

LIGHTS TO SHINE ON BORDER INSTALLATION AIMED AT ILLEGAL CROSSINGS

San Jose Mercury News (California)

January 16, 1994 Sunday MORNING FINAL EDITION

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Section: CALIFORNIA NEWS; Pg. 3B

Length: 320 words

Byline: Associated Press

Dateline: San Diego

Body

The **Border** Patrol plans to **light** up all 14 miles of the U.S.-Mexico **border** in San Diego with powerful stadium **lights**.

It's part of a new strategy to prevent **illegal** immigrants from crossing the **border** rather than arresting them after they already get here, said Gustavo De la Vina, chief of the U.S. **Border** Patrol's Chula Vista sector.

The **Border** Patrol previously **installed** 24 stadium **lights** along the Tijuana River levee just west of the San Ysidro port of entry.

Now it has 70 more **lights** that it plans to deploy to the west, mainly in the marshy zone between the **border** and Imperial Beach, about 15 miles south of San Diego.

Ready by March

The **lights** should be in operation within two months, De la Vina said.

"That's my main mission right now," De la Vina said Friday in an interview with the San Diego Union Tribune. "I have to **light** up this **border**."

Muriel Watson, one of several local campaigners for immigration reform and founder of a group called "**Light** Up the **Border**," was ecstatic about the plans. "Yippee for the **lights**!" she said. "This sends an important message, that we are willing to control the **border** and enforce our immigration laws."

De la Vina said the key **border** zone is a two-mile stretch west of the San Ysidro port of entry, between Interstate 5 and the Pacific Ocean, the area of the heaviest volume of **illegal crossings** for the last few years.

Focused effort

"This is where I'm sending everything and everybody I possibly can," he said.

Slowly, the U.S. **Border** Patrol is shifting its emphasis from arresting **illegal border** crossers to preventing their crossing, an approach pioneered last fall in El Paso, Texas.

But the approach will not concentrate on a blockade-style operation of the entire San Diego zone, such as was launched by the **Border** Patrol last fall in El Paso. But it will deprive **illegal** crossers of their favorite crossing sites, De la Vina said.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: **BORDER** CONTROL (99%); TERRITORIAL & NATIONAL **BORDERS** (96%); IMMIGRATION (90%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (90%); SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE FORCES (90%); **ILLEGAL** IMMIGRANTS (89%); ARRESTS (77%); INTERVIEWS (71%); RIVERS (56%)

Company: SAN DIEGO UNION TRIBUNE (58%)

Organization: US CUSTOMS & **BORDER** PROTECTION (91%); US CUSTOMS & **BORDER** PROTECTION (91%)

Geographic: SAN DIEGO, CA, USA (94%); EL PASO, TX, USA (92%); TEXAS, USA (79%); CALIFORNIA, USA (79%); PACIFIC OCEAN (79%); NORTH AMERICA (93%); MEXICO (92%)

Load-Date: October 25, 2002