

President signs law to build border fence

By STEPHEN LOSEY

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President Bush signed a bill Oct. 26 ordering the Homeland Security Department to build more than 700 miles of double-layered fence along the U.S.-Mexico border as part of an effort to stop illegal immigration.

"The United States has not been in complete control of our borders for decades, and, therefore, illegal immigration has been on the rise," Bush said in a signing ceremony at the White House. "By making wise use of physical barriers and deploying 21st century technology, we're helping our Border Patrol agents do their job."

The Secure Fence Act orders Homeland Security to finish building the fences by the end of 2008. The fences will run:

- 10 miles in each direction from Tecate, Calif.
- More than 400 miles from Calexico, Calif., to Douglas, Ariz.
- About 60 miles from Columbus, N.M., to El Paso, Texas.
- About 55 miles from Del Rio, Texas, to Eagle Pass, Texas.
- About 200 miles from Laredo, Texas, to Brownsville, Texas.

Some Border Patrol agents question how effectively more fences will deter illegal immigration. Chris Bauder, president of the San Diego local National Border Patrol Council, said that fences will only make potential border crossers find new ways to sneak into the country.

San Diego has had border fences for two decades. The fences — one series of converted steel landing mats erected by California National Guard and another series of concrete bollards that allow animals and water to pass through — pushed border crossings further west into more remote desert areas, which are more dangerous to cross.

Bauder said that cracking down on those who employ illegal aliens, and thus drying up the market for illegal labor, is the only thing that will slow down illegal immigration.

Homeland Security has made increased worksite enforcement as part of its Secure Border Initiative. Boeing Co. in September won a \$2 billion contract called SBInet that will deploy a network of cameras and sensors along the border.

Congress is also concerned that Customs and Border Protection officers may not have enough authority, equipment and training to stop vehicles illegally entering the United States. The act orders Homeland Security to study the issue and report back to Congress in two months.

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