



SB 1320 TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE

BY: AMMON BLAIR, APRIL 1, 2025

Chairman Flores, Vice Chairman Parker, and honorable members of the committee,

My name is Ammon Blair, and I am a Senior Fellow at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. I respectfully submit this written testimony in full support of Senate Bill 1320. I bring 22 years of military experience and extensive border security expertise from my service in the U.S. Army and U.S. Border Patrol. My roles have included serving as an Infantry Officer in Operation Lone Star, as a Collateral Intelligence Agent, and as a Marine Border Patrol Agent. Throughout my career, I have witnessed firsthand the threats posed by the Mexican cartels and weaponized mass migration.

This legislation is a timely and necessary step toward confronting an evolving and deeply rooted national security crisis—one that threatens not only the economic lifeblood of our state but the very integrity of our territory, institutions, and sovereignty. The theft of oil and gas from the Permian Basin and other production zones is not a local crime of opportunity. It is the domestic manifestation of transnational insurgency, and it is being orchestrated by designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations operating on U.S. soil ([U.S. Department of State, 2025](#)).

For too long, Texas has borne the burden of federal inaction ([Office of the Texas Governor, 2024](#)). Through Operation Lone Star, we have stood on the frontlines of the border crisis, enduring the daily toll of cartel-driven smuggling, human trafficking, and the systematic erosion of law and order in our rural counties and industrial corridors ([Office of the Texas Governor, n.d.](#)). Despite countless warnings, previous administrations allowed mass migration to spiral out of control ([Humire, 2025](#); [McCormick Sanchez, 2024](#)). The result has been the sustained occupation of key terrain within Texas by organized criminal networks—many of whom now operate with the same capabilities, tactics, and intentions as foreign terrorist cells ([Allen, 2023](#); [Office of the Texas Governor, 2023](#)).

Senate Bill 1320 proposes the establishment of an Organized Oilfield Theft Prevention Unit within the Department of Public Safety. I support this legislation and the leadership behind it because it finally recognizes that organized petroleum theft is not merely a criminal enterprise, but a coordinated campaign of economic sabotage carried out by networks like the Sinaloa Cartel, Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), Cartel del Golfo, and Tren de Aragua (TDA). These groups are now designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations ([U.S. Department of State, 2025](#)). Their operations include the use of counterintelligence, encrypted communications, drone-based ISR, GPS spoofing, co-optation of contractors, and coercion of illegal aliens as logistical assets under conditions tantamount to indentured servitude ([McCormick Sanchez, 2025](#); [Giaritelli, 2024](#)).

The oil and gas industry is now a targeted domain, both economically and operationally ([Gonzalez, 2024](#); [Blankley, 2025](#)). The same routes used for the past three decades to move narcotics are being used to siphon crude, refined petroleum, and critical infrastructure components from the Permian Basin ([National Drug Intelligence Center, 2007](#)). The logistical supply chains are already in place: highways, stash houses, fraudulently registered tankers, forged manifests, and corrupted midstream subcontractors. These are not emergent threats. They are matured capabilities being activated in a new theater of operations: Texas oil country ([Roach, 2024](#)).

Tren de Aragua represents a particularly dangerous vector. This Venezuelan Foreign Terrorist Organization, which originated in the Tócorón prison under the command of Héctor Guerrero, has expanded into a full-fledged transnational criminal enterprise. Its operational model is centralized, brutal, and adaptable ([Venezuela Investigative Unit, 2023](#)).

TDA is embedded in the Venezuelan illegal alien enclaves across Texas, particularly in El Paso, Odessa, Midland, Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston ([Alanis Amaya & Batalova, 2025](#)). Their expansion has followed the exact trajectory of the invasion into the U.S. They have used these population flows not only as cover, but as recruitment pools, coercion targets, and operational platforms. TDA now engages in petroleum theft, human trafficking, extortion, and cartel-aligned logistical operations ([Durden, 2024](#)).

It must be clearly understood that while the proposed DPS unit is an important step, it alone will not be sufficient to defeat this threat. What we are witnessing requires a coordinated, statewide—and ultimately national—task force approach rooted in intelligence, interagency integration, and operational readiness. The tools exist. They must be employed with urgency.

President Donald Trump's executive order of January 20, 2025—"Protecting the American People Against Invasion"—has fundamentally altered the federal posture on immigration enforcement ([Exec. Order No. 14159, 2025](#)). It invoked the Guarantee Clause of Article IV, Section 4 of the U.S. Constitution and recognized the need for state authority to confront the ongoing invasion of illegal aliens ([U.S. Const. art. IV § 4](#)). On January 23, 2025, the Acting Secretary of Homeland Security issued a formal "Finding of Mass Influx of Aliens," invoking 28 C.F.R. § 65.83 to authorize direct cooperation between state and local agencies and federal immigration authorities ([Department of Homeland Security, 2025](#); [28 C.F.R. § 65.83](#)).

Most notably, the reactivation of the 287(g) Task Force Model under INA § 103(a)(10) provides for the deputization of state and local law enforcement to exercise full immigration authority, with consent and training ([U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2025](#)). This model is designed for precisely the kind of hybrid threat environment Texas now faces. It recognizes that immigration enforcement, counterterrorism, and transnational organized crime suppression are overlapping missions.

The Organized Oilfield Theft Prevention Unit envisioned by SB 1320 must be integrated into this broader architecture. It must become the nucleus of a counterterrorism task force model focused specifically on the protection of Texas energy infrastructure. This means fusing real-time intelligence, field operations, legal authorities, prosecutorial tools, and community engagement into a single, unified effort. It means deploying all-of-government capabilities—DPS, sheriff's offices, the Texas State Guard, the National Guard, immigration authorities, local prosecutors, private sector partners, and federal agencies—to harden critical infrastructure and dismantle the adversary networks operating within our borders.

Texas must lead the nation in the development of this model. No other state possesses our proximity to the threat, our exposure to its consequences, or our constitutional authority to act. SB 1320 gives us a foundation. Let us build upon it decisively.

For the security of our people, the integrity of our borders, and the protection of our economy, I ask for strong consideration of Senate Bill 1320—and further request this committee to frame it as the first operational front in a broader counterterrorism and homeland defense mission to eradicate these threats from our soil. Thank you.

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