¹³⁶
- (U) In August 2014, a Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office deputy responded to a call in Elsa in reference to an aggravated robbery with the suspect shot and possibly deceased. Three subjects stated that they were at a residence when an unknown male stormed in with a rifle and a handgun. The subjects struggled with the unknown male to take the weapons away and were able to wrestle a handgun from the assailant and shoot him multiple times with his own gun. A black Taurus 9 MM handgun and a Bushmaster AR-15 were discovered by the deputy when he arrived on the scene. The unidentified male subject remained lying in the room unresponsive with no vital signs. Several tattoos on the subject's body indicate a possible association with the Sureños or Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) gangs.¹³⁷
- (U) In December 2014, a home invasion took place in Edinburg. Victims reported that the suspects cut the chain on the front gate, entered the front yard and started banging on the front door. The victim looked outside and saw a heavyset male standing by the window holding a pistol. The male pointed the pistol at the victim threatened to kill the victim. The victim's son-in-law came out a side door and surprised the suspects. The son-in-law saw about six or seven males run to two vehicles parked on the street. Both vehicles observed by the victims, a van and a pickup, fled the area.¹³⁸
- (U) In January 2015, an aggravated robbery/home invasion occurred in Donna. The victim reported that after hearing a loud bang she noticed that the front door had been kicked open. Men asked her "where the money was". Although no cash was found, several items were taken: two flat screen TVs, one Xbox 360 game console and ten Rolex watches valued at approximately \$50,000. The victim was able to describe the four to five Hispanic male assailants who were armed with various firearms.¹³⁹

2.9.5 Impersonation of Law Enforcement

(U//LES) DPS investigations and news media reporting have identified contraband robbery crews' use of ballistic vests, and in at least six cases, robbery crews have used police uniforms and accessories (police-marked T-shirts, raid jackets, hats or badges) or impersonated police officers.¹⁴⁰ For one robbery, the rip crew planned to masquerade as police officers and perform a traffic stop on a targeted load vehicle smuggling contraband. This police impersonation technique is not unique to contraband robberies; it has

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been used a number of times for unrelated crimes in the RGV, from daytime kidnappings to false vehicle stops.¹⁴¹

(U//FOUO) We are concerned about the home invasion crews' impersonation of law enforcement officers. This technique may discourage incident reporting, as the victims may fear that actual police are committing the robbery, or neighbors who witness the home invasions may mistake it for a legitimate police raid (warrant service) and therefore feel no need to call the police, since they believe that the police are already there. Although this tactic has been documented in only a small number of all identified home invasions, it has the potential for wide-ranging implications. Such impersonations undermine law enforcement effectiveness and public confidence, as citizens will be uncertain as to whether their future interactions will be with legitimate law enforcement officers or criminal impersonators. Armed citizens are normally reluctant to fire upon police officers, and more likely to shoot armed robbers who confront them. Police impersonations confuse the public at large, threatening officer safety. Police who conduct warrant raids on suspected stash houses may face a higher risk of being fired upon if the occupants presume they are robbers instead of real police officers.

- (U//FOUO) In late 2013, a Gulf Cartel-affiliated home invasion crew reportedly wore vests marked with Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) or a Sheriff's Office insignia while conducting home invasions. The crew allegedly stole nearly \$100,000 of bulk cash (presumed drug proceeds) from a Las Milpas, Texas, residence in November.¹⁴²
- (U//LES) On August 18, a home invasion occurred in Roma. Roma PD reported that they were searching for two subjects who were armed with handguns. The victims stated that three males claiming to be Mexican Federal Police entered the residence and restrained the occupants with zip ties. Two of the suspects were armed with handguns. The suspects stole a gun safe and a pickup. Two of the suspects were identified and arrested and the third arrest is pending. One of the suspects is a confirmed Partido Revolucionario Mexicano (PRM) gang member.¹⁴³
- (U//LES) On October 15, the Donna Police Department reported a home invasion in the early morning hours at an apartment complex. Victims reported that three males wearing black pants and black shirts labeled "SWAT" entered their apartment armed with handguns and rifles speaking Spanish only and stole three cell phones.¹⁴⁴
- (U//LES) On November 19, Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office deputies responded to an aggravated robbery/home invasion. The victims reported that they were outside sitting on the porch talking when they saw a gray van and a dark colored Jeep park in front of the house. They saw a male, wearing all black, step out of the van and walk towards them waiving a handgun in the air saying, (in Spanish) "police, police everyone on the ground." The victims got on their knees as the male subject pointed the handgun at them. Six other male subjects got out of the vehicles and entered the residence. A subject was inside the house sleeping in bed when a male subject woke him up. The male subject then asked him where the marijuana was and he then tried to get up, but the male subject hit him on the right side of his face with a fist, causing him to fall back on the bed.¹⁴⁵
- (U//LES) On December 4, Mission PD officers responded to a home invasion. Victims reported that four to five male subjects made entry by kicking in the front door. The male subjects were wearing black clothing with ballistic vests and attire labeled "Police." The male suspects demanded drugs. The victims responded they didn't know what they were talking about. The suspects then began to beat two of the victims by punching them on the back of the head and striking them with an assault rifle, causing lacerations.¹⁴⁶

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- (U//LES) On December 8, Pharr PD reported that four subjects entered a residence at 2901 South Gardenia armed with handguns and stating that they were police officers. Suspects also had clothing, badges, and hoodie sweatshirts with the word "Police" on them. Shots were fired in the residence and the victim was assaulted. Suspects left the location in a tan SUV described as possibly a Tahoe or Escalade.¹⁴⁷



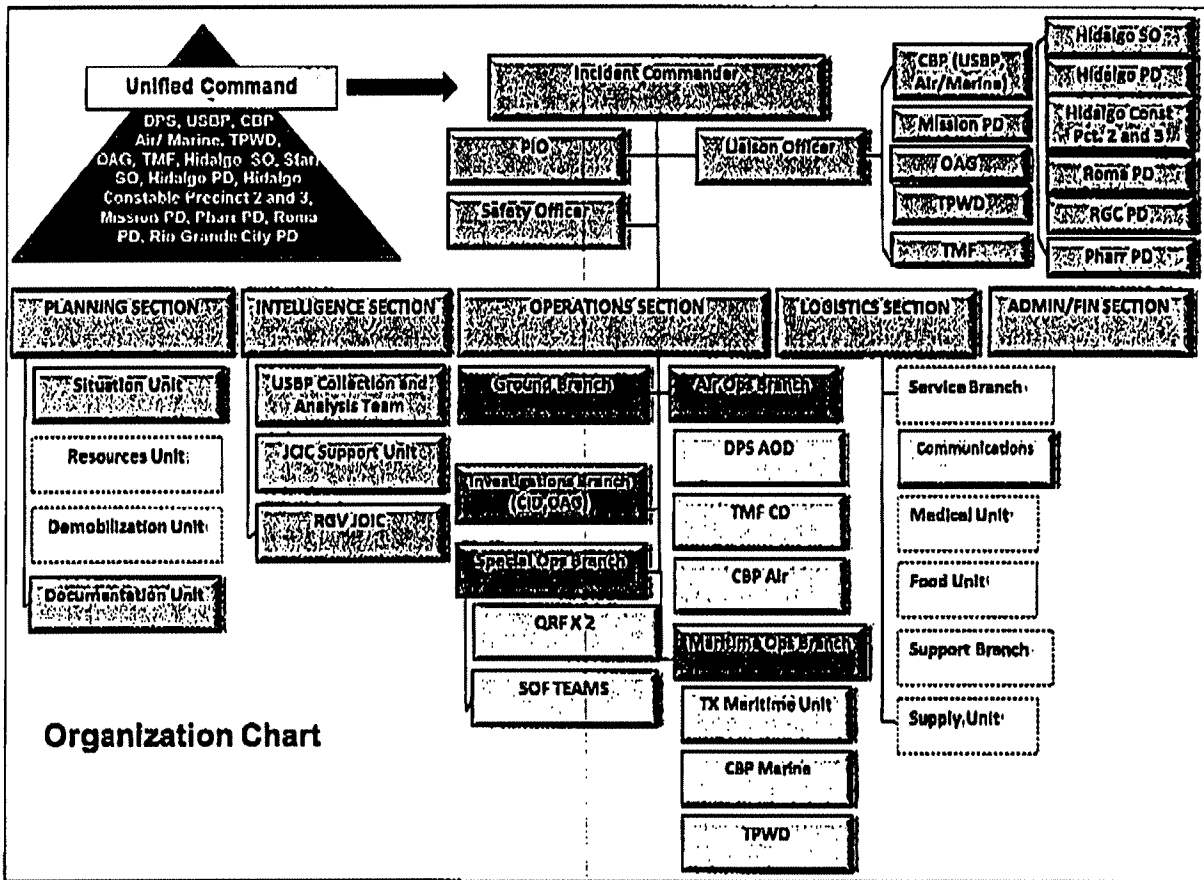
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3. Operation Strong Safety Concept of Operations

