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Underground sensors could change border enforcement



MARK RALSTON/AFP/Getty Images

U.S. Border Patrol agents Colleen Agle (R) and Richard Funke (L) patrol the border between Arizona and Mexico at the town of Nogales on July 28, 2010. A federal judge blocked the most controversial parts of Arizona's new immigration law, barring police from checking the immigrant status of suspected criminals. The ruling came hours before the new law had been due to go into effect, handing temporary victory to civil rights groups and the Obama administration which has challenged the legislation. For the first time in the United States -- a nation built on generations of immigrants -- the law would make illegal immigration a crime and penalize anybody helping or giving work to undocumented workers.

Marketplace Tech Report for December 17, 2010

TRANSCRIPT

Scott Urquhart is a geophysicist and president of the engineering company [Zonge](#). He teamed up with University of Arizona professor [Moe Momayez](#) on a project called Helios.

It doesn't involve cameras or fences or enforcement agents. It involves cable. [Fiber optic cable](#), specifically, that is buried a short distance below the ground and can sense exactly what's going on up above. Helios sends laser pulses from the cable up to the surface and then detects variations in the pulse it receives back. Urquhart and Momayez say it's incredibly sensitive and can detect the difference between a car, a person, a dog, a horse, whatever is going on up there.

They say that since the program uses standard fiber optic cable, it would be relatively affordable to stretch it out over long distances and would be more reliable and comprehensive than cameras.