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 Acting 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 Val Verde County, Texas, and Maverick County, Texas.

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

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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

The United States Border Patrol’s Del Rio Sector is an area of high illegal entry. In fiscal year 2019, the United States Border Patrol (“Border Patrol”) apprehended over 57,000 illegal aliens attempting to enter the United States between border crossings in the Del Rio Sector. Also in fiscal year 2019, there were over 146 drug-related events between border crossings in the Del Rio Sector, through which Border Patrol seized over 40 pounds of marijuana, over 15 pounds of cocaine, over 24 pounds of heroin, and over 195 pounds of methamphetamine. Additionally, Val Verde County, Texas, and Maverick County, Texas, which are located in the Del Rio Sector, have 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 Del Rio Sector, I must use my authority under section 102 of IIRIRA to install additional physical barriers and roads in the Del Rio Sector. Therefore, DHS will take immediate action to replace existing pedestrian fencing in the Del Rio Sector. The segments within which such construction will occur are referred to herein as the “project areas” and are more specifically described in Section 2 below.

The current pedestrian barrier in the Del Rio Sector does not provide the level of impedance necessary to effectively secure the border. Transnational criminal organizations frequently defeat and exploit the existing fencing for narcotics and human smuggling due to its inferior design and dilapidated condition. Construction of new fencing with a more operational effective design will allow Border Patrol to secure the border more effectively. Within the project areas roads will also be constructed or improved and lighting will be installed.
To support DHS’s action under section 102 of IIRIRA, I requested that the Secretary of Defense, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 284(b)(7), assist by constructing fence, roads, and lighting within the Del Rio Sector in order to block drug smuggling corridors across the international boundary between the United States and Mexico. The 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 areas 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 Texas within the United States Border Patrol’s Del Rio Sector, are areas of high illegal entry (the “project areas”):

- Starting approximately two and one-half (2.5) miles north and west of the Del Rio Port of Entry and extending south and east for approximately three and one-half (3.5) miles; and
- Starting approximately one-half (0.5) mile south of the Eagle Pass II Port of Entry and extending north for approximately three (3) miles.

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 areas 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 areas, 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 areas, 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 areas, 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 any other waiver determination made pursuant to section 102(c) of IIRIRA. Such waivers 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.


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Chad F. Wolf,
Acting Secretary of Homeland Security

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