(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

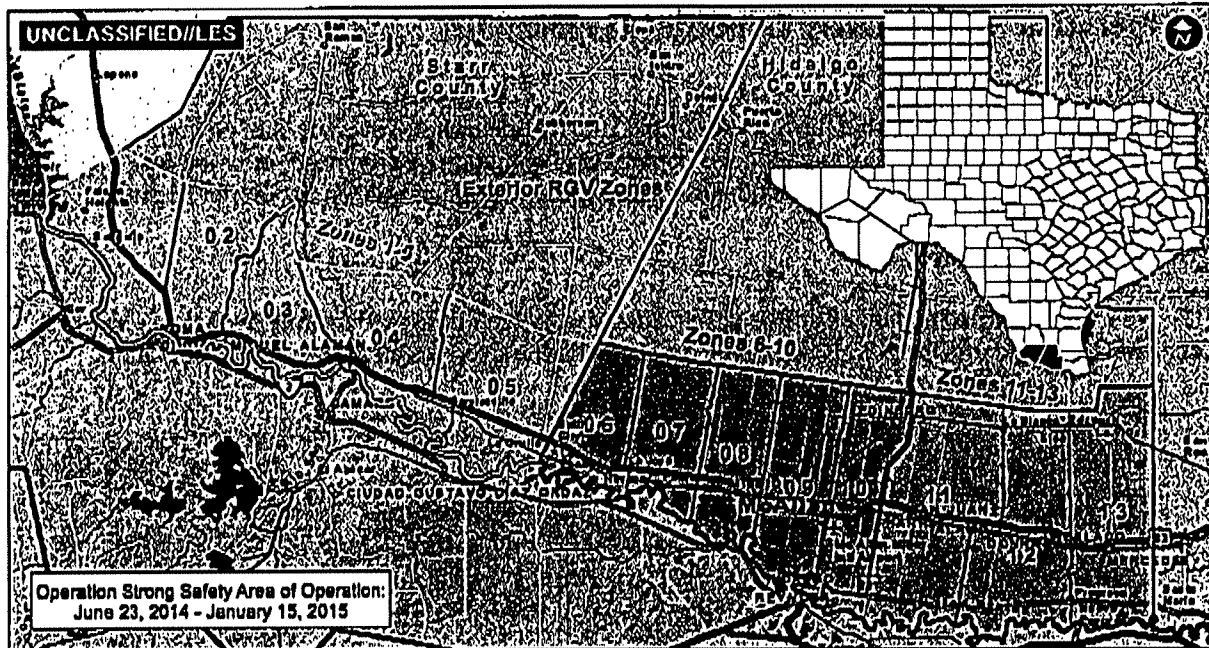
(U) OSS uses a unified command structure that encompasses multiple participating agencies. The OSS Incident Commander is the DPS Region III Commander, who oversees all aspects of the operation.



3.2 Area of Operation

(U//LES) The area of operation (AO) for Operation Strong Safety 2014 includes USBP Zones 1-13 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.

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3.3 Operational Components

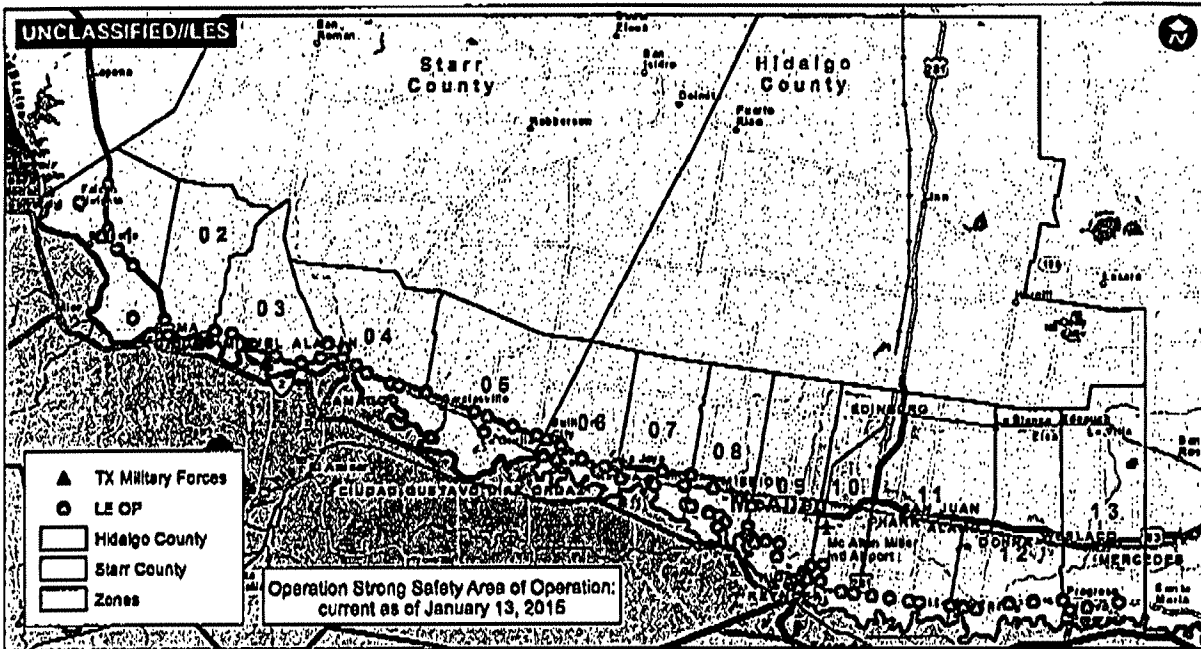
(U) Assets and personnel involved in OSS are coordinated to ensure unity of effort. These efforts include ground operations, air operations, maritime operations, special operations, and investigations.

3.3.1 Ground Operations

(U//LES) 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 vicinity of USBP Zones 1-13 (see image below). Officers manning observation posts (OPs) may move in the immediate area of their assigned area of responsibility rather than remaining static, and the number and location of OPs has changed throughout the operation. 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.



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(U//LES) 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.

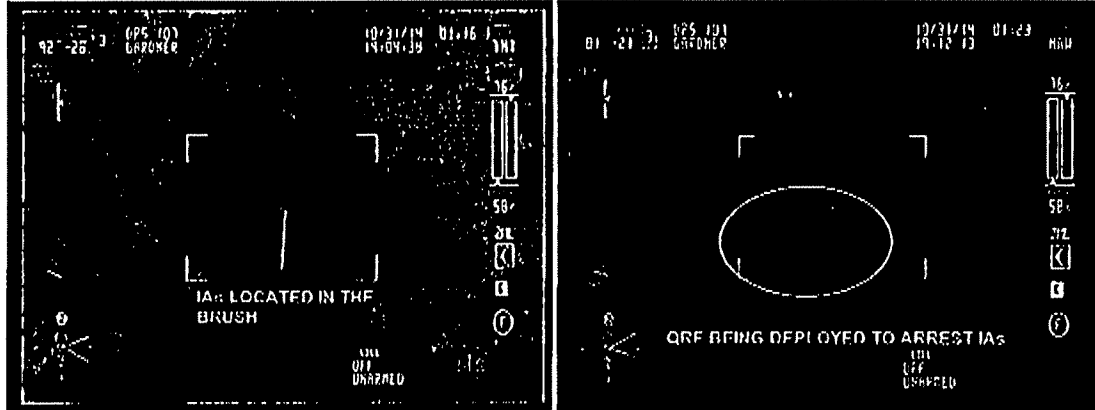
3.3.2 Air Operations

(U//LES) 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 by leveraging the Aircraft Mission package suite.



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(U//LES) 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//LES) 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.



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3.3.4 Special Operations

(U//LES) 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//LES) 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 CID, USBP, and the Attorney General's Office are supporting Operation Strong Safety.

