



SB 36 TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, PUBLIC SAFETY & VETERANS' AFFAIRS

By: **Ammon Blair**, Texas Public Policy Foundation
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Chairman Hefner, Vice Chairman Lopez and honorable members of the committee,

My name is Ammon Blair, I am a Senior Fellow at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, and I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 36. My background includes being a former U.S. Border Patrol Agent who served in the Rio Grande Valley Sector. I also bring 22 years of military service and extensive border security experience.

Texas has historically confronted persistent security threats emanating from the border ranging from illegal immigration, smugglers, insurgencies and foreign terrorist organizations, often with minimal federal support ([McCaffrey & Scales, 2011](#)). Today, these threats have intensified, culminating in a security crisis that necessitates immediate and decisive action. With a 1,254-mile border with Mexico, Texas is at the forefront of confronting a complex convergence of state and non-state threats that directly challenge our sovereignty and security.

President Biden's policies—including facilitating the invasion, releasing millions of illegal aliens into the interior, halting critical border security infrastructure projects, dismantling both border and interior enforcement mechanisms, and refusing to confront the threat posed by cartel-controlled Mexico—directly fueled the collapse of law and order along our border and in our communities ([House Judiciary Committee, 2024](#)). In doing so, the Biden administration ceded operational control of U.S. territory to foreign terrorist organizations ([Allen, 2023](#); [Office of the Texas Governor, 2023](#)).

Mexico is not a distant concern. It is the most strategically consequential nation to U.S. homeland security, and yet it remains one of the most underestimated and politically ignored threats in the American national security apparatus. While our defense establishment focused on the borders and sovereignty of foreign nations across the globe, Mexico devolved into a narco-state on our doorstep—exporting violence, criminal governance, and destabilization directly into U.S. territory ([Horowitz, 2019](#); [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 2024](#)). The federal government's persistent mischaracterization of Mexico has crippled our national response and has enabled Mexico to evolve into a sanctuary for enemies of the United States ([Fernández, 2024](#)).

Mexico today is more accurately described as a state where federal, state, and local governance have collapsed in key regions and foreign terrorist organizations dominate political and economic life, much like Afghanistan ([Kaminski, 2024](#)). These cartels function as hybrid threats, closely resembling their Middle Eastern counterparts, where they employ terror as a political weapon, control territory, corrupt or co-opt institutions, and use violence strategically to shape governance outcomes ([Maya, 2021](#)). Their war is not against a rival state, but against the very concept of law, sovereignty, and national borders.

Therefore, the security environment along the U.S.–Mexico border cannot be understood through the outdated framework of narco-criminality alone ([Balling, 2024](#)). What exists is an intolerable strategic alliance between the Mexican state, at the national and sub-national level, and the cartels—a relationship that has evolved into a coordinated, ideologically aligned partnership with direct consequences for U.S. national security ([Davidson, 2025](#); [Treviño, 2025](#)).

While Mexico is engaged in a non-international armed conflict—where cartels openly battle the state for control of territory and population—the spillover into the United States has taken a far more insidious form ([Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 2024](#)). Cartels do not seek to provoke a direct armed response from the U.S. military or federal government, nor does the Mexican state want to risk exposure as a complicit or tacitly cooperative actor. Instead, Mexican cartels have adapted their methods to achieve the same objective—territorial control—through covert, gray zone tactics that replicate their domination of Mexican society within U.S. border communities ([Blankley, 2022](#)).

Mexican cartels have systematically established operational control along the U.S. side of the border, employing sophisticated gray zone activities that remain below the threshold of conventional armed conflict ([Luna, 2024](#); [House Committee on Homeland Security, 2023](#)). Their operations now extend across multiple domains—land, air, maritime, subterranean, cyber, and the electromagnetic spectrum—enabling them to conduct surveillance, communication disruption, and logistical coordination with precision and impunity ([Sanchez, 2025](#); [Hackers Arise, 2025](#); [Paz, 2024](#); [McCaffrey & Scales, 2011, pp. 9, 18](#)).

This multi-domain approach has enabled cartels to seize, command, and control territory in Texas, while building a comprehensive infrastructure for unrestricted movement from Mexico deep into Texas communities ([McCaffrey & Scales, 2011, pp. 8–9, 17](#); [Allen, 2023](#)). This established framework of access has become the cartels' most valuable commodity, creating a sophisticated “silk road” that hostile state and non-state actors exploit to directly reach U.S. populations ([Warren, 2019](#)).

Through deliberate infiltration of every major city and many suburban and rural areas, cartels have constructed a logistical supply chain or “pipeline” that provides our adversaries—from adversarial Nations like the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) to foreign terrorist organizations—with direct pathways into the heart of Texas’ society ([House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, 2024, pp. 59–61](#)).

This vast and deeply embedded logistics infrastructure has not only enabled the movement of illicit goods and narcotics, but has also set the stage for a more insidious tactic of hybrid warfare: mass migration as a weapon. With the supply chain and access networks already in place, hostile state and non-state actors have shifted strategies to exploit humanitarian channels, using population flows to overwhelm American institutions, dilute law enforcement effectiveness, and penetrate communities under the guise of asylum or refugee resettlement ([Blankley, 2024](#)).

Over the last four years, the United States has endured a deliberately orchestrated invasion through weaponized mass migration. Millions of illegal aliens from over 170 countries have been funneled—often with cartel facilitation—into Texas and other border states, overwhelming state and local resources ([Humire, 2025; Sanchez, 2024](#)).

