



## MYTHS V FACTS re: the Proposed Border Wall on the Tohono O'odham Nation

**MYTH:** *"The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has the authority to press forward with building a border wall on the Nation's reservation lands."*

**FACT:** Building a wall on the Nation would involve illegally taking the Nation's land and diminishing the size of its reservation, neither of which DHS has the authority to do. Additionally, DHS personnel and contractors who enter the Nation to build the wall would be trespassing on the Nation's lands and violating its exclusive use of its reservation and resources. These and other arguments are laid out in the Nation's lawsuit against DHS. The Nation is hopeful that DHS will reconsider its border wall plans and instead continue to work with the Nation on implementing modern and effective border protection solutions.

**MYTH:** *"The Tohono O'odham Nation opposes border security and wants an open border."*

**FACT:** The Nation spends millions of tribal dollars and other resources annually collaborating with federal agencies to protect the U.S. border. The Nation has been on the front lines in this effort for decades and completely agrees on the need for a secure border — but the Nation advocates for modern, effective technology over a destructive physical barrier.

**MYTH:** *"A physical wall is the only effective way to stop unlawful border crossings."*

**FACT:** Fixed walls are easily bypassed, climbed, or cut in remote terrain. Security is optimized through integrated surveillance technology, fixed radar towers, forward law enforcement center and mobile personnel that track illegal crossings efficiently without scarring the land. The Nation has worked with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to implement all these security measures and they are working. **Detentions on the border have dropped by more than 95% in the last two years.**

**MYTH:** *"Even if unlawful border crossings are down, a wall is still needed to deter cartel drug smugglers."*

**FACT:** It is well-documented that the overwhelming majority of drugs smuggled into the United States through the southern border pass through ports of entry. With a 95% decrease in unlawful border crossings in the past two years due to existing security measures on the Nation, virtually nothing — people or drugs — is getting through. There is no need for a destructive wall.

Verlon M. Jose  
Chairman

Carla L. Johnson  
Vice Chairwoman

**MYTH:** *"The Department of Homeland Security followed proper legal procedures and consultation."*

**FACT:** DHS completely bypassed legally mandated, government-to-government tribal consultation frameworks. By invoking sweeping political waivers, DHS actively trampled the federal government's constitutional Trust Responsibility to protect sovereign tribal lands and also exceeded its legal authority.

**MYTH:** *"Federal construction contractors are carefully avoiding all historical and cultural sites."*

**FACT:** Cultural sites have already been permanently damaged. The latest example occurred just weeks ago when contractors plowed a 50-foot bladed corridor straight through the Las Playas Intaglio—a sacred O'odham and American treasure that is a 1,000-year-old ground geoglyph. The permanent destruction occurred despite the site being explicitly flagged for total avoidance by tribal monitors. This ongoing, reckless destruction of sacred sites will impact important ceremonies and religious practices, which is one of the many points raised in the lawsuit against DHS.

**MYTH:** *"The border wall project does not impact local water sources or desert wildlife."*

**FACT:** Construction of the border wall requires massive water resources, even in the arid Sonoran Desert. Contractors are currently drilling deep wells into fragile desert aquifers to mix concrete. This heavy pumping directly threatens sacred areas, such as A'al Waipia (Quitobaquito Springs), risking permanently drying up the sole habitat of the endangered Sonoyta mud turtle and other endangered species.

**MYTH:** *"The border wall only impacts people traveling from foreign countries."*

**FACT:** The wall slices through a single community unified since time immemorial. Over 3,000 enrolled Tohono O'odham Nation members live on the Mexican side and would be physically severed from their families, clinics, schools, and ancestral religious sites and ceremonies.

**MYTH:** *"The border wall is the most cost-effective method of securing the border with Mexico."*

**FACT:** The border wall is an expensive and ineffective political gimmick that cannot replace proven, successful security strategies. It costs tens of millions of dollars to build a single mile of static wall, which then requires constant, costly maintenance to protect it from the rugged desert environment as well as from sabotage by migrants and smugglers. All of this adds up to extraordinary expenses for American taxpayers to subsidize a border security measure that is less effective than the dynamic system already in place.

