

US officials find 'sophisticated' tunnel on Mexican border

'Most sophisticated tunnel in US history' discovered between Mexico and Arizona

● Although it's not clear exactly what the structure was intended for, it had ventilation, a rail system and extensive reinforcement

AP | Los Angeles

An incomplete tunnel found stretching from Mexico to Arizona appears to be "the most sophisticated tunnel in US history," authorities said.

The tunnel intended for smuggling ran from a neighbourhood in San Luis Río Colorado, Mexico, to San Luis, Arizona, where it stopped short of reaching the surface. It was built in an area that's not conducive to tunnels because of the terrain, and it had a ventilation system, water lines, electrical wiring, a rail system and extensive reinforcement, federal officials say.

"What makes this one unique is that the terrain in Yuma is very hard... the sand is very loose, and most of them end up caving. So the fact that the material was very well built and it had ventilation, it had water, it had a rail system with walls, roof, floor, electrical, makes this one a very unique type of tunnel," said Angel Ortiz, assistant special agent in charge for Homeland Security Investigations in Yuma. HSI is a division of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

"This appears to be the most sophisticated tunnel in US history, and certainly the most



Excavation work continues at a site of an incomplete tunnel intended for smuggling

sophisticated I've seen in my career," said Carl E. Landrum, acting chief patrol agent with the Border Patrol's Yuma Sector.

Homeland Security Investigations started excavating around the tunnel in late July after someone reported a sinkhole near the border wall. HSI already had reports of potential tunnel activity in that area already, and the agency began drilling, Ortiz said. A camera was sent 25 feet (7.6 metres) underground, and the tunnel was discovered on Tuesday.

The tunnel measured 3 feet (about 1 metre) wide and 4 feet (1.2 metres) high.

Investigators don't know what exactly the tunnel would have



In January this year, federal agents had discovered the longest cross-border smuggling tunnel ever found along the Southwest border, originating in Baja California, Mexico. It measured 4,309 feet (1,300 meters)

been used for, since it was incomplete. They also don't know how long it had been there, because they don't know what kind of equipment was used to build it. If it was done by hand, it would be many months of construction to get as far as it did, Ortiz said. But if the builders used heavy machinery it would "potentially a few months, not that long of a period," Ortiz said.

Smugglers have been using tunnels to get drugs and people across the border for decades.

Two years ago, authorities in Yuma discovered a sophisticated drug-smuggling tunnel that went from a home in Mexico to an abandoned fast-food restaurant in Arizona.

What makes this one unique is that the terrain in Yuma is very hard ... the sand is very loose, and most of them end up caving. So the fact that the material was very well built and it had ventilation, it had water, it had a rail system with walls, roof, floor, electrical, makes this one a very unique type of tunnel

ANGEL ORTIZ

HSI said the tunnel ran from Mexico to an old Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant that's not in operation in San Luis, Arizona, just about 200 yards (180 meters) north of the border.

The owner, Ivan Lopez, was arrested on Aug. 13, 2018, after authorities found several packages of methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin and fentanyl in the back of his truck.

That arrest led to a search at his home and the old restaurant, where agents found a hidden tunnel that was large enough for people to freely walk through.

Lopez pleaded guilty to one count of using a tunnel or passage to smuggle controlled substances, and was sentenced to seven years in prison, according to court records.

HSI continues to investigate the tunnel found Tuesday.

Fauci warns COVID-19 vaccine may be only partially effective



Dr. Anthony Fauci

Reuters | Washington

An approved coronavirus vaccine could end up being effective only 50-60 per cent of the time, meaning public health measures will still be needed to keep the pandemic under control, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top US infectious diseases expert, said.

"We don't know yet what the efficacy might be. We don't know if it will be 50pc or 60pc. I'd like it to be 75pc or more," Fauci said in a webinar hosted by Brown University. "But the chances of it being 98pc effective is not great, which means you must never abandon the public health approach."

The novel coronavirus has infected nearly 5 million people in the United States and killed more than 160,000.

Lockdown measures imposed to keep the virus from spreading have devastated the economy, which suffered its biggest blow since the Great Depression in the second quarter, with gross domestic product dropping at its steepest pace in at least 73 years.

As infections have spiked around the country after states started to open up, public health experts, including Fauci, have stressed the importance of steps that each American can take, including social distancing, washing hands and wearing masks.

Furry llama brings touch of Zen to protesters and police in Portland

Reuters | Portland

In Portland, Oregon, where anti-racism protests have sometimes turned violent, a furry llama stands out from the crowd to bless demonstrators and law enforcement with soothing hugs.

Caesar, the six-year-old "No Drama Llama," has become a fixture in the city, extending his woolly neck to nuzzle both Black Lives Matter activists and law enforcement officers in body armor lining up to take selfies with him.

The former Argentine grand champion show animal, standing 5 feet 8 inches at about 350 lbs, is unusually friendly for a llama, making him a natural peacemaker, said his owner, Larry McCool, who runs the Mystic Llama Farm in Jefferson, Oregon.

Caesar may not speak, but knows more than you think, McCool said. This was clear on June 9 when about 5,000 people laid down or knelt at bridge near downtown Portland for nearly nine minutes of silence to honour George Floyd, a Black man who died on May 25 after a white police officer knelt on



A woman hugs Caesar McCool, a therapy llama at the site of ongoing protest

Caesar stood there, motionless, just like this. He understood the moment. He understood the importance of what we were doing. (He) did not move an inch that whole time

LARRY MCCOOL

his neck.

"Caesar stood there, motionless, just like this. He under-

stood the moment. He understood the importance of what we were doing," McCool said. "(He) did not move an inch that whole time."

Caesar guides everyone to a higher path by showing up at various social justice rallies, McCool said, as the therapy llama posed for photos near a memorial to African-Americans harmed by police violence.

"As intense as the public is, the protesters and the federal agents and the marshals, ... he actually can defuse that very much. That's his whole purpose."

Rare syndrome linked to Covid-19 found in nearly 600 US children: CDC

Reuters | Washington

Nearly 600 children were admitted to US hospitals with a rare inflammatory syndrome associated with the novel coronavirus over four months during the peak of the pandemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in a report.

Multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C) is a rare but severe condition that shares symptoms with toxic shock and Kawasaki disease, including fever, rashes, swollen glands and, in severe cases, heart inflammation.

It has been reported in children and adolescent patients about two to four weeks after the onset of Covid-19.

With rising Covid-19 cases, there could be an increased occurrence of MIS-C, but this might not be apparent immediately because of the delay in the development of symptoms, said the report's authors, including those from the CDC's Covid-19 response team.

In May, the CDC published a health advisory with details of how MIS-C manifests in patients and asked clinicians to report suspected US cases to local



A health worker carries out a COVID-19 coronavirus test on a child

570

MIS-C patients diagnosed with the illness from March 2 to July 18 across the United States

and state health departments.

As of July 29, state health departments across the country reported a total of 570 MIS-C patients diagnosed with the illness from March 2 to July 18.

Among the MIS-C cases, all

patients tested positive for Covid-19 and 10 died, the CDC said in the report.

The data is consistent with two US studies published in June and several reports of the syndrome among Covid-19 patients in France, Italy, Spain and Britain.

The report, the CDC said, highlights the need for greater awareness among healthcare providers, as distinguishing patients with MIS-C from those with acute Covid-19 and other hyperinflammatory conditions is critical for early recognition, early diagnosis, and prompt treatment.