Texas Sends Ranger Recon Teams Into Border Region

*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.

Thursday, September 10, 2009

Good afternoon and thank you for being here today. Looking around at the people standing up here with me, I have to say I feel pretty safe. If you were going to assemble a team to get something done, to protect something precious, the folks up here are where to start.

With a Texas Ranger, the Texas Military Forces, DPS troopers, and local law enforcement, you have a team that is skilled, experienced and ready to handle just about anything that comes their way.

Today, I am here to announce our plans to enhance efforts to protect our citizens by introducing what we’re calling Ranger Recon Teams. Deployed to high-traffic, high-crime areas along the border, they will give us boots on the ground at the hot spots, no matter where they exist.

This is the latest in a series of aggressive actions we’ve taken to fill in the gap left by the federal government’s ongoing failure to adequately secure our international border.

I genuinely appreciate the efforts of Border Patrol agents here in Texas. They’re a hard-working group of professionals who play a key role in our joint efforts, but Washington continues to shortchange them on the resources they need to do their job. As a result, we have dedicated our own resources to the challenge.

I appreciate our legislators like those here with us today for responding to my requests, and devoting more than $110 million in each of the last two legislative sessions, to beef up our security efforts along the border.

Our philosophy is based on putting boots on the ground, and equipping those vigilant personnel with the technology, training and funding they need, to help stem the flow of contraband across our border.

We also just recently awarded $2 million to the Border Sheriff’s Coalition to continue the Virtual Border Watch
program. I want to thank Don Reay of the Border Sheriff’s Coalition and his folks for their ongoing support of this program.

By combining technology with the efforts of Texans concerned about Border Security, we have had a deterrent effect on criminal activities. This effort has also given Texans a greater sense of ownership of the border security challenge.

These initiatives have had a positive impact, as we've seen crime in the targeted areas drop more than 60%…and Texans are safer. However, as we have taken a more aggressive approach to policing the border, the bad guys on the other side have reacted by changing tactics. Up and down our border, smugglers constantly probe for blind spots and weak points, studying our routines and adapting on the fly.

As a result, landowners all along our border are finding their farms and ranches overrun by smuggling operations, often by armed individuals with no respect for property, the law or human life. By introducing Ranger Recon Teams that can stay on the move, we can stay one jump ahead of the cartels and beat them at their own game.

They are a Texas-style solution to a problem that would also be helped by the arrival of the 1,000 National Guard forces that I’ve been requesting since January. In the absence of a clear answer on those troops from Washington, we’ll keep doing what Texas does: pursuing our own solutions.

Our vigilance will not waver as the situation across the border continues to worsen, the drug cartels continue to battle the government and each other for dominance, and we begin to see incidents of spill-over violence in our communities.

We will protect our citizens, no matter what the cost. These teams are an essential part of that effort.

Thank you all for being here today. Once again, I’d like to thank all the brave men and women of Texas law enforcement and our Texas Military Forces for your sacrifices to keep us safe.