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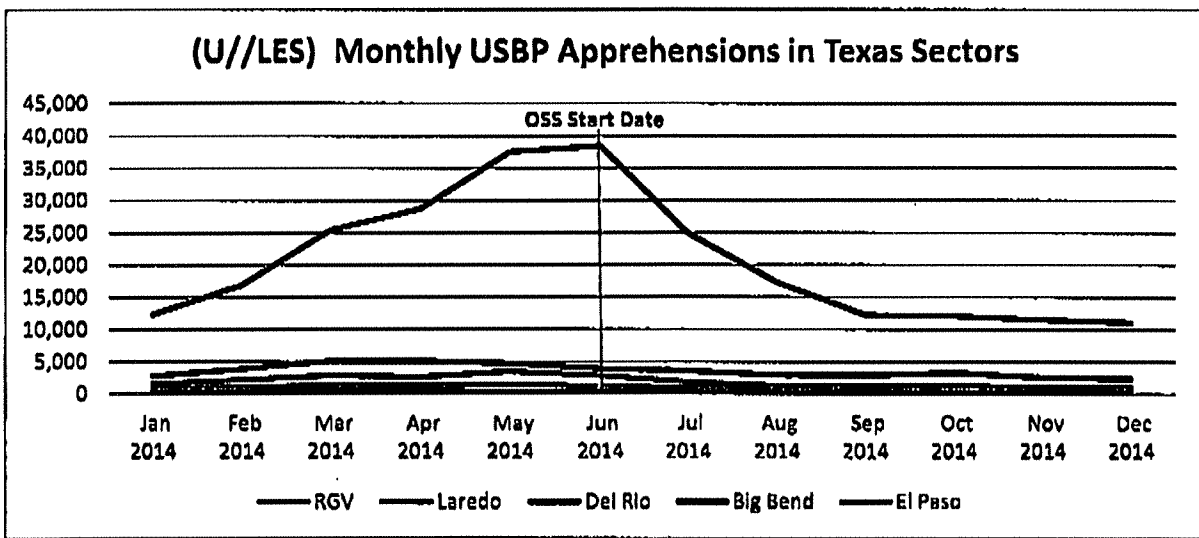
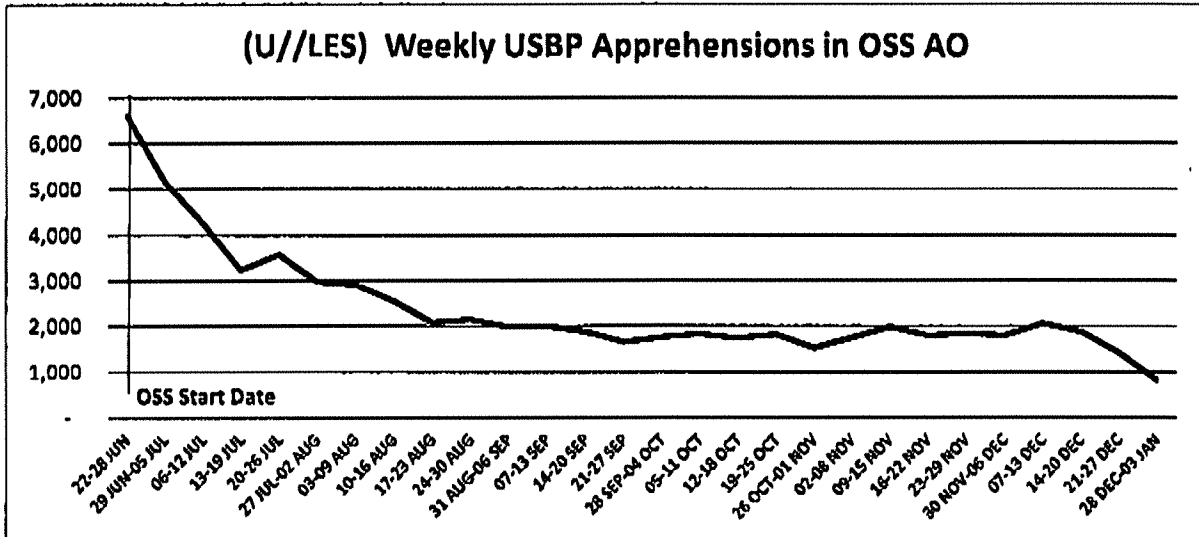
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4. Operation Strong Safety Results

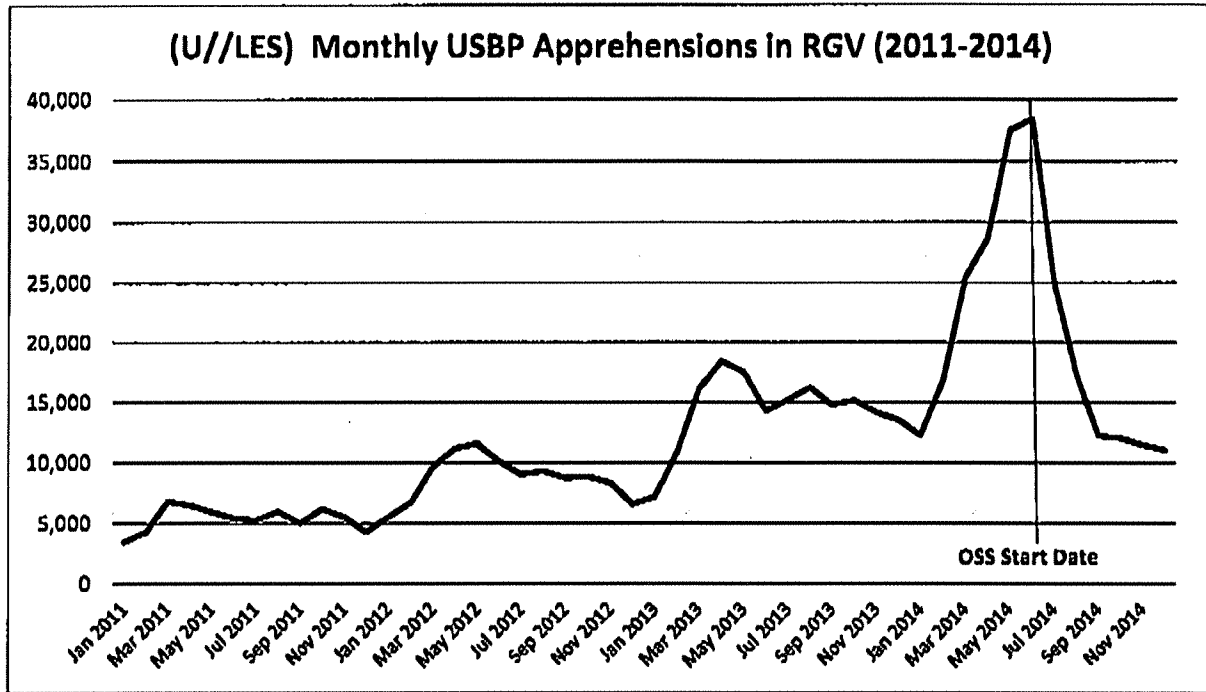
(U) OSS has had a clear impact on criminal activity in the RGV, as shown in the following results. The results highlighted here are based on data and incidents that continue to develop, with new data and information emerging on an ongoing basis as investigations and reporting continue.

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

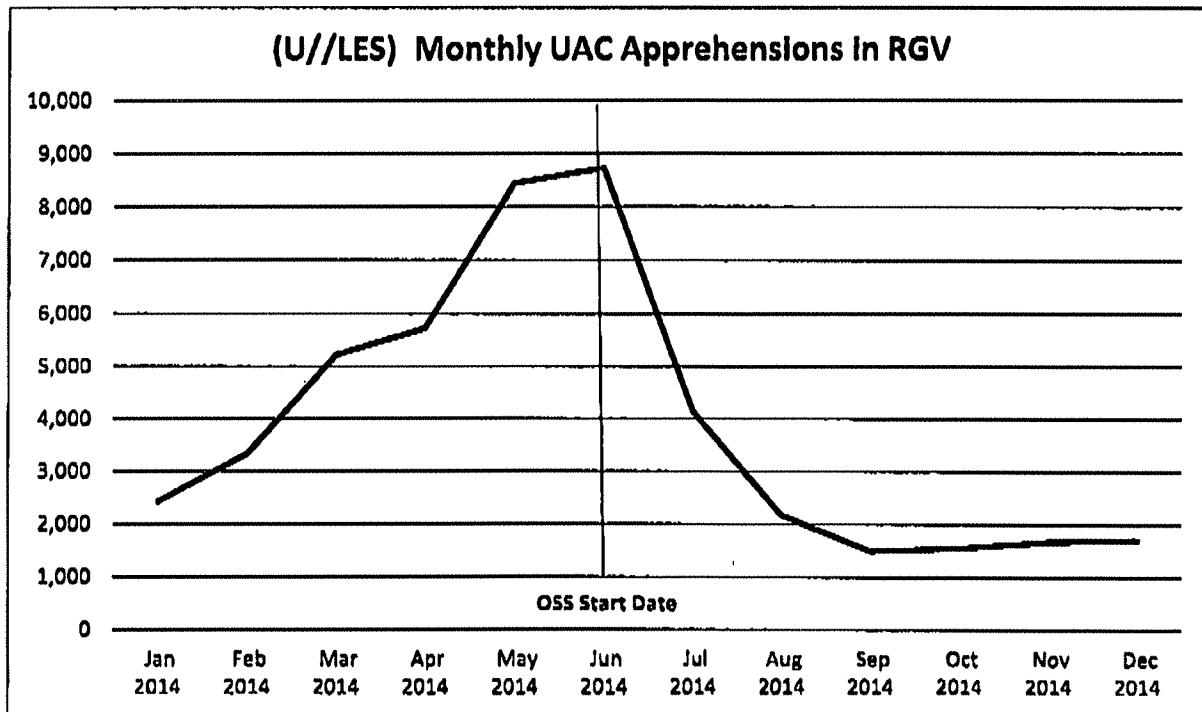
(U) In FY2014, the number of apprehensions in the RGV reached its highest level since records are available beginning in 1960.¹⁴⁸ Since the launch of OSS in June, the number of illegal alien apprehensions in the OSS AO has fallen sharply, as shown in the chart below. This trend marks a sharp contrast 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.



