DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Office of the Secretary

Determination Pursuant to Section 102 of the
Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996,
as Amended

AGENCY: Office of the Secretary, Department of Homeland Security.

ACTION: Notice of determination.

SUMMARY: The Secretary of Homeland Security has determined, pursuant to law, that it is necessary to waive certain laws, regulations, and other legal requirements in order to ensure the expeditious construction of barriers and roads in the vicinity of the international land border in Yuma County, Arizona.

DATES: This determination takes effect on [INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Important mission requirements of the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) include border security and the detection and prevention of illegal entry into the United States. Border security is critical to the nation’s national security. Recognizing the critical importance of border security, Congress has mandated DHS to achieve and maintain operational control of the international land border. Secure Fence Act of 2006, Public Law 109-367, section 2, 120 Stat. 2638 (Oct. 26, 2006) (8 U.S.C. 1701 note). Congress defined “operational control” as the prevention of all unlawful entries into the United States, including entries by terrorists, other unlawful aliens, instruments of terrorism, narcotics, and other contraband. Id. Consistent with that mandate from Congress, the President’s Executive Order on Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements directed executive
departments and agencies to deploy all lawful means to secure the southern border. Executive Order 13767, section 1. In order to achieve that end, the President directed, among other things, that I take immediate steps to prevent all unlawful entries into the United States, including the immediate construction of physical infrastructure to prevent illegal entry. Executive Order 13767, section 4(a).

Determination and Waiver:

Section 1

United States Border Patrol’s Yuma Sector is an area of high illegal entry. In fiscal year 2018, the United States Border Patrol (“Border Patrol”) apprehended over 26,000 illegal aliens attempting to enter the United States between border crossings in the Yuma Sector. Also in fiscal year 2018, the Border Patrol had over 1,400 separate drug-related events between border crossings in the Yuma Sector, through which it seized over 8,000 pounds of marijuana, over 78 pounds of cocaine, over 102 pounds of heroin, and over 1,700 pounds of methamphetamine. Additionally, Yuma County, Arizona, which is located in the Yuma Sector, has been identified as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area by the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Due to the high levels of illegal entry of people and drugs within the Yuma Sector, I must use my authority under Section 102 of IIRIRA to install additional physical barriers and roads in the Yuma Sector. Therefore, DHS will take immediate action to replace existing barriers in the Yuma Sector. The project will occur within two segments of the border in the Yuma Sector. The first is southeast of the Andrade Port of Entry and runs south along the international border adjacent to the Colorado River. The second is situated on the eastern edge of the Barry M. Goldwater Range. The segments within which such construction will occur are referred to herein as the “project area” and are more specifically described in Section 2 below.

The existing barriers within the project area include both vehicle fencing and outmoded pedestrian fencing that no longer meet the United States Border Patrol’s operational needs. The construction of vehicle barriers in the project area initially curtailed illegal vehicular crossings. However, transnational criminal organizations have adapted their tactics by smuggling illicit cargo by foot, cutting the barrier, or driving over it, which has prompted the need for the
construction of a more effective barrier. The design of the existing pedestrian barrier makes it susceptible to being breached and repeated damage to the existing fencing has made it less effective. The existing vehicle barriers and outmoded pedestrian fencing will be replaced with an eighteen to thirty foot barrier that employs a more operationally effective design. In addition, roads will be constructed or improved and lighting will be installed.

To support DHS’s action under Section 102 of IIRIRA, DHS requested that the Department of Defense, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 284(b)(7), assist by constructing fence, roads, and lighting within the Yuma Sector in order to block drug smuggling corridors across the international boundary between the United States and Mexico. The Acting Secretary of Defense has concluded that the support requested satisfies the statutory requirements of 10 U.S.C. 284(b)(7), and that the Department of Defense will provide such support in the project area described in Section 2 below.

Section 2

I determine that the following areas in the vicinity of the United States border, located in the State of Arizona within the United States Border Patrol’s Yuma Sector, are areas of high illegal entry (the “project area”):

- Starting at the Morelos Dam and extending south and generally following the Colorado River for approximately five and one-half (5.5) miles.

- Starting two and one-half (2.5) miles east of Border Monument 198 and extending east to Border Monument 197.

There is presently an acute and immediate need to construct physical barriers and roads in the vicinity of the border of the United States in order to prevent unlawful entries into the United States in the project area pursuant to sections 102(a) and 102(b) of IIRIRA. In order to ensure
the expeditious construction of the barriers and roads in the project area, I have determined that it is necessary that I exercise the authority that is vested in me by section 102(c) of IIRIRA.

Accordingly, pursuant to section 102(c) of IIRIRA, I hereby waive in their entirety, with respect to the construction of physical barriers and roads (including, but not limited to, accessing the project area, creating and using staging areas, the conduct of earthwork, excavation, fill, and site preparation, and installation and upkeep of physical barriers, roads, supporting elements, drainage, erosion controls, safety features, lighting, cameras, and sensors) in the project area, all of the following statutes, including all federal, state, or other laws, regulations, and legal requirements of, deriving from, or related to the subject of, the following statutes, as amended:
This waiver does not revoke or supersede previous waivers published in the Federal Register on January 19, 2007 (72 FR 2535) and April 8, 2008 (73 FR 19078), which shall remain in full force and effect in accordance with their terms. I reserve the authority to execute further waivers from time to time as I may determine to be necessary under section 102 of IIRIRA.

Dated: April 18, 2019.

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Kevin K. McAleenan,
Acting Secretary of Homeland Security

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