



TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE
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PRESS RELEASE

Commissioner Buckingham Holds Press Conference on the Success of Operation Flat Top and Agreement with Texas DPS

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AUSTIN — On Monday, February 12th, Texas Land Commissioner Dawn Buckingham, M.D. held a press conference with Regional Director for the South Texas Region of the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), Victor Escalon, and Brigadier General Tanya Trout of the Texas Military Department (TMD). The press conference was held to discuss the success of Operation Flat Top through interagency cooperation as well as announce a partnership between DPS and GLO.

"During my time in the Texas Senate, I worked tirelessly to provide our law enforcement with the tools necessary to keep Texans safe," said Commissioner Buckingham. "Every day our Texas Military Department and our law enforcement they stand in harms way to protect the residents and citizens of Texas. As Land Commissioner, I will continue to seek creative solutions with our state partners to promote law and order in the Lone Star State."



Brigadier General Tanya Trout of TMD and Texas Land Commissioner Dawn Buckingham, M.D.

Regarding Fronton Island, DPS Regional Director Victor Escalon said, "There is a history there of troopers, border patrol agents, being shot at, being hit, land owners and farmers that operate there on a daily basis and they have to see this type of activity... Commissioner Buckingham found a way and allowed us freedom of movement, which is important for law enforcement and military, to go in there and make an impact on that safety."

"I truly believe what Mr. Escalon said is correct," said Brigadier General Tanya Trout. "It's this interagency partnership, it's the organizational skills that our team brings, our engineering team behind us. It's that success that we're able to do something to create a safe haven in the area that in the past had not... We just want to continue to build on that. We continue to use every opportunity as we do with Operation Lone Star to secure the border [and] create better interagency partners in the long run."



Regional Director for the S. TX Region of DPS, Victor Escalon and Texas Land Commissioner Dawn Buckingham, M.D

On September 7, 2023, the Texas General Land Office granted DPS access to Fronton Island after determining the 170-acre property is Texas owned land. Fronton Island has been used by multiple Cartels to push guns, ammunition, drugs, bombs, and human trafficking victims unobstructed through our southern border, threatening the safety of all those who work along the border and Texas communities.

On November 27, 2023, Operation Flat Top was completed as DPS, in partnership with TMD, had cleared the island of all vegetation and leveled it, making it virtually impossible for cartel members to use this property to evade law enforcement. Since the beginning of Operation Flat Top, there has been a 100% decrease in Cartel activity.

On December 8, 2023, GLO and DPS entered into a Right of Entry Agreement that allows DPS to operate and maintain temporary fencing along the Rio Grande on GLO's property in Starr County. This agreement will help both cooperating state agencies accomplish what the federal government refuses to do: safeguard Texas communities and assist our state in its robust border security efforts.

During the press conference, both DPS and TMD received Operational Certificates to applaud their bravery and dedication to service while participating in Operation Flat Top. Their courage has helped ensure the safety of Texas communities and further reinforced Texas' border security.

GLO continues to work with DPS to find GLO land that can be used to build a new regional office. Similarly, GLO is also working with TMD to find GLO land to build a training center in South Texas.

DPS Regional Director Victor Escalon presented Commissioner Buckingham with a frame containing a Highway Patrol patch and Studies and Observation Group patch worn by DPS members who cleared the border island. Additionally, she was gifted with the original Texas flag flown over Fronton Island upon completion of Operation Flat Top.