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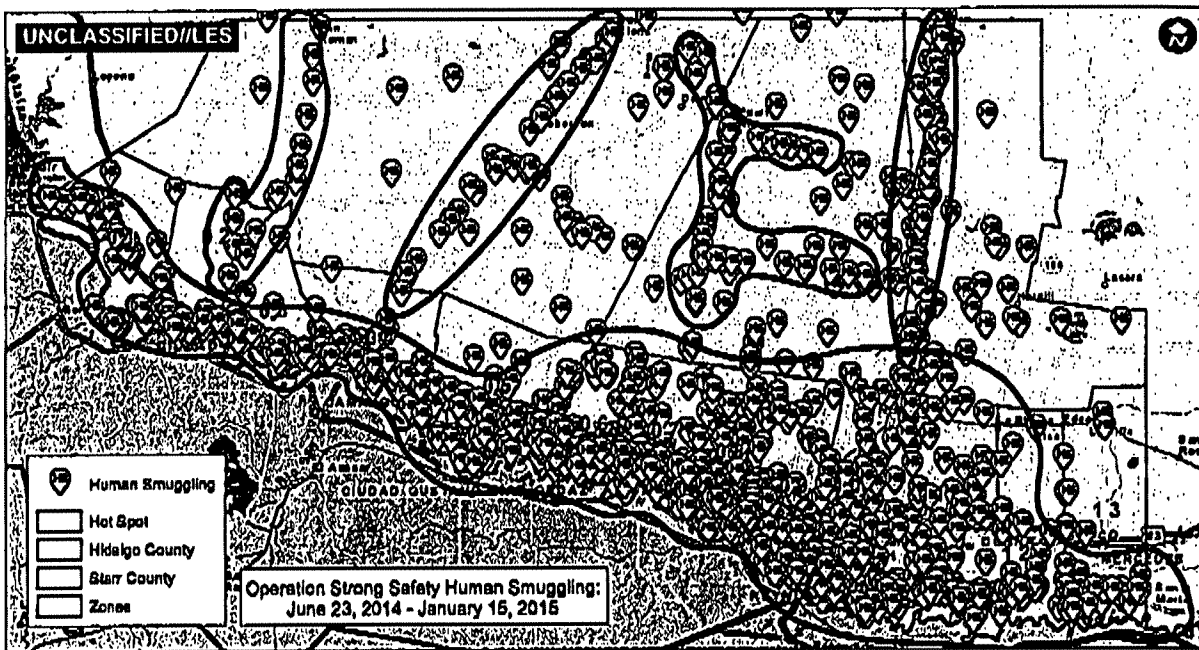
(U) Apprehensions of UACs also declined. As of June, the federal government had projected that the number of UAC apprehensions along the U.S.-Mexico border could rise to 90,100 in FY2014 and 142,000 in FY2015, with the majority of these apprehensions occurring in the RGV. The actual number of UAC apprehensions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



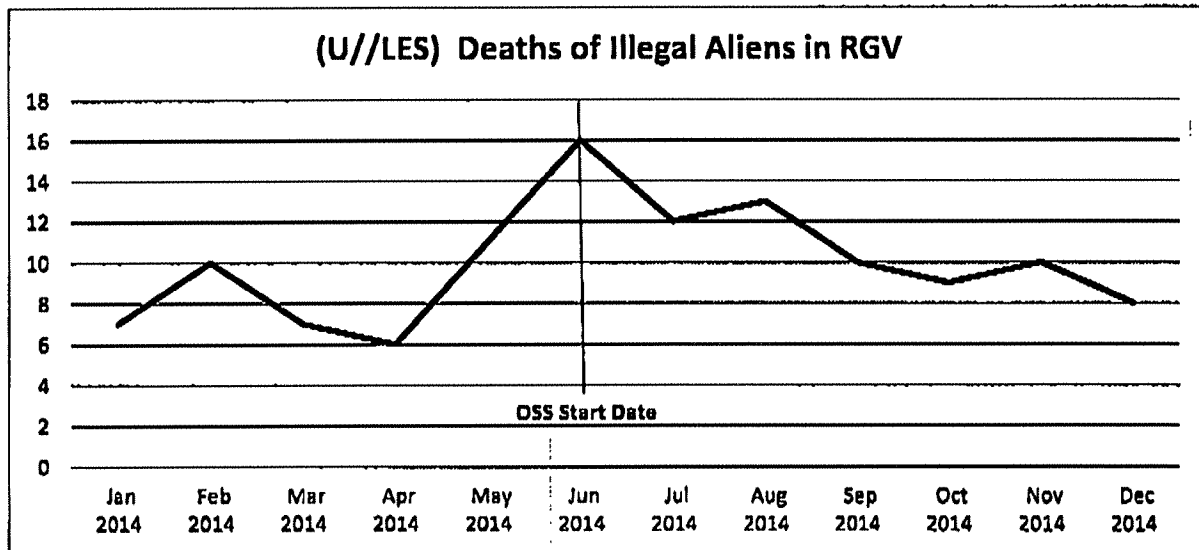
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(U) Human smuggling activity and illegal alien apprehensions have occurred throughout the OSS AO, but have been more concentrated in some zones than in others.

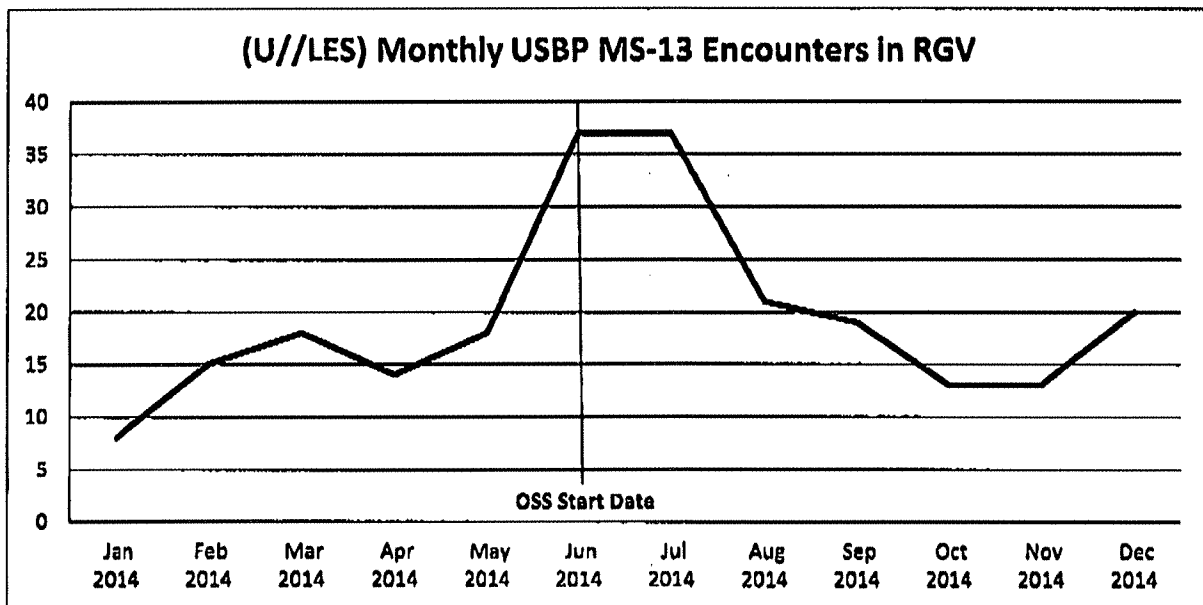
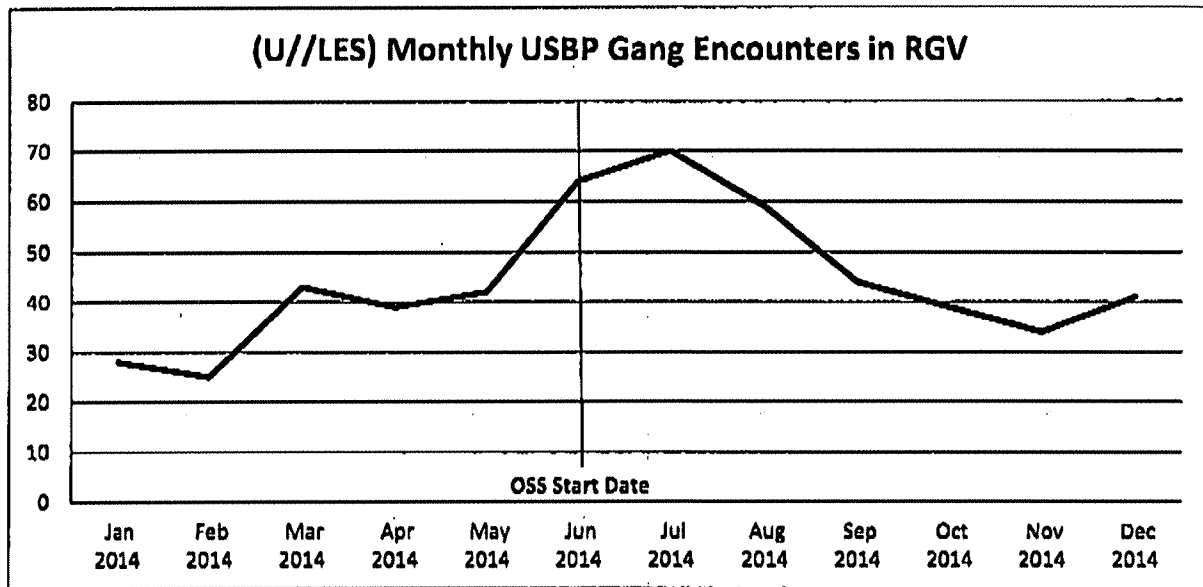


