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# First Texas Ranger Lassos Executive Leaders Program

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# First Texas Ranger Lassos Executive Leaders Program

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U.S. Navy photo by Javier Chagoya

*By Javier Chagoya*

Texas Ranger J.D. Robertson, the first ever Texas Ranger to walk the halls of NPS, looks the part of the historically, unyielding lawman. His stature is straight and tall, fixed blue eyes, well proportioned frame of a head, all topped with an impeccable cattleman's, fur felt hat – not a cowboy hat. He's one of 34-law enforcement and government officials, who recently completed the nine-month Executive Leaders Certificate Program in NPS' Center for Homeland Security Studies. (CHDS-ELP).

Robertson's rank in the Texas Rangers is Major. He heads the Special Operations Group out of Austin, Texas, where he is responsible for a host of expert teams in special weapons and tactics, bomb squad, reconnaissance, special response, crisis negotiations, and border security. He's the one they call on when things get critical ...for the entire state of Texas. So what can this seasoned enforcer learn in the classroom that he doesn't already know from the hard scrabble of 26-years on the streets and frontier?

"The Naval Postgraduate School and the Center for Homeland Defense and Security are institutions with a long and legendary history of providing excellent Executive level education. There are multiple asymmetrical threats facing Homeland Security leaders today in a wide variety of areas including but not limited to terrorism, cyber security, critical infrastructure and natural disasters," said Robertson. "The CHDS-ELP program brings together leaders from the many multidisciplinary fields in homeland security with the premise of providing advanced discussion on critical threat topics presented by leading experts. In this environment, leaders gain different perspectives in dealing with these threats in a collaborative problem-solving atmosphere, which builds trust and respect for the various perspective's in dealing with these challenges."

Robertson's career has encompassed a wide range of duties, including serving as an officer of the Texas Highway Patrol and the Texas Department of Public Safety. But his calling for taking on greater responsibilities flourished in the last decade with opportunities that have put him in the forefront of the state's incredibly burgeoning drug and human trafficking problems. He was ready.

"In 2006, Transnational Criminal Organizations began to exploit vulnerabilities in the Texas Border region, capitalizing on the diverse terrain of Texas in smuggling ton-quantities of drugs and human cargo across the border," said Robertson. "I was fortunate to be selected to a special unit created to operate in areas where conventional law enforcement could not effectively deal with the transnational criminal groups.

"Over time that position allowed me to develop a set of skills in dealing with issues related to critical incidents and border security related issues," added Robertson.

In 2010, Robertson assumed command of the Department of Public Safety's Special Weapons and Tactics team, which further developed his skills in dealing with critical incident management and resolution.

With the growing escalation in illegal drug trafficking, human smuggling and escalation of violence in the Texas Border region, the Department of Public Safety Director, combined the Special tactical operations units under a single Commander in October of 2011 to address these threats in a task force initiative.

"At the time of the formation of the Special Operations Group, I was again fortunate to have developed and honed the skills needed to lead this diverse and highly specialized group of units in a combined effort to provide a unique

and specialized application of tactical law enforcement to a growing problem," explained Robertson.

Over the course of the past nine months, Robertson's own tactical experience and savvy has served as a major contribution to the ELP's participants, an aggregate of the nation's local, tribal, state, federal government, and private sector homeland security officials. Robertson has the highest regard for his colleagues and considers them as equals. However, it's his special law enforcement pedigree that sets him apart, so much so that he's been invited several times to lecture in the CHDS program.

"Having engaged extensively in a collaborative environment and various social settings through the course of study, I have learned the members of the cohort have the highest level of integrity and character you would expect of executive leaders. The quality of personnel, as well as instructors, has exceeded my expectations in many ways. I have also developed professional and personal relationships that will benefit collaborative information sharing on Homeland Security issues for years to come," added Robertson.

The CHDS Executive Leaders Program requires nine-months of continuous enrollment and coursework, which includes four one-week seminar sessions in residence.