



Written by [John F. McManus](#) on October 12, 2016

Sneaking in the Tunnels

Donald [Trump's plan to build a wall](#) between the United States and Mexico has excited many Americans. It's no secret that there are somewhere between 11 and 20 million individuals who have crossed our southern border illegally.

Among the illegal entrants are many who want to work hard and build a better life for their families. If they entered the U.S. legally and started on a path to assimilation, they would find a welcome mat. But within the millions already here are a [sizable number of criminals](#), agents of drug kings, and even murderers. Many have been deported, some several times, only to return and continue their crime sprees. And the cost of welfare, education, housing, and medical cares for untold numbers of these lawbreakers is another serious problem.



In the face of all of this, along comes an unorthodox candidate for President who wants to put a stop to the invasion by erecting a wall. He wasn't supposed to win the GOP's nomination, but he did. Elitists in the media and political world insisted he shouldn't be taken seriously, but many Americans have ignored those self-important pundits.

Yet, one problem that only very few have ever discussed is that a wall will keep only some wannabe illegals out. But tunnels under the border continue to be a significant problem. In late August 2016, Border Patrol agents found a sophisticated tunnel whose beginning point was found in a cemetery in Nogales, Mexico. Similarly named Nogales, Arizona, sits across the border and a fence separates the two communities. But a fence isn't enough to keep illegals from entering through the tunnels they built.

Border Patrol tunnel expert Kevin Hecht notes that these underground passageways are used to transport drugs into the United States. He says: "They know we'll eventually find them. But even if one load [of drugs] gets through before we find it, they consider it a success."

In the San Diego area, some U.S. citizens alerted the Border Patrol when they noticed suspicious activity in an area 500 yards from the border. Agents then found a tunnel 800 yards long. What they found were 2,200 pounds of cocaine and 14,000 pounds of marijuana. The cost of building that underground passage is easily covered by the sale of those drugs.

More than 70 tunnels were discovered along the border during a five-year period ending in 2013. Some had their own railways, lighting, and ventilation. The notorious Sinaloa cartel finances many of these, even knowing that construction of each will take as much as a year and cost as much as \$1 million for labor and materials. Joseph DiMeglio, a 13-year veteran with the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), calls such an expenditure "pocket change." A small cache



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of 25 methamphetamine packages has a street value of \$700,000. Deadly cocaine brings even more monetary reward.

Isn't there any way to [detect these tunnels](#) while they're being built or after they're being used? The answer is a resounding no. Using a ground-radar machine doesn't work because it isn't capable of reporting anything deeper than ten feet. Homeland Security investigator David Shaw admits, "We've never found a tunnel using them."

This problem won't be solved easily. It will become less worrisome if the federal government quits winking at illegal immigration and forcing states and local communities to care for the invaders. A complete turnaround in the way illegals have been treated by the federal government and its courts is needed. If it ever comes, however, the digging of tunnels will still be a problem.

John F. McManus is president emeritus of [The John Birch Society](#). This column appeared originally at the [insideJBS](#) blog and is reprinted here with permission.



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