(U) Illegal alien deaths in the RGV have decreased during OSS, including during the hot summer months of July, August, and September.



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(U) Encounters with gang members have also decreased in the RGV, after peaking in July. This trend applies to USBP encounters with all gang members, as well as with MS-13 specifically.

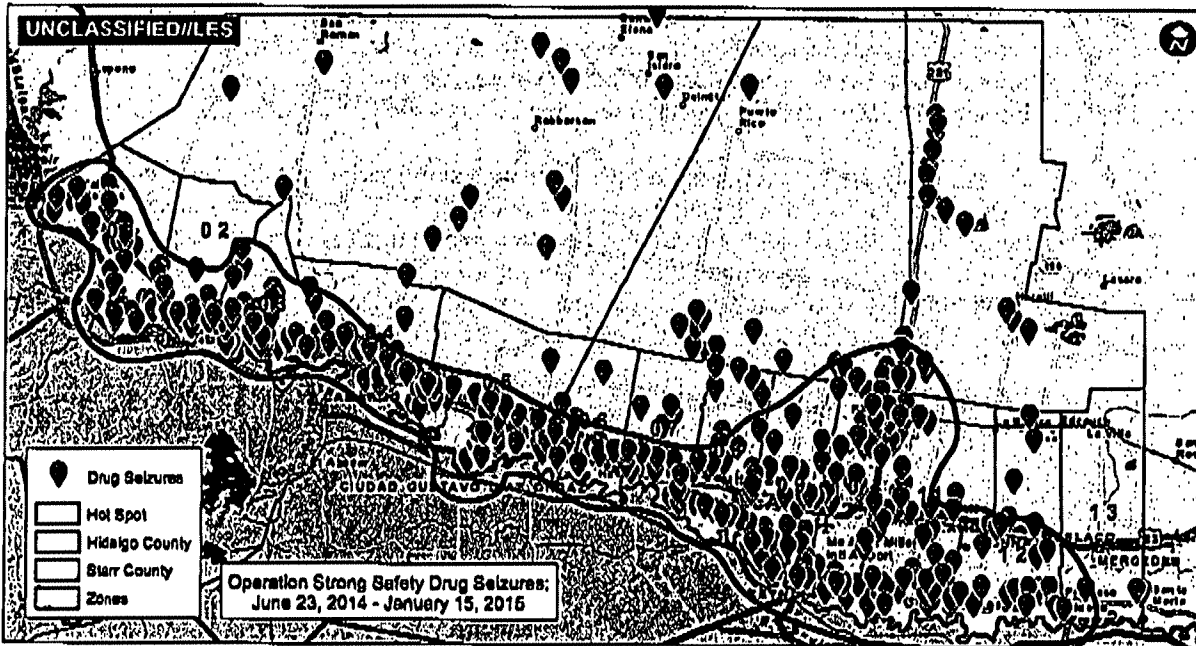


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4.2 OSS has resulted in the seizure of nearly 150 tons of illegal drugs

(U) OSS-related seizures have totaled nearly 150 tons of illegal drugs that had been smuggled across the border and were destined to be distributed throughout the state and nation.

OSS SEIZURES, ZONES 1-13 (06/22/2014 – 01/03/2015)	WEIGHT(LBS)	PRICE PER LB ¹⁴⁹	STREET VALUE
MARIJUANA	297,970.53	\$6,069	\$1,808,383,154
COCAINE	588.31	\$61,479	\$36,168,567
METHAMPHETAMINE	320.90	\$87,117	\$27,955,686
HEROIN	6.66	\$128,661	\$857,268
STREET VALUE OF CONTRABAND SEIZED			\$1,873,364,675



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.¹⁵⁰
- (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.¹⁵¹

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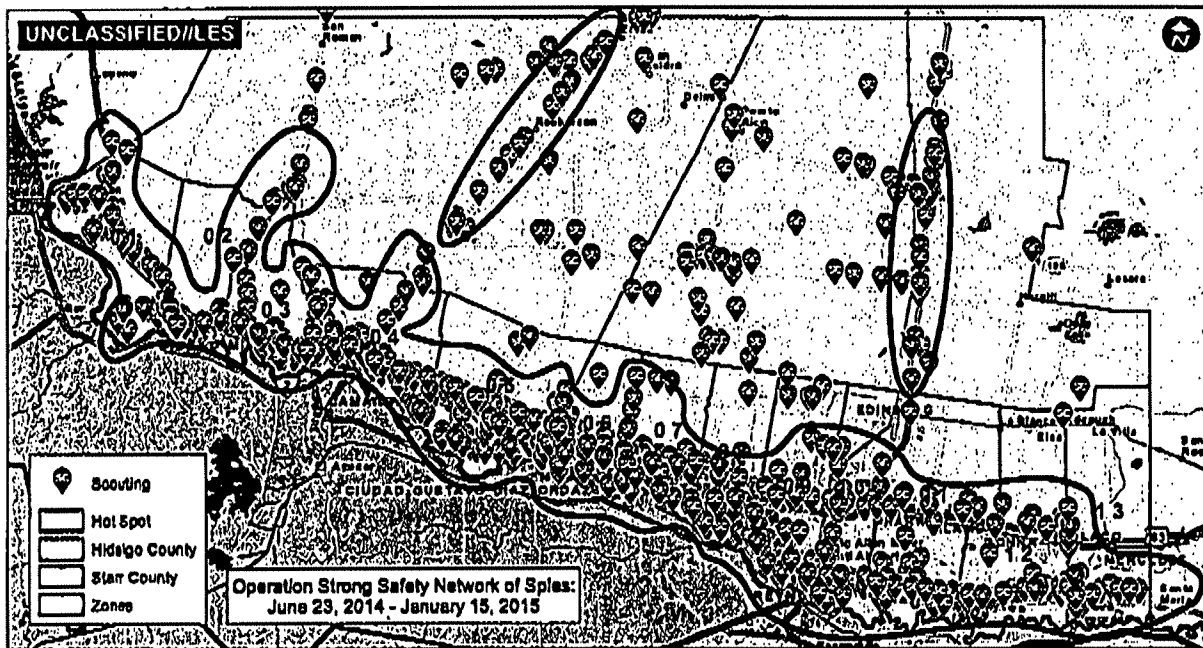
- (U) The Chief of the McAllen Police Department announced in January 2015 that the city of McAllen had experienced a 10 percent reduction in the crime rate in 2014, and he credited DPS' enforcement efforts and concentration in the community as making a difference.¹⁵²

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

(U//LES) Operation Strong Safety has created confusion among the cartels and succeeded in disrupting their operations. 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. 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.

(U//LES) Increased surveillance of law enforcement by criminal organizations: 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. Scouts are often engaged in routine surveillance at gas stations where they are able to observe OSS posts, and conduct photographic and video surveillance of hotels where personnel assigned to OSS are billeted. From June 6 to December 1, 2014, 2,309 suspected scouting events were reported through OSS.

(U//LES) As of July 2014, scouts were always observing and figuring out the daily routine of the officers. They have noticed that the DPS troopers work from 7 a.m. – 7 p.m., and that the U.S. Border Patrol shift change is at 4 p.m. On one occasion, the smugglers waited for a Border Patrol agent to move so that they could then transport their merchandise. One scout called over the radio that within 60 to 90 minutes, the USBP agent was going to leave to use the restroom like he always does. The agent then left in that time frame to go use the restroom.¹⁵³



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(U//LES) Evolution of criminal scouting posture and tactics: Criminal organizations also increased the scope of their scouting operations, and evolved from passive to active methods. They even moved to conducting reverse interviews of law enforcement. This involved questioning the DPS troopers and other agencies' officers about their schedules, and of the duration and scope of the operation.

