Operation Knockdown targets drug trafficking on border

DPS recently conducted Operation Knockdown in Hidalgo, Starr and Brooks counties with the goals of disrupting, denying entry to and recovering loads of narcotics smuggled by drug-trafficking organizations (DTOs) into the state.

DPS Aviation developed and implemented an air-asset task force, specifically designed for this type of operation. The task force used DPS helicopters and fixed-wing Texas Military Air National Guard aircraft and was augmented with a mobile DPS SWAT element as ground support. Highway Patrol and Border Patrol agents, already working in steady-state patrol, provided additional resources.

Operation Knockdown was conducted along known smuggling routes and keyed around air assets in the area. By design, the operation was small to provide instant flexibility and low signature, making it less noticeable to traffickers.

This most-recent operation was designed by DPS Aviation and the Rio Grande Valley Joint Operations Intelligence Center (JOIC) and personnel to disrupt and interdict illegal drug activity. The operation targeted pre-defined areas where there is a high-incident rate of DTO activity. The areas of operation are not limited to a specific stretch of the border, and the operations are sporadic in nature and will continue to target hot spots.

These operations have resulted in drug seizures and aborted loads of narcotics, in which the smugglers are attempting to bring drugs across the Rio Grande, but abandon their efforts when they spot the presence of law enforcement. The operations also provide an opportunity for DPS to conduct surveillance of smuggling activity that is applied to future, large-scale operations conducted by the Texas Rangers.

In addition, during these border operations, the Department tests new technology and operating procedures that aid in intelligence sharing and communication between multiple law enforcement and government agencies and contribute to better situational awareness for all operation participants.

Governor appoints new Public Safety commissioner


Leon is a retired regional director for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. She is a life member of the Naval Reserve Association, Navy League, U.S. Naval Institute and the Reserve Officers Association. She is also a member of the International Women's Forum and Leadership Texas, and past chair of the Dallas-Fort Worth and San Antonio Federal Executive Boards. She served as a captain in the U.S. Navy Reserves.

Leon received a bachelor's degree from Austin College and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Colorado at Boulder. She is also a graduate of the Federal Executive Institute in Charlottesville, VA.

Commissioner Leon replaces Tom Clowe of Waco, who had served on the Public Safety Commission since March 2008.
On the mend...

Sgt. David Cramer, CVE Garland, injured in a traffic crash  
Tr. Raymond Sanders, HP Liberty, injured in a traffic crash  
Tr. Chadrick A. Walker, HP Cedar Hill, injured in a traffic crash.  
Good news! Tr. Manuel Gonzales, HP Weslaco; Tr. Roberto Madrid-Gonzalez, HP Brownsville; and Tr. Andrew Peavy, CVE Houston; Tr. Dustin Oliver, HP Green-

Awards

In October, Sgt. Derek Prestridge, Education Training and Research Austin, was awarded the Texas Children’s Hero Award by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children--Texas Region.
Prestridge developed the first training program in the nation that trained officers on how to recognize, intervene, and interdict endangered children. Since the development of the course—called Interdiction for the Protection of Children—and the subsequent training for all Highway Patrol Troopers, DPS has documented the recovery of 10 children in Texas by DPS troopers.

Mile Markers

Promotions
Texas Rangers
Terry L. Snyder, Lt., CID San Antonio to Sgt., Rangers Browns-
Randy Aguirre, Agent CID Corpus Christi to Sgt., Rangers Del Rio; Jeffrey D. Rickel, Agent, CID Corpus Christi to Sgt., Rangers Kingsville;

Regulatory Services
Alicia J. Alexander, Analyst, ICT Dallas to Investigator V, Compliance and Enforcement Dallas.

Highway Patrol
Jay M. Webster, Lt., HP Webster to Capt., HP El Paso; Armando P. Villegas, Sgt., CVE San Angelo to Lt., CVE Waco; Jeffrey L. Carr, Sgt., CVE Palestine to Lt., CVE Tyler; Daniel A. Martinez, Cpl. II, CVE Laredo to Sgt., CVE Laredo-Columbia POE.

Office of Inspector General
Michael A. Stanford, Lt., CID Austin to Capt., CID OIG Austin;
Kevin Huggins, Sgt., HP McKinney to Lt., OIG Dallas; Robert C. Strickland, Staff Lt., OIG Tyler to Lt., OIG Dallas;
Christopher W. Pratt, Agent, CID Austin to Lt., OIG Austin; James P. Lopez, Sgt., HP Austin to Lt., OIG Austin; Hoby R. Smith, Agent, CID Austin to Lt., OIG Austin.

Administration
Eddie King, Prgm. Administrator, Administration Austin to Manager, Administration Austin.

Retirements
Amelia Villarreal Alvarez, Examiner, DL Carrollton, 28 years;
Robert R. Lindley, Sen. Tr., HP Tyler, 27 years; Linda L. Carter, Supv., LES Austin, 24 years; Raul Domantay Centeno, Tech. II, LES Austin, 11 years; Catherine May, Admin. Asst. III, CID Austin, 5 years;
Michael Gary Smith, Sen. Tr., Regulatory Svc. McKinney, 28 years; Elvira Calvin, Tech., DL Austin, 27 years; Elizabeth Zeliff, Supv., Communications San Antonio, 25 years; Richard Braziil, Lt., CID Tyler, 23 years;
Russell Lecklider, Dep. Asst. Director, EMD Austin, 20 years; Billy Rains Sr., Sgt., CID Wichita Falls, 20 years; Gregorio Benavidez Jr., Admin. Asst. III, DL Laredo, 18 years; Ken Ballay, Programmer III, IT Austin, 17 years; Golden Martin, Jr., Inspector IV, HP Riviera, 11 years; William Masch, Admin. Asst.

Deaths