New Criminal Law Enforcement chief named

Thomas Ruocco has been named the chief of Criminal Law Enforcement for the Texas Department of Public Safety. His appointment took effect Feb. 2.

“Tom Ruocco brings a wealth of experience to DPS, and we are excited about the future of the Criminal Law Enforcement Division under his leadership,” said DPS Director Stanley E. Clark.

The Criminal Law Enforcement Division investigates multijurisdictional crimes such as narcotics violations, terrorism, motor vehicle theft, gambling, public corruption, fraud, theft and counterfeit documents. The division has 1,100 employees across the state.

“I look forward to working with the outstanding men and women of DPS. This agency has a proud tradition in law enforcement,” Ruocco said. “I know we can build on that to accomplish even greater things.”

Ruocco, 50, is the former Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the San Antonio Division, Austin Resident Agency, for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. His responsibilities included management and oversight of the Austin and Waco offices, as well as the counterterrorism program. During his career with the FBI, Ruocco was stationed in New York, Atlanta, Washington D.C. and San Antonio. He retired from the FBI in July 2008.

A native of New York, Ruocco has a bachelor’s of science degree in criminal justice from St. John’s University in Queens, New York.

Dear fellow employee:

Good news to report on the legislative front. Our testimony before the Senate Finance and House Appropriations committees was well received. Also, individual legislators have expressed a willingness to work with DPS on addressing the pressing needs of our Agency.

Additionally, we have resource witnesses attending every committee hearing that would impact DPS to ensure visibility and the availability to provide information.

I applaud the tireless efforts of the many employees from various divisions who are monitoring the 31 DPS requested bills. Keep up the good work!

Finally, I also want to thank our commissioned officers and noncommissioned employees who come to work every day, work hard and do this agency proud.

Stanley E. Clark
Briefs

FBI graduate

Lt. Kevin Wilkie, Internal Affairs Austin, graduated from the 235th Session of the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia, Dec. 12.

Quarter Century Club meets

The next Quarter Century Club ladies luncheon and banquet will be held at the Georgetown Community Center on Friday, March 20. Call Jennifer Hall at 512-424-7297 for more details.

Christmas cheer BIA style

Employees of the Bureau of Information Analysis in CLE brought a little Christmas cheer to an Army unit serving in Afghanistan. BIA donations filled 17 boxes with homemade cookies, snacks, books, magazines, hygiene products, hand warmers and other items. Letters from elementary students and Christmas cards signed by BIA employees also were included. By all accounts, the gifts were a hit with the soldiers spending Christmas far away from their loved ones.

Trooper finds bus filled with marijuana

A DPS trooper discovered almost five tons of marijuana in an abandoned school bus in Webb County Jan. 31— one of the biggest Highway Patrol busts in DPS history.

Tr. Luis Guzman, HP Laredo, was on routine patrol when he noticed the school bus on the side of U.S. 59 outside of Laredo, and went to investigate. Inside the bus, he discovered 9,216 pounds of marijuana worth $3.9 million. The 560 bundles of marijuana were covered by cardboard in the passenger area, and hidden in a secret ceiling compartment.

The bus was made to appear as if it was a legitimate school bus belonging to a Laredo area school district, but the markings were determined to be fake.

Investigators believe the bus developed engine problems, and DPS Narcotics is now conducting the follow-up investigation. At last word, no one had been arrested.

The bust appears to be the second largest marijuana seizure by DPS during routine Highway Patrol enforcement. The all-time record was 11,921 pounds seized in Bee County in a 2004 traffic stop.

Commission adds to exceptional items

At an emergency meeting in early February, the Public Safety Commission approved a $27 million additional exceptional item to the DPS legislative appropriations request for the next biennium.

If approved by the Legislature, this would allow the purchase of an additional 450 black and white patrol units for the Highway Patrol, equipping virtually every trooper with their own patrol unit. The Commission ranked the additional vehicles as priority number five in the exceptional items’ request.

The 2010-2011 exceptional items list is available on the front page of the DPS website.

On the mend...

Tr. Steven Hoppas, HP San Marcos, injured when vehicle struck by alleged drunk driver.

Good news! Tr. Ronald R. Ramirez, HP Alice, has returned to work.
Mile Markers

Promotions

Rangers

L.C. Wilson, Capt., Rangers Houston to Asst. Chief, Rangers Austin-HQ.

