

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
U.S. Border Patrol Program Management Office Directorate

Consolidated Towers and Surveillance Equipment
Environmental Assessment

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

BACKGROUND

The Proposed Action consists of the deployment (i.e., installation, operation, maintenance, and repair) of fourteen (14) Consolidated Tower Surveillance Equipment (CTSE) in U.S Border Patrol's (USBP) El Paso Sector (EPT) EPT – Truth or Consequences (TCN), Santa Teresa (STN), Deming (DNM), and Lordsburg (LOB) Stations Area of Responsibility (AOR), New Mexico. The Proposed Action would provide long-term, persistent surveillance in the USBP EPT Area of Responsibility (AOR) and would greatly enhance viewshed capabilities for agents in the field as there is currently no long-range surveillance towers in area. The proposed CTSE sites are on federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – Las Cruces District Office (LCDO). Each CTSE would be equipped with a suite of sensors, radars and/or communications equipment to provide enhance surveillance capabilities. The CTSE would communicate with the Border Patrol Stations' Command and Control (C2) facilities. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been prepared for the Proposed Action.

The legal land descriptions are as follows:

Site Name	Land Description
Radars	The site is located at the Northeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of Section 11, Township 29 South, Range 9 West, Luna County, New Mexico, New Mexico Meridian
Vineyard	The site is located at the Northeast Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of Section 34, Township 29 South, Range 16 West, Hidalgo County, New Mexico, New Mexico Meridian
Microwave Tower	The site is located at the Southeast Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section 30, Township 27 South, Range 18 West, Hidalgo County, New Mexico, New Mexico Meridian
Old Animas	The site is located at the Northeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of Section 33 Township 26 South, Range 19 West, Hidalgo County, New Mexico, New Mexico Meridian
Chato Road	The site is located at the Southeast Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of Section 31, Township 24 South, Range 21 West, Hidalgo County, New Mexico, New Mexico Meridian
Hwy 9 MM2	The site is located at the Northeast Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section 29, Township 27 South, Range 21 West, Hidalgo County, New Mexico, New Mexico Meridian
Monument 5	The site is located at the Northwest Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section 17, Township 29 South, Range 2 East, Doña Ana County, New Mexico, New Mexico Meridian.
Monument 7	The site is located at the Northeast Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section 14, Township 29 South, Range 1 West Doña Ana County, New Mexico, New Mexico Meridian.
Monument 8 Alt	The site is located at the Southwest Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of Section 7, Township 29 South, Range 1 West, Doña Ana County, New Mexico, New Mexico Meridian.
Monument 11	The site is located at Northeast Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section 17, Township 29 South, Range 3 West, Doña Ana County, New Mexico, New Mexico Meridian.
Monument 13	The site is located at the Northwest Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section 18, Township 29 South, Range 4 West, Doña Ana County, New Mexico, New Mexico Meridian.
Monument 15	The site is located at the Northwest Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section 17, Township 29 South, Range 5 West, Luna County, New Mexico, New Mexico Meridian.
MM411	The site is located at the Southwest Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of Section 17, Township 29 South, Range 3 West, Doña Ana County, New Mexico, New Mexico Meridian
TCN Border Patrol Station	The site is located at the Northwest Quarter of the Northeast Quarter of Section 9, Township 13 South, Range 4 West, Sierra County, New Mexico, New Mexico Meridian

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on the EA (DOI-BLM-NM-L000-2024-0017-EA), which analyzes potential impacts from the **2024 Consolidated Towers and Surveillance Equipment**, and evaluating the criteria for considering the potentially affected area and degree of the effects of a specific action provided by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1501.3 (1) and (2) i-iv, I have determined that deployment of the relocatable CTSE, under the Proposed Action, does not

constitute a major federal action that would have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required.

The Proposed Action, the deployment (i.e., installation, operation, maintenance, and repair) of fourteen (14) Consolidated Tower Surveillance Equipment (CTSE) in USBP's El Paso Sector's (EPT) Area of Responsibility, and its effects have been evaluated in a manner consistent with the CEQ regulations for determining the potentially affected area and the degree of the effects. Per 40 CFR 1501.3 (1) and (2) i-iv, a determination of the degree of the effects of the action as used in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires consideration of both the affected area and the degree of the effect. The affected area refers to the setting in which the action would occur (national, regional, or local) and its resources. Significance varies with the setting of the Proposed Action. The degree of the effect refers to the severity of the impact. The degree of the effect relates to four criteria outlined in 40 CFR 1501.3 (2) i-iv. This FONSI is based on the affected area and degree of the effects of the Proposed Action.

AFFECTED AREA

Under the Proposed Action, the BLM would grant a right of way (ROW) for USBP to deploy (i.e., installation, operation, maintenance, and repair) of fourteen (14) CTSE in USBP's El Paso Sector's (EPT) - Truth or Consequences (TCN), Santa Teresa (STN), Deming (DNM), and Lordsburg (LOB) Stations' Area of Responsibility (AOR) in New Mexico

CTSE deployments would occur in Doña Ana, Luna, Hidalgo, and Sierra Counties with a total acreage of 3.2 acres, with 1.2 acres (38%) of 3.2 acres that would be permanently impacted. The site preparation and tower deployments at these sites would be consisted with the White Sands and Mimbres Resource Management Plans.