(U//LES) Changes in cartel tactics: As OSS has proceeded, the cartels and their associated criminal organizations have made changes to their operations and tactics, including the renewed use of caltrops, tandem and decoy vehicles accompanying load vehicles, a geographic shift in smuggling corridors within the area, and others.

- **(U//LES) Smugglers have shifted some of their bulk marijuana trafficking from the central areas near McAllen to the areas farther west, around the towns of Escobares and Roma where travel from the riverbanks to small communities with little to no infrastructure and abandoned houses make for ideal ad-hoc storage for loads from 400 – 1,000 pounds of marijuana. In other cases, they have been reported to shift to the east. For example, as of October 2014, drug smugglers from Mexico continued to shift east of Mission to bring merchandise into the U.S.¹⁵⁴**
- **(U//LES) Smugglers also began using vehicles that they believed would not appear suspicious, in accordance with what they have seen from DPS troopers. These commercial vehicles have varied from those of legitimately owned and operating companies in the RGV to those “cloned” to appear as though they are legitimate utility vehicles from various power or telecommunications companies. For example, as of June 2014, the Gulf Cartel was using dump trucks in Mission to haul loads of drugs on Expressway 83.¹⁵⁵ And as of July 2014, the Gulf Cartel was using “regular” vehicles to transport their merchandise. When Troopers stop the suspicious vehicles, it provides a window of opportunity to move drugs or illegal aliens.¹⁵⁶**
- **(U//LES) Smugglers have also begun to use vehicles in groups of two or three to act as scouts to either warn the load vehicles of the approach of law enforcement, or in more extreme occasions, to actually engage the police and attempt to ram them. For example, in September 2014, tandem vehicles were used to smuggle 342 pounds of marijuana. Spike strips were deployed (by law enforcement) and disabled one of the vehicles during a pursuit.¹⁵⁷**
- **(U//LES) Smugglers renewed their use of “caltrops” – spikes designed to be deployed by smugglers to puncture the tires of pursuing law enforcement vehicles – after they had not been seen in the RGV with regularity for over two years. For example, in November 2014, two vehicles deployed caltrops while trying to escape USBP agents and Texas Highway Patrol near Alamo. The pursuit resulted in the seizure of 447.79 pounds of marijuana.¹⁵⁸**
- **(U//LES) Beginning in October 2014, drug smugglers have been observed creating distractions and decoy drug bundles to draw law enforcement attention. In late November, USBP observed individuals carrying bundles wrapped in plastic. They unsuccessfully attempted to conceal the bundles on the U.S. side of the Rio Grande River. Responding agents seized six marijuana bundles weighing 542 pounds and two decoy bundles mixed with the load. Smugglers had co-mingled decoy bundles of straw with actual bundles of marijuana once before during OSS. The decoy bundles, as in this case, were distinguishable by their unique, dark plastic wrapping. The bundles may be intended to serve as “chaff” when officers pursue the smugglers: by dropping the decoy bundles, the smugglers hope to make the pursuing officers stop to secure the fake contraband (which they believe is required by law or policy), giving the smugglers time to get away with the real drugs.**

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(U//LES) Drug smuggling hindered in some cases: Criminal organizations and their operatives have had difficulty in getting drugs across the river. For example, in July 2014, intelligence reporting indicated that DPS was affecting the movement of drugs by slowing down transportation, creating a stockpile of marijuana and cocaine on the Mexican side.¹⁵⁹ Additionally, in August 2014, intelligence reporting indicated that marijuana being held on the Mexican side was slowly starting to rot as the operation was deterring drug smugglers from sending marijuana from Mexico to the U.S., and marijuana that was sent was considered "old."¹⁶⁰

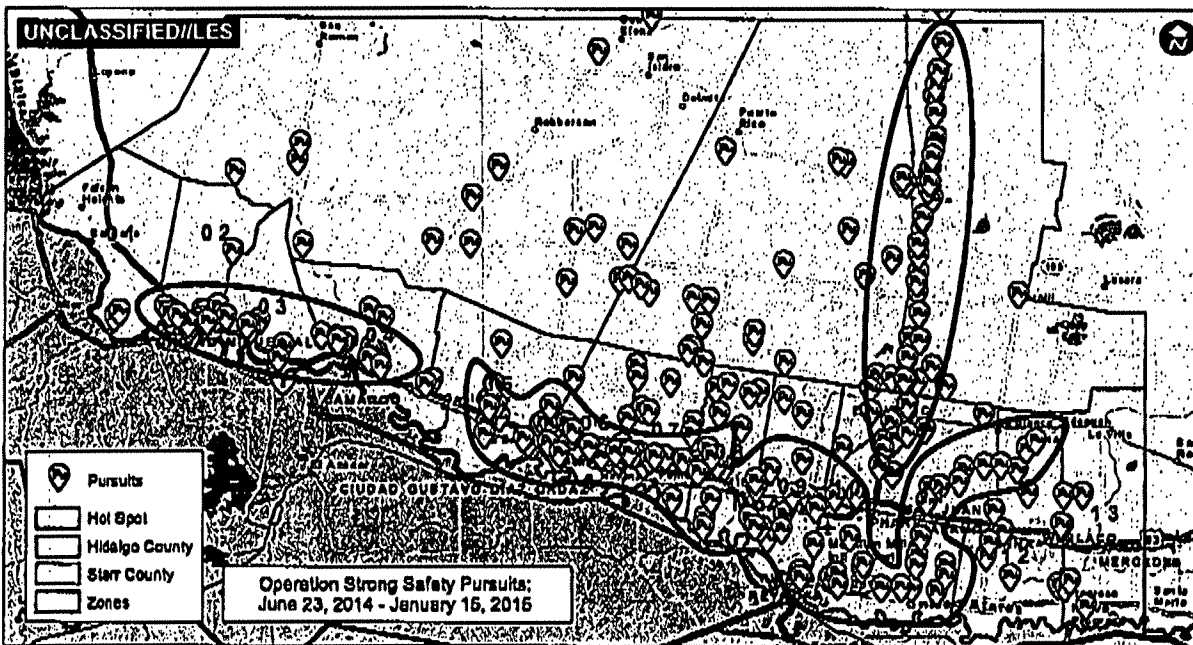
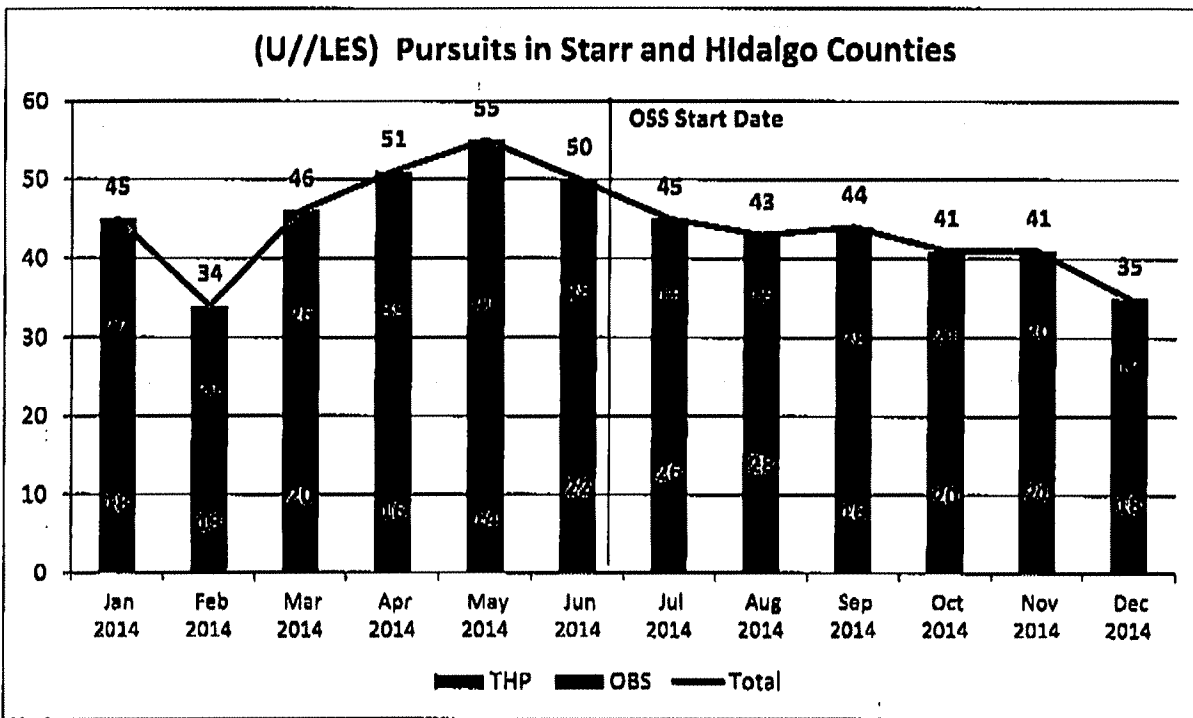
(U//LES) Some cartel operatives and smugglers view the RGV as too hostile: Intelligence reporting indicates that the cartels view operating in the RGV as difficult, due to OSS. In some cases, the cartels have reportedly shifted operations away from the RGV or the Texas border entirely, due to the increased law enforcement presence, according to intelligence reporting.

