



Texas Military Forces News

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MEDIA ADVISORY

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FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLIC RELEASE:

Texas Military Forces' to Assist State Search Teams With Recovery of Deceased Victims in Brooks County

CAMP MABRY, Texas (Sept. 19, 2014)- The Texas State Guard and the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) have established special search teams to assist the Brooks County Sheriff's Office with locating and recovering human remains in remote areas north of the Texas-Mexico border. The majority of the remains are suspected to be those of undocumented immigrants who died attempting to avoid detection while entering the United States. The first of these search missions began this week and will continue through the weekend.

"For many years law enforcement and landowners in this area have been overwhelmed by the tragic impacts of human smuggling across our county," said Brooks County Sheriff Rey Rodriguez. "We are grateful for the assistance these search teams will provide in locating the numerous individuals who have lost their lives. Each of these victims – regardless of how or why their lives ended in our community – deserve the dignity of being found, and if possible, returned to their families for proper interment."

This effort is not a part of Operation Strong Safety. However, the deceased remains being recovered in Brooks County are primarily suspected to be individuals who were smuggled and trafficked into the country by the Mexican cartels and criminal operatives exploiting security gaps along the Texas-Mexico border. Since 2011, at least 332 sets of human remains have been recovered in Brooks County alone.

"We know that Brooks County is home to a busy drug and human trafficking route used by Mexican cartels – and it has been for far too long," said DPS Director Steven McCraw. "Tragically, many individuals have died while traversing this area, and DPS is committed to assisting our law enforcement partners in Brooks County in addressing these challenges and locating these victims."

"Our organization stands ready to serve Texas using our search and recovery skill sets toward this important recovery mission," said Brig. Gen. Patrick Hamilton, Commander-Domestic Operations Task Force, Texas Military Forces. "By supporting the Brooks County Sheriff's Office in this mission, the Texas State Guard is reinforcing our enduring partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies, while helping others find a sense of closure."

When requested by the Brooks County Sheriff's Office, these specially trained teams of approximately 20 to 25 personnel will be called upon for several days at a time to search for human remains in the area. These searches will largely be conducted on private property, and the Brooks County Sheriff's Office will coordinate with landowners in those cases. The Texas State Guardsmen, who will be conducting the actual searches, are trained in search and rescue/recovery operations, and will be utilizing a number of resources and methods during these missions, including but not limited to using all-terrain vehicles, cadaver dogs, grid searches and medical support personnel. Security support during these searches will be provided by DPS troopers or U.S. Border Patrol agents, who will also provide specialized resources for these recovery missions. During these missions, if the search teams encounter criminal actors or individuals who are suspected to be or admitted in the country illegally, those individuals will be referred to the appropriate law enforcement officials.

Every discovery of human remains must be handled as a crime scene, including proper evidence collection and processing, reporting, autopsy, etc. The Texas Rangers may provide investigative support for these cases when requested.

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The mission of the Texas Military Forces (TXMF) is to provide the Governor and the President with ready and trained forces in support of the citizens of Texas and State and Federal civil/military authorities at home and abroad.

The Texas Military Forces are commanded by the Adjutant General of Texas, the state's senior military official appointed by the governor, and is comprised of the Texas Military Department (formerly the Adjutant General's Department), the Texas Army National Guard (TXARNG), the Texas Air National Guard (TXANG), the Texas State Guard (TXSG) and the Domestic Operations Command (DOMOPS).

For more information about the Texas Military Forces visit our Website at www.txmf.us.