These mass population movements were not merely tolerated by the prior federal administration—they were facilitated. Federal agencies and NGOs were repurposed to serve an ideological agenda of “safe, orderly, and humane migration,” creating an extralegal immigration regime in violation of longstanding federal law ([Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, 2024; Bensman, 2024](#)). The sheer scale of these movements overwhelmed federal, state, and local law enforcement resources, degrading operational effectiveness and diverting attention away from known threats.

Simultaneously, these mass migrations provided concealment and cover for infiltration by foreign intelligence operatives (e.g., CCP), cartel enforcers, and members of transnational criminal and terrorist organizations, including MS-13, Tren de Aragua, and other violent networks with direct ties to adversarial regimes. The precise whereabouts and identities of many of these illegal aliens remain unknown, creating blind spots in national security coverage and opening the door to catastrophic risk across Texas communities ([The White House, 2025a](#)).

The current federal response under the Trump administration represents the most robust border security effort since 1916, when nearly 110,000 National Guard soldiers were mobilized for border service to counter cross-border insurgencies ([Barnes, 2016](#)). Today's response demonstrates unprecedented commitment to addressing these complex challenges ([The White House, 2025b](#)). However, the scale and sophistication of current threats demand more than federal action alone can provide.

Despite the dedicated efforts of the Department of Homeland Security, USNORTHCOM, and other federal agencies, the current threat landscape along the southern border and throughout Texas, demands more than federal presence. It requires a whole-of-society approach, one that fully leverages state legislative authority, integrates local and county law enforcement capabilities, and empowers Texas to act as a co-equal force in national defense.

Texas now stands at a critical inflection point that demands the establishment of a comprehensive homeland security framework. This framework must integrate specialized units, enhanced surveillance capabilities, all-source intelligence operations, and coordinated response protocols designed to function both autonomously and in conjunction with federal authorities. Without such measures, Texas risks continued erosion of its sovereignty and the expansion of cartel influence within its borders.

The necessity of a permanent, state-controlled homeland security framework is not only a response to contemporary security challenges but also a reaffirmation of foundational constitutional principles. Texas' ability to safeguard its citizens against transnational threats requires a security apparatus that is both proactive and independent, capable of functioning within or beyond the scope of federal assistance. Ensuring this capability demands a structured approach informed by historical precedent, legal authority, and strategic necessity.

On January 20, 2025, President Donald Trump signed Executive Order 14159, "Protecting the American People Against Invasion," invoking Article IV, Section 4 of the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees states the authority and support necessary to repel invasions and defend their borders ([Exec. Order No. 14159, 2025; U.S. Const. art. IV § 4](#)).

Shortly after, on January 23, 2025, the Acting Secretary of Homeland Security formally declared a "Mass Influx of Aliens," invoking 28 C.F.R. § 65.83 to formally request state and local assistance in immigration enforcement ([Department of Homeland Security, 2025; 28 C.F.R. § 65.83](#)). This historic federal declaration authorizes Texas law enforcement officers to perform "any of the powers . . . or duties conferred or impose" on ICE officers under INA § 103(a)(10) ([8 U.S.C. § 1103\(a\)\(10\); U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2025](#)).

By leveraging our constitutional authority and with the Trump administration's explicit support, Texas now possesses a historic opportunity to establish a self-sustaining, state-controlled Department of Homeland Security that operates independently of federal policy fluctuations ([U.S. Const. art. I, § 9, cl. 1; U.S. Const. amend. X](#)). This legislative session, we have an opportunity to set the standard for interior enforcement in the nation.

Nothing is more fundamental to the continued existence of the states than their ability to defend their borders and protect their sovereignty. Without this authority, the structural balance between state and federal power collapses, thus undermining the constitutional system of dual sovereignty. The right of self-defense is inherent to statehood, ensuring that states retain the means to secure their citizens and territory when faced with external threats. The Constitution's text, our nation's federalist structure, and judicial precedent all support the states' robust right to self-defense, including the authority to repel invasions and prevent imminent threats.

This framework reflects the fundamental principle that states, as sovereign entities, retain essential self-preservation powers while participating in the broader national defense structure.

This is not just a law enforcement issue. It is not only a military or immigration challenge. This is a whole-of-society war—a multijurisdictional, multi-generational, and multi-agency campaign to preserve not only the United States, but the sovereignty and liberty of the Republic of Texas.

The words written in the Texas Declaration of Independence are as relevant today as they were in 1836: “[The enemy] has invaded our country both by sea and by land, with intent to lay waste our territory, and drive us from our homes; and has now a large mercenary army advancing, to carry on against us a war of extermination” ([Texas State Library and Archives Commission, 1836](#)).

And so, we must again heed the immortal call of Lieutenant Colonel William B. Travis, written from the walls of the Alamo: “Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism & everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all dispatch – The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily...” ([Travis, 1836](#)).

The enemy has returned—not in redcoats or battalions, but in cartels, proxies, and corrupted institutions. They do not merely aim to cross our border. They aim to dissolve it—to erase the very idea of national sovereignty.

Therefore, the need for a durable Texas homeland security infrastructure is not only a response to contemporary realities; it is a reaffirmation of the enduring principles upon which this nation was founded. A secure Texas is a secure America. The responsibility to protect citizens, uphold the rule of law, and defend sovereign territory cannot be outsourced or deferred. It must be exercised, owned, and operationalized—now.



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