- **(U//LES) As of September 2014, the cartels believed that DPS is running out of money and will be leaving the Rio Grande Valley soon.**¹⁶¹
- **(U//LES) As of August 2014, the cartels had told the "river bosses" to stop sending unaccompanied alien children across from Mexico to the U.S. due to the deployment of the military to the U.S. border. Illegal alien family units were still being sent.**¹⁶²
- **(U//LES) As of August 2014, the Sinaloa Cartel could not move any of their merchandise from Mexico to the U.S. because of all the attention the border is receiving, mainly due to the Governor's outspoken approach to border issues.**¹⁶³
- **(U//LES) As of July 2014, the Gulf Cartel feared DPS because they are hard to corrupt, which makes it harder for smugglers to move drugs and illegal aliens.**¹⁶⁴
- **(U//LES) As of June 2014, the Gulf Cartel believed DPS consistently had a strong presence in the Rio Grande Valley. They viewed the added number of troopers as a concern for them.**¹⁶⁵
- **(U//LES) As of June 2014, the Gulf Cartel heard about the increase of DPS units into the Rio Grande Valley and were concerned with this. They were planning on creating a new strategy to smuggle drugs and aliens across the border from Mexico because of the surge.**¹⁶⁶

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4.5 Pursuits

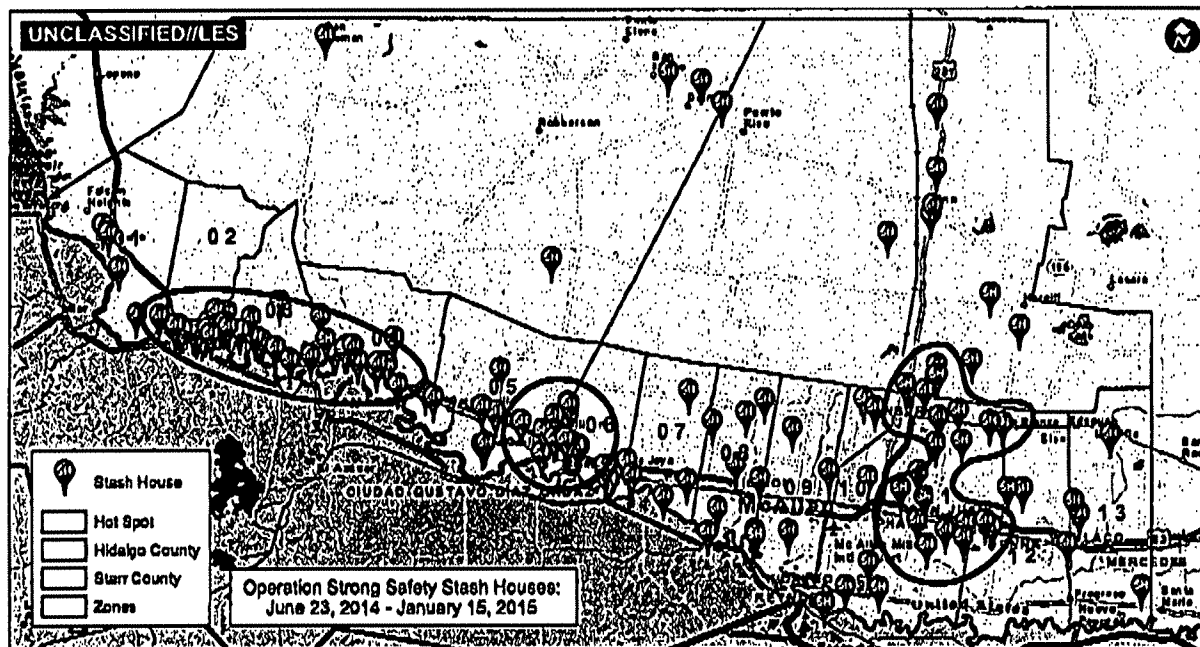
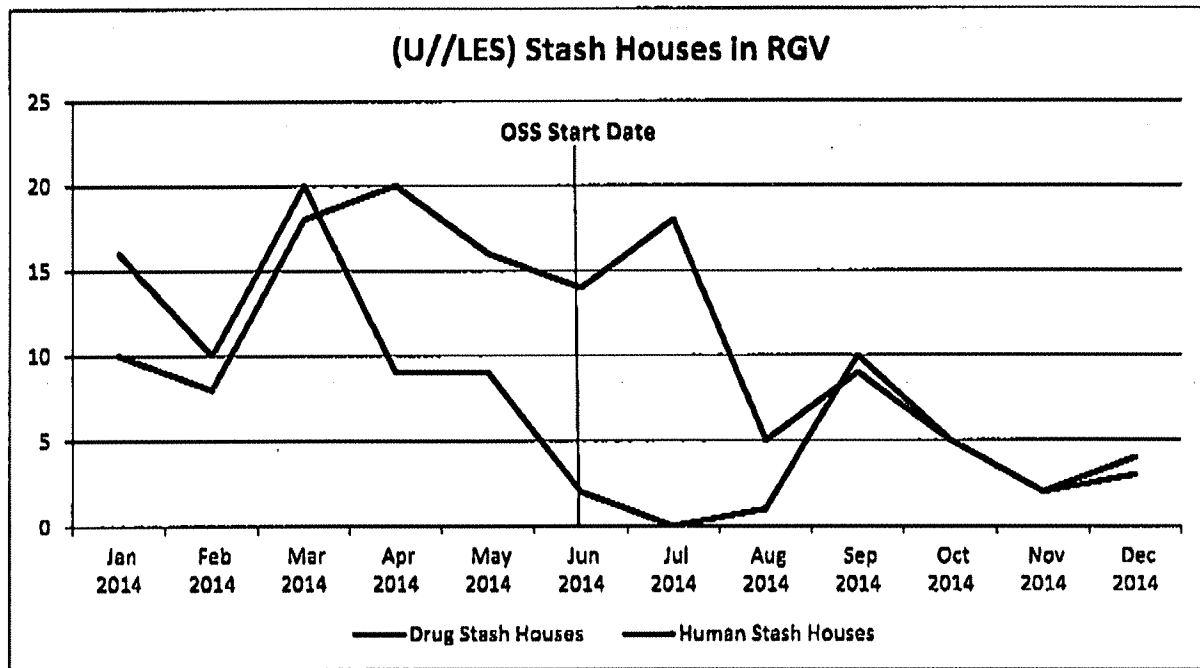
(U) Pursuits in Hidalgo and Starr Counties have declined since June, after trending upward since January.



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4.7 Stash houses

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

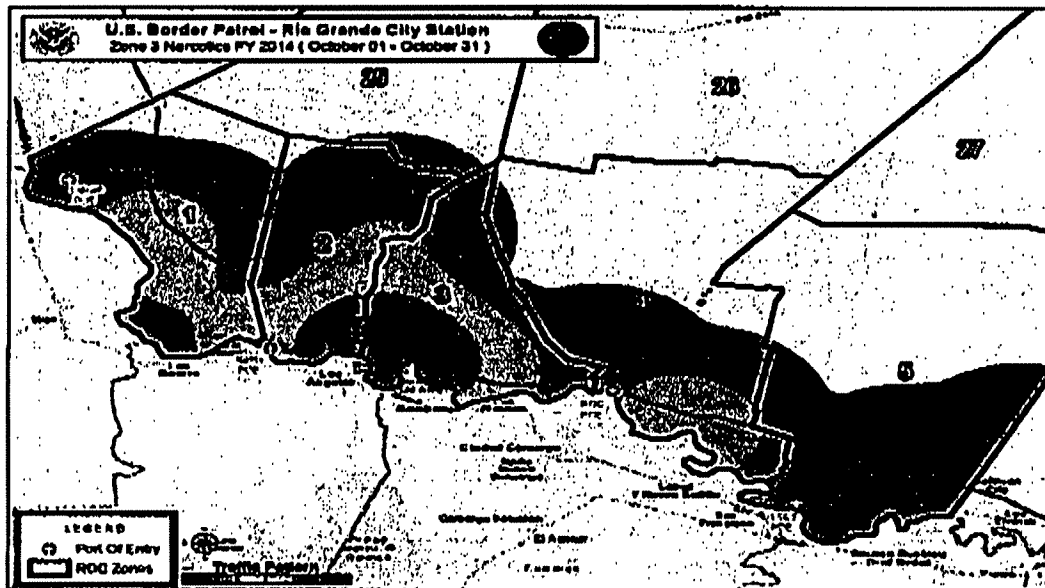


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4.8 Zone 3 Surge Success Story

(U//LES) In October 2014, a joint surge effort with USBP, DPS, and other participating Operation Strong Safety agencies was initiated in USBP Zone 3, an area within the USBP Rio Grande City Area of Operations where drug smuggling activities are predominately concentrated. Zone 3 has typically been a stronghold for transnational criminal organizations because of the extended law enforcement response time and the economic make-up of the area, making it a prime zone for recruitment of scouts, transportation networks and stash houses. Historically, criminal organizations have operated relatively unaffected in this area of the border.