HP

Kent Steven Radney, Capt., IA Austin-HQ to Major HP Austin-HQ; Fred Bailey Whisnant, Jr., Sgt., CVE El Paso to Lt., CVE El Paso; Joe Robert Dennett, Sgt., CVE Austin to Lt., CVE Waco; Monty Gene Kea, Sgt., CVE Garland to Lt., CVE Garland;

Stephen Wayne Steadman, Sgt., CVE Rosenberg to Lt., CVE Houston; Frank Pellizzari, Sen. Cpl., CVE Rockwall to Sgt., CVE Laredo; Earl Wayne Heath, Sen. Cpl., CVE Brookshire to Sgt., CVE Kingsville;


Administration

Phillip G. Ayala, Lt., HR Austin to Capt., HR Austin-HQ.

Director's Staff

David Franklin, Lt., CIS Austin to Inspector II, OAI Austin HQ.

CLE


Steven Wade Tuggle, Sgt., HP Grandbury to Sgt., MVT Wichita Falls; Justin Blain House, Tr. III, CVE Seminole to Sgt., MVT El Paso; David Lynn Dixon, Tr. II, HP Austin to Sgt., MVT Austin;

Lucian Paul Ebrom, Tr. III, HP Jourdanton to Sgt., MVT Laredo; Lester Clinton Keener, Tr. II, HP Corpus Christi to Sgt., MVT Beeville; James Lee Nelson, Tr. II, HP Big Lake to Sgt., MVT El Paso;

Marvin Jerard Richardson, Tr. III, CVE Eagle Pass to Sgt. MVT McAllen; Richard A. Hunter, Tr. II, HP Mineral Wells to Sgt., MVT Wichita Falls; Steven Scott Bailey, Tr. II, HP Karnes City to Sgt., MVT Brownsville; Brandon Edward Speed, Sgt., HP El Paso to Sgt., CIS El Paso;


Glen L. Welters, Tr. II, HP Rosenberg to Sgt. CIS Laredo; Bryan J. Moczygemba, Tr. II, HP Austin to Sgt., CIS Laredo; Steven Ray Gleaton, Tr. III, HP Sweetwater to Sgt., CIS El Paso; Ronald Ray Gumm, Jr., Tr. II, PSB Midland to Sgt., CIS Van Horn;

Charles Burwell Howell, Tr. II, HP Kerrville to Sgt., CIS Eagle Pass; Chris Ybanez, Sgt., HP Beeville to Sgt., CIS Laredo; Nathan Ray Mutz, Tr. II, HP continued on page 4
Floresville to Sgt., CIS Laredo.

Retirements
  Curtis Ray Johnson, Tech., Gen. Svc. Austin, 30 yrs., 3 mos.; Craig Michael Ashley, Sen. Tr., HP Bryan, 26 yrs., 7 mos., 22 days; Paul Terrel Davis, Maj., HP Austin, 24 yrs., 22 days; Robert Frank Clark, Sgt., Narcotics Svc., Del Rio, 21 yrs., 5 mos., 24 days; Sammy Machuca Prieto, Sgt., MVT San Angelo, 32 yrs., 4 mos., 16 days; Alan Leroy Spears, Lt., HP Pierce, 31 yrs., 1 mo., 2 days; Clayton Blane Shuffield, Sen. Tr., CVE Odessa, 27 yrs., 7 mos., 21 days;
  Homero Artemio Marines, Sen. Tr., CVE Cotulla, 27 yrs., 18 days; Barbara Ann Bentenbough, Tech., DL Mineral Wells, 17 yrs., 8 mos., 25 days; June Rhynell Sternnadle, Evaluator, DL Austin, 14 yrs., 11 mo., 17 days;
  Richard Larry Stelling, Examiner, DL Dallas, 14 yrs., 9 mos., 16 days; Gerardo Javier De Los Santos, Asst. Chief, Rangers Austin, 31 yrs., 24 days; Lonnie Dale Harms, Supv., Fleet Austin, 28 yrs., 9 mos.;
  Danny Joel Flowers, Spec., IMS Austin, 26 yrs., 1 mo., 9 days; Robert Leland Dymke, Officer, EMS Bryan, 18 yrs., 4 mos.; Lana Faye Royal, Tech., DL Beeville, 18 yrs., 1 mos., 19 days.

Deaths

Owen Castle, 2, sits in the cockpit of a DPS helicopter in Austin. The serene setting is nothing like the 14-hour ordeal that began when the boy wandered off Feb. 3 in rural Llano County, spending the night alone in sometimes subfreezing temperatures. A frantic search by hundreds of law enforcement personnel and volunteers ended the next morning when the shivering, barely responsive boy was spotted from the air by DPS Tactical Flight Officer Benjamin Muller, El Paso, and Pilot Nick Granelli, Austin, about a mile from where he had disappeared. The boy was loaded into the DPS chopper and flown to the nearest hospital. The next day, the boy’s father brought a rejuvenated Owen to meet his rescuers.

At right, Owen sits with Nick Granelli, who was piloting the DPS helicopter when Owen was found.