DEGREE OF EFFECTS

The following discussion is organized around the four criteria described at 40 CFR 1501.3(2)i-iv.

1. *Both short- and long-term effects.*

Long-term and short-term effects from relocatable CTSE deployment (i.e., installation, operation, maintenance, and repair) would be assessed during permitting approval processes and a site-specific basis. If the towers are deployed, the following general impacts should be expected:

- Long-term impacts on land use, vegetation, and wildlife habitat. Design features would be implemented to reduce some of these effects.
- Short-term impacts from temporary CTSE deployment footprint to land use, vegetation, wildlife habitat.

Table 2. Summary of Duration of Effects and Associated Significance Conclusions

Issue (EA Section)	Short-term Effects and Significance Conclusions	Long-term Effects and Significance Conclusions
Issue 1: How would ground-disturbing activities from Consolidated Tower & Surveillance Equipment (CTSE) construction and operation activities potentially impact land use??	3.2 acres of rangeland would temporarily be impacted from tower deployment.	1.2 acres of rangeland would be permanently converted for tower deployment.
Issue 2: How would ground-disturbing activities from Consolidated Tower & Surveillance Equipment (CTSE) construction and operation activities potentially impact vegetation resources?	3.2 acres of vegetation would temporarily be impacted from tower deployment.	1.2 acres of vegetation would be permanently impacted from tower deployment.
Issue 3: How would ground-disturbing activities from Consolidated Tower & Surveillance Equipment (CTSE) construction and operation activities potentially impact wildlife habitat?	3.2 acres of wildlife habitat would temporarily be impacted from tower deployment.	1.2 acres of wildlife habitat would be permanently impacted from tower deployment.

2. Both beneficial and adverse effects.

Potentially beneficial and adverse impacts related to the Proposed Action are disclosed and analyzed in EA Section 3.6. The potential for adverse impacts to the resources examined in Sections 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5. The potential for adverse impacts to the resources examined would not be significant with the application of design features within the EA.

Table 3. Summary of Issues Analyzed in Detail

Issue (EA Section)	Summary of Issues Analyzed in Detail (further discussed in EA Chapter 3) and Significance Conclusions
Issue 1: How would ground-disturbing activities from Consolidated Tower & Surveillance Equipment (CTSE) construction and operation activities potentially impact land use? (EA Section 3.3)	3.2 acres of the rangeland would be temporarily impacted, and 1.2 acres of rangeland would be permanently impacted
Issue 2: How would ground-disturbing activities from Consolidated Tower & Surveillance Equipment (CTSE) construction and operation activities potentially impact vegetation resources? (EA Section 3.4)	3.2 acres of vegetation would be temporarily impacted, and 1.2 acres of vegetation be permanently impacted
Issue 3: How would ground-disturbing activities from Consolidated Tower & Surveillance Equipment (CTSE) construction and operation activities potentially impact wildlife habitat? (EA Section 3.5)	3.2 acres of wildlife habitat would be temporarily impacted, and 1.2 acres of vegetation be permanently impacted.

3. Effects on public health and safety.

The combination of hazardous materials and other health and safety risks associated with deployment and operation of the 14 relocatable CTSEs in conjunction with similar health and safety concerns for other reasonably foreseeable projects across the Planning Area is expected to be negligible. All sites would have to comply with state and federal requirements pertaining to worker safety and the use, storage, transports,

and disposal of debris and hazardous materials and wastes, which would in turn minimize cumulative impacts. The potential for hazardous waste spills would be minimized through the application of design features and BMPs included in the ROW permit and would not be at a large enough scale to cumulatively affect human health and safety either at the local level when combined with local projects, or across the Planning Area when combined with all other projects with similar individual effects or reasonably foreseeable actions outside of relocatable CTSE deployment.

4. *Effects that would violate Federal, State, Tribal, or local law protecting the environment.*

None of the effects associated with the Proposed Action would violate any Federal, State, Tribal, or local law protecting the environment.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, based on the information contained in the EA (DOI-BLM-NM-L000-2024-0017-EA) and all other information available to me at this time, it is my determination that:

- The degree of the effects of the Proposed Action do not rise to the level of significance requiring preparation of an EIS. (See criteria 1–4 explained in detail.)
- The Proposed Action is in conformance with the White Sands (BLM 1986) and Mimbres (BLM 1993) Resource Management Plans. Therefore, preparation of an EIS is not necessary.

Original signed by Ruynar R. Singleton on 5/14/2024

Ruynard R. Singleton **Date**
Executive Director
Program Management Office Directorate
U.S. Border Patrol

Original signed by Yvonne R. Medina on 6/25/2024

Yvonne R. Medina **Date**
Assistant Commissioner
Office of Facilities and Asset Management
U.S. Border Protection