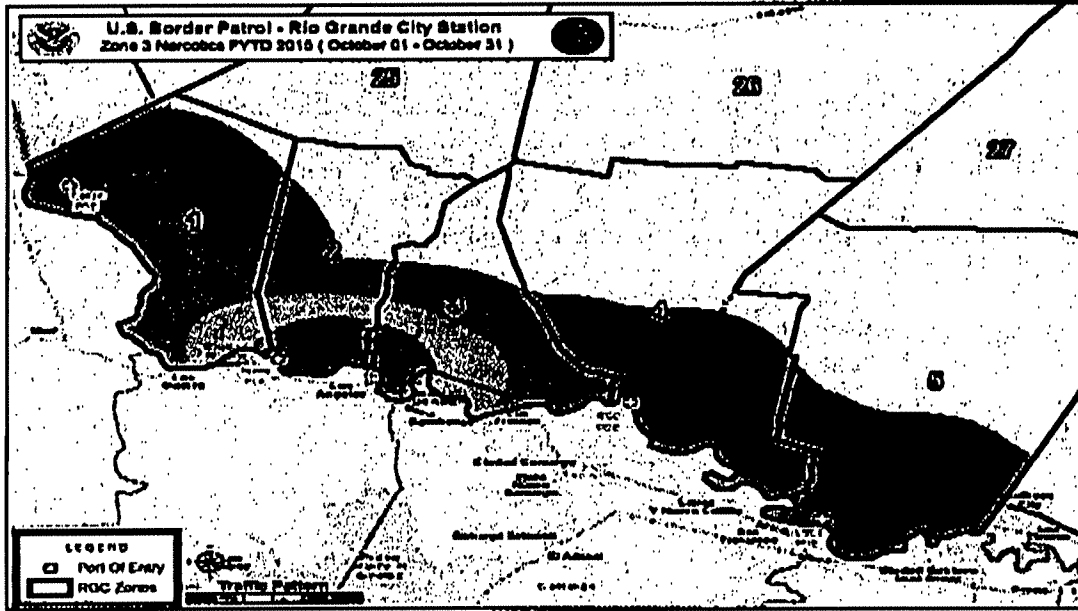
(U//LES) Although the below image depicts drug seizures in the RGC AO for October FY2014, the same general trend pattern is present for all of FY2014.



(U//LES) The surge effort in Zone 3 was a "layered" approach and consisting of assistance with Government of Mexico (GOM)/International Liaison Unit, marine assets, targeted enforcement, static observation posts and air assets. The purpose of the effort was to deny the criminal organizations access to the area and deter the smuggling activity in Zone 3 by establishing an overt presence of forces.

(U//LES) The layered surge effort noticed an immediate shift of activity from Zone 3 into Zone 2, moving slightly west throughout October 14. By the end of the 30-day assessment, the concentration of the drug seizures had moved almost completely into Zone 2 – highlighting the effectiveness of the joint surge effort.

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(U//LES) Due to the joint surge effort initiated in October 2014, the figures below highlight the noticeable shift of drug smuggling from Zone 3 into Zones 1 and 2 in early FY2015:

	FY 14	FY 15	% Change
Zone 1	5408 lbs	8800 lbs	63% ↑
Zone 2	8152 lbs	14063 lbs	72% ↑
Zone 3	13771 lbs	8405 lbs	39% ↓

(U//LES) Additional successes from the joint surge effort include the targeted enforcement and arrest of several high-profile cartel leaders, as well as the identification of new Plaza Bosses and shifts in smuggling activity:

- (U//LES) Arrest of Camargo Plaza Boss Juan Saenz-Tamez, AKA "Panochitas."
- (U//LES) Sources indicate U.S.-based smugglers are hesitant to purchase marijuana from organizations in the Rio Grande City Area of Responsibility due to deterioration of the product caused by extended storage.
- (U//LES) Cartels changed tactics from loading drugs near the river bank to backpacking or "muling" drug loads to U.S. Hwy 83.
- (U//LES) Sources indicate several organizations are trying to "wait out" the surge or have shifted from Zone 3 to Zone 4.
- (U//LES) The Alexander Diaz-Duarte, AKA "Overdose" organization, has relocated to Zone 1 due to the heavy law enforcement presence.
- (U//LES) DPS presence along U.S. Hwy 83 continues to have significant impact on organizations attempting to "mule" their drugs north rather than loading them up the river.

(U//LES) The surge effort has proven effective in displacing illegal alien and drug traffic, disrupting scouting/smuggling operations, and denying the cartels the ability to stage and operate in Zone 3. It has increased interdiction and deterrence, and has essentially extended the border by leveraging GOM relationship and cooperation.

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5. Operation Strong Safety Costs

(U) The cost of Operation Strong Safety to date 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
Total Estimated Cost for Reporting Agencies	\$59,010,889.15

(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	\$647,929	\$2,670,980	\$416,187	\$104,866	\$813,952	\$1,229,215	\$576,454	\$127,728	\$13,926,962	\$1,545,400	\$22,059,483
Overtime	\$528,657	\$2,806,542	\$169,998	\$58,350	\$878,579	\$1,272,050	\$1,668,622	\$131,594	\$13,128,372	\$1,200,300	\$21,848,004
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	\$5,759	\$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	--	--	\$9,847	--	--	\$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
Total	\$3,964,606	\$6,867,968	\$731,523	\$176,044	\$1,869,353	\$3,143,685	\$2,769,439	\$335,701	\$34,622,321	\$4,536,250	\$59,010,889

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Texas Military Forces		Original Budget	Adjusted Budget	Expenditures	Encumbrances	Remaining Budget	% of Budget Remaining
1001	Salaries and Wages	26,810,270.00	0.00	16,109,920.40	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	960,994.14	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%
2005	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	18,091,087.55	6,829,467.85	(6,739,794.63)	-64%
3002	Food for Persons - Wards of State	4,159,846.15	0.00	550,114.87	221,682.06	3,381,849.22	125%
Appropriation Balance		\$50,000,000.00	\$0.00	\$93,149,505.57	\$9,953,440.33	\$6,897,054.10	21%

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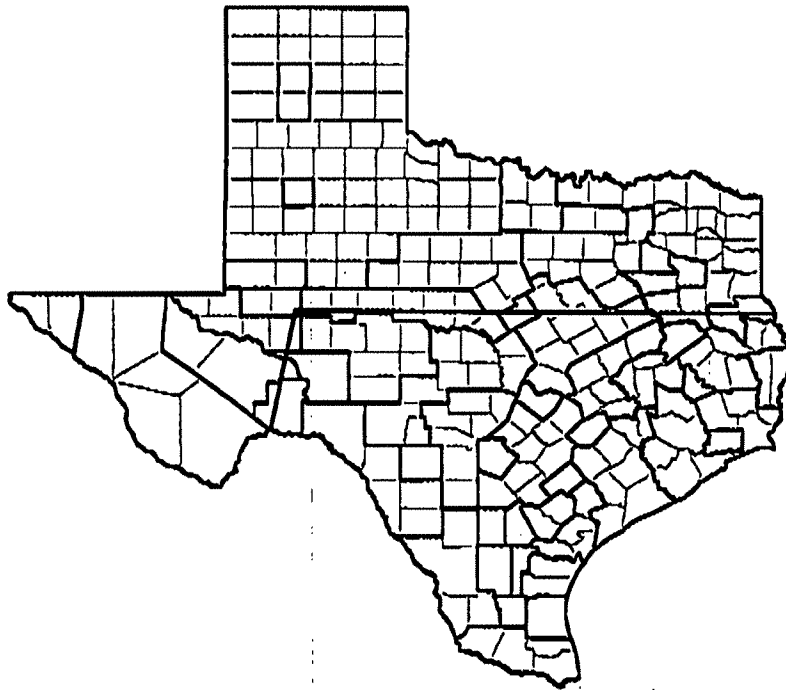
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6. Recommendations

(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, 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.



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(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 110,500 smuggling events, resulting in 52,250 apprehensions and the seizure of 92 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, 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

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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 84th Texas Legislature, Speaker of the House, Lieutenant Governor, and Governor:

- Expand the work day 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.



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