



2013

***TEXAS PUBLIC SAFETY  
THREAT OVERVIEW***

UNCLASSIFIED



# **Texas Public Safety Threat Overview 2013**

A State Intelligence Estimate

Produced by the Texas Department of Public Safety

In collaboration with other law enforcement and homeland security agencies

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## Executive Summary

(U) Texas faces the full spectrum of threats, and the state's vast size, geography, and large population present unique challenges to public safety and homeland security. Texas employs a systematic approach to detect, assess, and prioritize public safety threats within seven categories: crime, terrorism, motor vehicle crashes, natural disasters, public health threats, industrial accidents and cyber threats.

(U) Crime threatens the safety, security and freedom of people. Sadly, one needs only to look to our neighbor to the south to view the impact that organized crime can have on a nation and its citizens. Some 60,000 men and woman have been killed in Mexico since 2006, with a substantial number of brutal tortures and beheadings.

(U) Index crimes measured by the Uniform Crime Reporting system have decreased throughout Texas and the nation, which is encouraging, as the eight index crimes include homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, larceny, and arson. These are referred to as index crimes because they were selected in the 1930s to provide an index of the general level of criminal activity. From 2010 to 2011, the most recent year for which complete data is available, the volume of index crimes in Texas declined 6.4 percent and the crime rate declined 8.3 percent. Compared to 2001, the volume of index crimes in 2011 declined 9.2 percent and the crime rate decreased by 24.6 percent.

(U) This is good news, as the reduction in these crimes in both number and per capita improves the safety in our communities. An important caveat to the decreased numbers is that the eight index crimes do not reflect the general level of organized crime activity, which also affects the safety, security, and quality of life in our communities. There is not sufficient crime reporting data at this time in Texas to determine if crime is being reduced as reflected in the index crimes, or if it is simply being replaced by other crimes that also impact the safety and security of communities but that are not currently measured by this system.

(U) For example, the majority of the crimes committed in Texas by the Mexican cartels and transnational and state-wide gangs go unreported, and include crimes such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, kidnapping, extortion, public corruption, money laundering, and the recruitment and use of children in criminal operations. If there were a national organized crime index in the Uniform Crime Report, Texas would most likely lead the nation as a direct result of Mexican cartel and gang activity along the border and throughout the state.

(U) The Mexican cartels are the most significant organized crime threat to Texas, with six of the eight cartels having command and control networks operating in the state and using it as a transshipment center for the movement of marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, and people into and throughout Texas and the nation, and transporting bulk cash, weapons, and stolen vehicles back to Mexico.

(U) The second most significant organized crime threat in Texas is the existence of state-wide prison gangs, many of whom now work directly with the Mexican cartels, gaining substantial profits from drug and human trafficking, including prostitution. Prison gangs operate within and

## Texas Public Safety Threat Overview 2013

outside of prison and are responsible for a disproportionate amount of violent crime. With access to the large profits from drug and human trafficking, they are less dependent upon robberies, burglaries, and larcenies as a source of income.

(U) The impact of crime on children is multifaceted and a serious public safety concern. The tragic murder of 20 first grade girls and boys at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut is a bitter reminder of how vulnerable children are to crime in Texas. The Mexican cartels, Texas gangs, and other criminals engage in child trafficking for the sexual enslavement of children to profit from the pedophiles who seek them out. These same organizations recruit our children as criminal labor along the Texas-Mexico border, and use them to conduct criminal operations on both sides of the border. Gangs have expanded their operations into prostitution and they seek out runaways and vulnerable children to compel them into prostitution by guile and force. During 2012 alone, Texas State Troopers identified and rescued 29 such children being transported on the highways between cities. There are currently 76,272 sex offenders registered in Texas, and at least 60,871 of these offenders had a child victim. Additionally, drug traffickers and gangs have introduced heroin called “cheese” into Texas middle schools and high schools in the Dallas area with tragic consequences.

(U) Another crime-related public safety concern exists from criminal aliens, who may not be affiliated with the cartels and gangs but act alone to commit crime in Texas. From October 2008 to December 2012, Texas identified a total of 141,982 unique criminal alien defendants booked into Texas county jails. These individuals, identified through the Secure Communities initiative, are responsible for at least 447,844 individual criminal charges over their criminal careers, including 2,032 homicides and 5,048 sexual assaults.

(U) The threat of terrorism is ever-present as global terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda and Hezbollah still seek to destroy the U.S. and our way of life through asymmetric tactics. Most recently, terrorism has become disaggregated with individual and would-be terrorists acting alone engaged in jihad. Nidal Hasan is the most prominent example of this type of terrorist, killing 13 U.S. servicemen at Fort Hood, Texas on November 5, 2009. Over the past five years in Texas, there have been four other Islamic extremist plots and two antigovernment terrorist plots.

(U) Other terrorist activities in Texas include fundraising in support of terrorism. Hezbollah, which is closely associated with Iran, has long been operating in the Tri-Border area of South America: Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil. Most recently, there have been reports that Hezbollah is operating in Mexico. Some reports suggest that Hezbollah may be collaborating with the Mexican cartels, but at this time the Texas Department of Public Safety does not possess sufficient specific or credible information to confirm that this is indeed happening.

(U) There have been documented incidents of foreign nationals with links to terrorism entering the U.S. from Mexico using existing human trafficking and human smuggling networks operated by the cartels, though not in an active conspiracy with the cartels.

(U) Motor vehicle crashes killed 3,353 people in Texas in 2012. The high volume of commercial motor vehicles on Texas’ roadways, including some that violate the law and operate unsafely, is a particular concern because of the increased potential for loss of life and serious bodily injury when the large mass of a commercial vehicle is involved in a crash.

## Texas Public Safety Threat Overview 2013

(U) Natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes and tropical storms, tornadoes, drought, and wildfires represent a continued and highly unpredictable public safety threat. These disasters result in deaths, loss of infrastructure, and billions of dollars in personal property damage and economic losses.

(U) Emerging infectious viruses such as West Nile, which has been responsible for 95 deaths in Texas since 2010, and reemerging infectious diseases such as highly drug resistant tuberculosis are a serious concern to health professionals and the public because of their potential health consequences to people and animals.

(U) Major industrial accidents are a potential threat to public safety, considering the large industrial base in Texas, which includes the petrochemical industry, 212,000 miles of regulated gas and oil pipeline, and the tons of hazardous materials that are shipped by rail across 10,384 miles of freight rail track, some of which is in the most populated areas of the state. It is important to note that the state's large and varied industrial base operates safely for the large majority of the time, and that serious accidents are rare.

(U) Cyber threats are an emerging area of concern, and have the potential to cause serious consequences to Texas. We are particularly concerned about the threat to critical infrastructure and agencies that provide essential services to the public, including utilities, public health, firefighting, and law enforcement.