



## **Operation Lone Star: Unaccountable Bureaucracy and Weapons of War**

Immigration is a complex issue that requires systematic change at the federal level as well as international cooperation to address human migratory patterns holistically. Operation Lone Star is a state-level, executive-branch campaign that is actively hurting Texans and migrants, and diverting funding from other important programs. Texas should terminate Operation Lone Star in its entirety and reapply funds currently spent on it to the critical programs and services from which those funds have been extracted.



Though immigration policy is under federal jurisdiction, Texas has consistently sought to influence migration for the past two decades. Texas has funded several operations as well as other measures to disincentivize migration to the state and crack down on drug trafficking. Funding has continued to rise with last year's budget quadrupling spending on border security.

### **Operation Lone Star**

Operation Lone Star is a law enforcement and military campaign that began as an attempt to curb immigration into Texas and

“crack down” on transnational crime with an emphasis on the transportation and selling of fentanyl. In March of 2021 Gov. Abbott declared a state of emergency at the Texas border and initiated Operation Lone Star.

The operation initially included the mobilization of 10,000 national guardsmen to patrol the Texas border (the number has since been reduced to around 5,500); the utilization of DPS and other state agencies' resources for mass arrests of mostly single migrant men for trespassing; the construction of border barriers; and other activities such as busing migrants to northern cities.

You shall neither vex a stranger nor oppress him,  
for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Exodus 22:21





### Operation Lone Star Funding Has Increased

FY 08-09	\$108 million
FY 10-11	\$120 million
FY 12-13	\$222 million
FY 14-15	\$511 million
FY 16-17	\$800 million
FY 18-19	\$800 million
FY 20-21	\$801 million
FY 22-23	\$4 billion

Source: Legislative Budget Board

### Operation Lone Star Has Not Diminished Border Crossings

	2021	2022
April	107,500	123,000
May	106,500	135,600
June	116,700	123,800
October	90,600	132,700
November	98,300	135,400
December	100,400	140,000

Source: US Customs and Border Patrol



Some of Operation Lone Star’s tactics have involved recruitment of local law enforcement partners. For example, sherriffs have been invited to join the campaign, and counties have been offered incentives to participate in mass arrests for trespassing.

According to the Governor’s website, officials under Operation Lone Star have apprehended 336,000 migrants and arrested more than 23,000, with more than 20,000 felony charges reported. An investigation by the Texas Tribune, The Marshall Project, and ProPublica found this data to be questionable, however, since it apparently counted arrests unrelated to the border or without evidence of involvement of officials associated with Operation Lone Star.

### Human Cost of Operation Lone Star

While Operation Lone Star does not appear to have impacted border crossings, it has resulted in significant civil rights abuses for migrants. There have been several reports by defense attorneys and migrants rights groups of immigrants arrested under Operation Lone Star being held in prison for months without charges being brought against them.

Operation Lone Star also has resulted in over-policing and racial profiling in border communities. The presence of law enforcement officials—including state troopers, local police, Customs and Border Patrol, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the National Guard—is vastly disproportionate per capita to the population of border communities, affecting community relationships with law enforcement.

Critics have pointed to Operation Lone Star as an improper use of the Texas National Guard. National Guardsmen are part-time military who have civilian careers. The operation disrupts their lives both socially and financially. These service men and women are doing the same work as Federal agencies without receiving the



degree of training; this has led to reports of low morale and incidents such as suicides of guardsmen, the drowning of a guardsmen attempting to save a migrant without proper water rescue training, and the shooting of a migrant. A total of 10 National Guard deaths have been attributed to Operation Lone Star.



## Catholic Principles of Migration

### **I. Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland.**

All persons have the right to find in their own countries the economic, political, and social opportunities to live in dignity and achieve a full life through the use of their God-given gifts. In this context, work that provides a just, living wage is a basic human need.

### **II. Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families.**

The Church recognizes that all the goods of the earth belong to all people. When persons cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families, they have a right to find work elsewhere in order to survive. Sovereign nations should provide ways to accommodate this right.

### **III. Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders.**

The Church recognizes the right of sovereign nations to control their territories but rejects such control when it is exerted merely for the purpose of acquiring additional wealth. More powerful economic nations, which have the ability to protect and feed their residents, have a strong obligation to accommodate migration flows.

### **IV. Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection.**

Those who flee wars and persecution should be protected by the global community. This requires, at a minimum, that migrants have a right to claim refugee status without incarceration and to have their claims fully considered by a competent authority.

### **V. The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.**

Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity that should be respected. Often they are subject to punitive laws and harsh treatment by enforcement officers from both receiving and transit countries. Government policies that respect the basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary.

US Conference of Catholic Bishops

# THE WAY FORWARD FOR TEXAS

- ★ End Operation Lone Star and reallocate funding to crucial state programs
- ★ Cease the arrests of migrants for trespassing and instead place them in immigration processes
- ★ Strengthen oversight to protect migrants from abuse in detention facilities
- ★ Support limits on executive authority to declare disasters under the Texas Disaster Act

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