



## From the Chief of the Texas Rangers



# Rangers Face New Responsibilities

*By Randy Prince, Chief, Texas Rangers*

The men and women of this division are ordinary people doing extraordinary things. And as you know, they work under intense pressure to maintain a high level of performance each and every day as shown by the success in many high profile investigations, by solving cold case murder investigations, by determining facts in a complex officer involved shooting investigation, or by negotiating the safe outcome of a barricaded suspect. These tasks require an individual of character who has earned respect and possesses the command presence to manage chaos. But, just as important are the investigations that receive little or no media attention, worked day-in and day-out by rangers with our local law enforcement partners.

Aside from the normal duties of being the primary criminal investigative division of the DPS, we have increased our duties within the Division. The Texas Rangers have indeed returned to our roots—with a mission of keeping our border safe and secure.

Operation Drawbridge is a significant and vital part of our border security program. This operation involves a large number of motion activated cameras strategically positioned along the border. We have established multiple monitoring points, to include our Joint Operation Intelligence Centers and the Border Security Operation Center in Austin. This event-driven surveillance system is a valuable asset to help secure Texas and address the threats facing our border region from criminal organizations. It is a real-time intelligence tool depicting things such as number of people, presence of weapons, narcotics and human trafficking. Customs and Border Patrol agents in South Texas are hardworking and dedicated law enforcement officers who are committed to teamwork and work in concert with the Texas Department of Public Safety for a front line response to Drawbridge alerts.

Our department has seen significant growth over the past few years and, it has seen significant improvement thanks to the leadership of our State Legislature, DPS Commission, and Directors. We all recognize them as our leaders, because at its core – leadership is not about self but about the people and inspiring positive change.

The 84<sup>th</sup> legislative session is now history. The DPS Office of Government Relations worked diligently with our Texas Ranger staff through some tedious and intricate proposed legislation to ensure accurate information was provided to the legislature. Here are a few bills which have a significant impact on the Ranger Division.

House Bill 11 - a lengthy bill relating to the powers and authority of the Texas Department of Public Safety, including a provision authorizing a “10-hour work day” for most commissioned personnel, establishes a “Reserve Officers Corp” within the Department, funds a new multi-agency Training Center in the Rio Grande Valley and established a Transnational Intelligence Center to combat transnational gangs, who have infiltrated the country with no area of the state being immune from their brutal violence. The passage of this bill provides for additional Rangers to focus on border related violence and corruption. In the near future, and in

consultation with the Director's Office and Ranger Command Staff, we will develop a plan to implement the requirements of HB-11 and incorporate the additional personnel by strategic placement in response to the state's need to battle continued threats and provide effective assistance to local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

House Bill 2053 - outlines assistance the Department will provide to Child Protective Services in searching for unlocatable children, who are the subject of serious allegations of abuse or neglect. The bill is named after Colton Turner, a 2-year-old child, whose remains were found in Travis County in 2014, leading to the arrest of his mother and a companion. Often, case workers are unable to find a child connected to a serious allegation and during this time the child's safety remains in jeopardy. In 2005, legislature authorized the "Child Safety Check Alert List", which provides an avenue for local law enforcement, through documentation, to place unlocatable children and their families in a database which is searchable by law enforcement. This bill causes the responsibility of these entries to be made with the Department of Public Safety's Texas Crime Information Center. As important, HB 2053 mandates additional training to educate all Texas peace officers on the application of the alert list. The Texas Crimes against Children Center will assist in providing training and resources to law enforcement in the protection of children.

House Bill 1690 – transferred duties, changed the prosecution venue of state employees and state officers accused of certain offenses, and created the "Public Integrity Unit" within the Texas Rangers. Public Corruption is high on the department's list of investigative priorities, as the breach of trust undermines the confidence in public officials. In the past, a significant number of these allegations were investigated and prosecuted by the Travis County District Attorney's office. This bill places the responsibility of the investigation of public integrity offenses with the Texas Rangers, requiring the division to establish a new unit. The Texas Ranger Division will develop a strategy and policy to implement the requirements of this bill and to ensure we remain unbiased and non-political in its application, that we always do what is right, and that our investigations will be based on truth and fact.

The Rangers, as always, will continue to work in partnership with local prosecutors in the pursuit of public integrity investigations. The respect of a Texas Ranger is not based on a badge and a gun, but is earned through the trust and confidence of the public by continuing the dedicated service to Texas through unquestioned competence and integrity.