

INS targets dangerous border crossings

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Body

The Immigration and Naturalization Service on Thursday unveiled an array of new measures and high-tech devices to heighten security and safety along some of the most porous and **dangerous** stretches of the U.S.-Mexican **border**.

The changes focus on California's Imperial Valley, which has become an increasingly popular but perilous crossing point since a crackdown on illegal immigration closer to the Pacific Ocean.

Key elements of the federal government's new strategy include deployment of hovercraft and horseback units to patrol the All American Canal, stepped up helicopter surveillance, extended testing of non-lethal pepper ball launchers, and installation of six "rescue beacons" **in** the desert outside Yuma, Ariz.

The beacons are 30-foot-tall towers designed to emit a distress signal and are capped with strobe lights that can be spotted five miles away.

A metal plate posted at the base advises migrants **in** English and Spanish: "If you need help, push red button. U.S. **Border** Patrol will arrive **in** 1 hour. Do not leave this location."

Many of the measures will **target** the Imperial Valley, a region crisscrossed by irrigation waterways including the swift-moving All American Canal, where 17 people have drowned since Oct. 1.

The systems were announced by **INS** Commissioner James Ziglar during a tour of U.S. **Border** Patrol operations **in** Tucson and Yuma **in** Arizona, and Calexico and San Ysidro **in** California.

"These latest steps represent a major breakthrough **in** the ongoing effort to make the southern **border** safer for the people of both nations," Ziglar said.

Ziglar also announced an unprecedented agreement between the United States and Mexico to establish an "intelligence cell" **in** the El Centro area with a mission of helping identify, arrest and prosecute migrant smugglers on both sides of the **border**.

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